

# DETROIT MERCY LAW



DETROIT  
MERCY  
LAW

MENTOR  JET

## Taking Networking to New Heights

*Presented by*

Women's Law Caucus, Detroit Mercy School of Law  
National Association of Women Judges

**October 1, 2020**

**via Zoom**

*Sponsored by*

Detroit Bar Association Foundation

## AGENDA

- 5:45 p.m.      Welcome Remarks
- Dean Phyllis Crocker, Detroit Mercy Law  
Zenell Brown, NAWJ Michigan State Chair  
Rebecca Zarras, Vice President, Women's Law Caucus,  
Detroit Mercy Law
- MentorJet, A Speed-Networking Event
- 6:00 p.m.      First Breakout Session
- 6:17 p.m.      Second Breakout Session
- 6:34 p.m.      Third Breakout Session
- 6:51 p.m.      Fourth Breakout Session
- 7:08 p.m.      Closing Remarks
- Maya Younis, President, Women's Law Caucus,  
Detroit Mercy Law

## MENTORJET PLANNING COMMITTEE

**HONORABLE MICHELLE M. RICK**

29TH CIRCUIT COURT CLINTON AND GRATIOT COUNTIES

**ZENELL BROWN**

THIRD CIRCUIT COURT, NAWJ STATE CHAIR MICHIGAN

**JEANETTE HEACOX**

THIRD CIRCUIT COURT

**REBECCA ZARRAS, 21'**

WOMEN'S LAW CAUCUS, VICE PRESIDENT, DETROIT MERCY LAW

## MENTOR PARTICIPANTS

**The Honorable Mariam S. Bazzi**

THIRD CIRCUIT COURT

**Kristina Bilowus**

KIZY LAW

**Amanda Ghannam**

ATTORNEY

**Debani Gordon Lehman**

ROSATI, SCHULTZ, JOPPICH, & AMTSBUECHLER

**Brad Hall**

ADMINISTRATOR, MICHIGAN APPELLATE ASSIGNED COUNSEL SYSTEM

**The Honorable Nadine Hatten**

MAGISTRATE, 43RD DISTRICT COURT

**The Honorable Timothy M. Kenny**

THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

**Karen Liddle**

ATTORNEY

**Lynda McGhee**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MICHIGAN CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER

**The Honorable Lisa M. Neilson**

Third Circuit Court

**Zena Ozeir**

ATTORNEY, ACCESS' DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

**Tammi Palmer**

Director, Case Processing, Third Judicial Circuit Court

**Antoinette Star Porter**

MANAGER OF EMPLOYMENT & LABOR, DTE ENERGY

**The Honorable Elizabeth White**

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

# Mentor Biographies

## HONORABLE MICHELLE M. RICK

### 29th CIRCUIT COURT - CLINTON AND GRATIOT COUNTIES



The Honorable Michelle Rick was appointed to the bench in 2007. Prior to that, Judge Rick worked briefly in private practice before becoming a public employee. Her public service career began when she became an assistant prosecutor in Livingston County, followed by service to the State of Michigan as an assistant attorney general and then as deputy legal counsel to Governor Granholm.

Judge Rick is Chief Judge Pro Tem of the 29th Circuit Court, which includes Clinton and Gratiot Counties. Judge Rick hears family, criminal, and civil cases. Judge Rick is a graduate of Michigan State University and the University of Detroit School of Law, cum laude. She is a member of the UDM Law Justice Frank Murphy Honor Society. Judge Rick is the District 7 Director for the National Association of Women Judges, covering Michigan, Ohio, and West Virginia. Judge Rick is an Officer of the Michigan Judges Association, where she serves as Secretary. She previously co-chaired MJA's Outreach and Conference Planning Committee. In 2015, Judge Rick was appointed by Governor Snyder to the Human Trafficking Commission. In 2015, the Women Lawyers Association of Mid-Michigan awarded Judge Rick the Carolyn A. Stell Award. Judge Rick is an active member of the Clinton County Community Corrections Board. Judge Rick is an emeritus Board Member for SafeCenter. Judge Rick is a member of the Michigan Bar Association Limited Scope Representation work group, and she serves as an advisor to the State Bar Affordable Legal Services committee. Judge Rick is active with several other state bar committees that work to promote diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. Judge Rick is a member of the State Bar of Michigan Judicial Council, and a former member of the Limited English Proficiency Steering Committee. Most recently, Judge Rick served as a judicial advisor to the Jail and Pretrial Release Task Force.

