

## THE HONORABLE BERNADETTE D'SOUZA



The Honorable Bernadette D'Souza was elected as the first Family Court Judge at Civil District Court for the Parish of Orleans on February 1, 2012. Judge D'Souza was previously a practicing attorney in public interest law for over 18 years, many of them as Managing Attorney of the Family Law and Domestic Violence Unit at Southeast Louisiana Legal Services. Judge D'Souza received her Juris Doctor degree from Tulane University School of Law in 1992. Upon graduation she dedicated her legal career to public interest law representing indigent clients in family law, housing, and domestic violence cases. She has spent over a decade promoting awareness to domestic violence issues by devoting time to educating

and supervising law students from Tulane Law School and from around the country post-Katrina.

Judge D'Souza served as adjunct professor at Tulane Law School, teaching a course on family law and domestic violence and instructing students through a clinical externship program. She also served as a guest lecturer at Loyola University College of Law on topics of domestic violence and poverty law. Judge D'Souza now serves on the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges faculty of the National Judicial Institute on Domestic Violence. Judge D'Souza has participated in numerous speaking engagements including continuing legal education programs for the Louisiana State Bar Association and New Orleans Bar Associations. Due to her experience in family law and dedication to ensuring that legal services are available to all who need them, Judge D'Souza was appointed to the Louisiana Commission on Women's Policy and Research by Governors Mike Foster and Kathleen Blanco. Additionally, she served on the City of New Orleans Mayor's Domestic Violence Advisory Committee.

Judge D'Souza is a member of the Louisiana State Bar Association, and served on its Access to Justice Committee; the New Orleans Bar Association as Past Chair of the Family Law Committee; the American Bar Association Family Law Section Domestic Violence Executive Committee; the A.P. Tureaud Inn of Court; and the Association for Women Attorneys. She is a Fellow of the Louisiana Bar Foundation where she served as chair of the Judicial Liaison Committee and chair of the Development Committee. Judge D'Souza has been appointed by the Supreme Court to the Self-Represented Litigants Task Force and the Committee on Bar Admissions.

Judge D'Souza has served on a variety of community boards. She served as President of the Greater New Orleans YWCA, Tulane University Women's Association and the Auxiliary to the American Academy of Neurology. She served as Chairman of the Board of the WRBH-Radio for the Blind and as a board member (Secretary) of the Institute for Mental Hygiene. Judge D'Souza is a Mayoral appointee on the Board of Total Community Action. Upon election to the bench, Judge D'Souza became a member of the National Association of Women Judges and was appointed as co-chair of the Domestic Violence Committee. She was elected to the Board of NAWJ as District Director, Secretary, and served as chair of the Personnel Committee and co-chair of the Executive Director Search Committee before her election as President-Elect in 2018 and accession to President in 2019.

Judge D'Souza is the recipient of several prominent awards for her professional and personal commitment to the community, including recognition as one of the City Business 2011 Women of the Year, the St. Mark Missionary Baptist Church Humanitarian Award, YWCA Role Model Award, Citizen Hero Award from Victims and Citizens Against Crime and the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence into Action Award. She received the Association for Women Attorneys Professionalism Award

and the Louisiana State Bar Association 2008 Career Public Interest Award in recognition of her career commitment and outstanding contribution of legal services to Louisiana's indigent. Additionally, Judge D'Souza received the Public Service and Leadership Award from Black Law Students Association of Loyola University College of Law, and the Distinguished Jurist Award from the New Orleans Pro Bono Project. More recently, Judge D'Souza received the City Business Icon Award to mark New Orleans' 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary honoring 20 leaders for their energy, innovative ideas, achievements and commitment to excellence to move the community forward.

Judge D'Souza has three children, Lloyd, Vanessa and Christine, sons-in-law, Michael DePetrillo and David Gelband two grandsons, Aidan and Dylan DePetrillo. She was married to the renown New Orleans doctor Terence D'Souza, who passed away in 2019.