Judge Rick teaches Access to Justice at Detroit Mercy Law School. Judge Rick has previously served as an adjunct law professor at MSU Law and Cooley Law Schools. Judge Rick is a frequent guest speaker and lecturer at various statewide and local law-related events. In January 2019, the Michigan Supreme Court recognized Judge Rick as a judge who gives back and makes a difference. Read more on her Success Stories [here](https://courts.michigan.gov/News-Events/press_releases/Documents/News%20release%20for%20Judges%20Giving%20Back_FINAL.pdf). (https://courts.michigan.gov/News-Events/press\_releases/Documents/News%20release%20for%20Judges%20Giving%20Back\_FINAL.pdf) Judge Rick is a Michigan State Bar Foundation Fellow and an American Bar Foundation Fellow. Judge Rick is married to her college sweetheart, Matthew, and they have 4 children.



**The Honorable Mariam S. Bazzi**  
**Third Circuit Court**

Judge Mariam S. Bazzi has served on the Third Circuit Court since 2017. She previously served as Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor. She is currently assigned to the Criminal Division, where she oversees a Mental Health Court docket in addition to her regular duties. She also serves on the Court Executive Committee and on the Strategic Planning Team, where she is the Judicial Sponsor of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. During her service in the Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office, she prosecuted thousands of criminal cases including violent crimes, drug cases, financial crimes and other complex, and high profile cases. Prior to leaving that office for the bench, she was the Lead Attorney in charge of the Mortgage and Deed Fraud Task Force in Wayne County.

Judge Bazzi has been active in many community and civic organizations, including the Arab American Political Action Committee (AAPAC) where she served as the President from 2010 to 2014. Prior to her judicial appointment, she was elected to the Dearborn Board of Education and Henry Ford College Board of Trustees where she served as chair for each organization’s board. She also served on Michigan’s Middle Eastern Affairs Commission and Michigan’s Environmental Justice Work Group. She is a boardmember for the Leaders Advancing and Helping Communities (LAHC). Judge Bazzi holds a J.D. from Wayne State University and a B.S. in Political Science from the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

She is married to Abdul Bazzi, an Executive at General Motors and, together, they have three children.



**Kristina Bilowus**  
**Attorney**

Kristina Bilowus is legal practitioner with Kizy Law in Southfield, Michigan, a firm specializing in family and criminal law. She is also an adjunct professor at WMU Cooley Law School. She serves on various boards and professional organizations including the State Bar of Michigan Young Lawyers Section, Women Bar Association, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan, and the Hellenic Bar Association.



## **Zenell Brown**

### **Executive Court Administrator, Third Circuit Court**

Zenell Brown currently serves as the Executive Court Administrator of the Third Circuit Court. She previously served as the Friend of the Court, Enforcement Director, and Senior Staff Attorney, as well as mediator at the Third Circuit Court. She is a certified diversity professional, and co-author of a State Court Administrative Office approved mediation training curriculum. With a vision to stir up conversations of inclusion and good trouble, Ms.

Brown shares stories and lessons learned in *Coffee and Conversations: Inclusion and Belonging* which is available on Amazon.

Her commitment to delivering quality judicial services runs deep and wide. She has spearheaded and contributed to the reconstruction and transformation of court operations such as the amnesty program, judicial strategic planning, and juvenile justice. Inside the legal profession, she has trained attorneys and court professionals in multiple areas including domestic relations mediation, creating an inclusive work environment, managing the multi-generational workforce, and caseflow management. She has presented before the Michigan Judicial Institute, the Association of Family and Conciliation Court, the National Association of Court Management, and National Black Child Development Institute audiences. Mr. Brown serves on the board of the Detroit Bar Association, the board of the Michigan Diversity Council, several committees of the National Association of Court Management, the faculty of the Michigan Judicial Institute, and the faculty of the Institute of Court Management. A forever learner, Zenell holds a Juris Doctor (Wayne State University Law School), Graduate Certificate in Public Administration (Central Michigan University), and Judicial Administration Certificate (Michigan State University).



## **Dean Phyllis Crocker**

### **Detroit Mercy Law**

Phyllis Crocker became Dean of Detroit Mercy Law in July 2014. She joined Detroit Mercy from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, Cleveland State University, where she was on the faculty from August 1994 through June 2014, becoming a full Professor in 2005. She also served as Interim Dean (March 2010 – June 2011) and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (July 2006 – June 2010) at Cleveland-Marshall. Dean Crocker is a nationally recognized authority on the death penalty. She serves on local, state, and national advisory committees. In Michigan she served on the State Bar of Michigan 21<sup>st</sup> Century Practice Task Force (2015-16). She has been a Trustee of the Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association Foundation since 2014. Dean Crocker is a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation. While in Ohio she

chaired the American Bar Association Ohio Death Penalty Assessment Team that published *Evaluating Fairness and Accuracy in State Death Penalty Systems: The Ohio Death Penalty Assessment Report* (2007). She served on the ABA Death Penalty Due Process Review Project Steering Committee from 2010 to 2014. She was appointed to the Ohio Supreme Court and Ohio State Bar Association Joint Task Force to Review the Administration of Ohio's Death Penalty (2011-14). She also served as a Commissioner on the Cuyahoga County Public Defender Commission and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center. She is admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court.



**Amanda M. Ghannam**  
**Attorney**

Amanda M. Ghannam is an attorney specializing in plaintiff-side employment and civil rights litigation. She earned her Juris Doctor with a specialization in Labor, Work, and Income from Northeastern University School of Law in Boston, Massachusetts in 2018. She then began her career in employment and civil rights litigation at the law firm of Nacht & Roumel, P.C. in Ann Arbor. She is currently working on multiple civil rights and constitutional matters, including representing Black Lives Matter demonstrators in a police brutality lawsuit against the City of Detroit and working with the Pitt Legal Team to pursue claims arising out of the Edenville Dam collapse of May 2020. She lives in Royal Oak.

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**Debani T. Gordon Lehman**  
**Rosati, Schultz, Joppich, & Amtsbuechler**

Debani T. Gordon Lehman is an Associate with Rosati, Schultz, Joppich, & Amtsbuechler in Farmington Hills Michigan. She focuses her practice on municipal law, employment law, law enforcement and civil rights. She also assists with providing general counsel services to several municipalities. Ms. Gordon Lehman is also a trained civil mediator. Ms. Gordon Lehman is a graduate of Michigan State University College of Law where she earned various academic awards and scholarships. While in law school, she participated in the Eviction Diversion Program where she represented clients who could not afford to hire private legal counsel for their landlord/tenant issues. She was also the President of the Women's Law Caucus. In her free time, she is an avid sports fan and enjoys going to classic car shows. Ms. Gordon Lehman was recently appointed to the State Bar of Michigan's Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee for the 2020-2021 term.

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**Bradley R. Hall**  
**Michigan Appellate Assigned Counsel System**  
**State Appellate Defender Office.**

Bradley R. Hall is Administrator of the Michigan Appellate Assigned Counsel System, a division of the State Appellate Defender Office. He is a graduate of Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law, where he gained practical experience working at the Southern Center for Human Rights, Cook County Public Defender Office, and Center on Wrongful Convictions. After a clerkship with Judge Nancy G. Edmunds on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, he spent eight years as a staff attorney at the Federal Defender Office in Detroit, handling trials, appeals, and habeas corpus cases. As amicus counsel for the Criminal Defense Attorneys of Michigan, he has briefed and argued several significant cases in the Michigan Supreme Court and Michigan Court of Appeals, one of which was awarded a Distinguished Brief Award by Cooley Law School. He has written scholarly articles on wrongful convictions, sentencing, and appellate procedure, and is the immediate past Chair of the State Bar of Michigan's Appellate Practice Section.



**Magistrate Nadine Hatten**  
**43rd District Court,**

The Honorable Nadine Hatten is a Magistrate in the 43rd District Court, Hazel Park. For 15 years, Magistrate Hatten taught high school in Detroit Public Schools. While teaching, she attended evening classes, part-time, and earned a Master’s Degree in Educational Administration (1999) and a Juris Doctor (2009), both from Wayne State University. Magistrate Hatten earned a Master’s Degree in Law (LL.M.) in Criminal Defense from California Western School of Law (2011). She established and continues to manage the Law Offices of Nadine R. Hatten, PLLC. She is a graduate of the National Criminal Defense College, Macon, Georgia and the Criminal Defense Attorneys of Michigan’s (CDAM) trial college, Lansing, Michigan; and she was sworn into the Supreme Court of the United States.



**The Honorable Timothy M. Kenny**  
**Third Judicial Circuit Court, Detroit Michigan**

The Honorable Timothy M. Kenny currently serves as Chief Judge of the Third Circuit Court (Wayne County). During his twenty-three years on the bench, he has also served for nine years as Presiding Judge of the Court’s Criminal Division. Prior to becoming a judge, he spent twenty years in the Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office and three year in private practice. In addition to working on efforts to deal with the pandemic, Judge Kenny is currently involved in a project to improve juvenile justice in Wayne County. Judge Kenny also monitors the 1971 Wayne County Jail Consent Order dealing with inmate population and jail services. From 2009-2018 Judge

Kenny served as one of the founders as well as the judge in charge of the Mental Health Court. He also served for twelve years as a Drug Court judge. Judge Kenny is a graduate of the University of Michigan and the University of Minnesota Law School.



**Karen Liddle**  
**Attorney**

Karen Liddle has been a licensed attorney in Michigan since 1990. Ms. Liddle graduated from Michigan State University with a Bachelors of Arts degree, and she graduated from the University of Detroit-Mercy School of Law with a Juris Doctorate degree. Ms. Liddle has extensive legal experience in both the private and public sectors. She has litigated a variety of matters in administrative forums, state district and circuit courts and federal district courts. She is an adjunct professor for Oakland University’s paralegal program and has served on Oakland University’s Paralegal Board of Directors. Currently, she is a Judicial Attorney for the Honorable David J.

Allen in Wayne County Circuit Court. She is a member of the Detroit Bar Association and the Oakland County Bar Association.





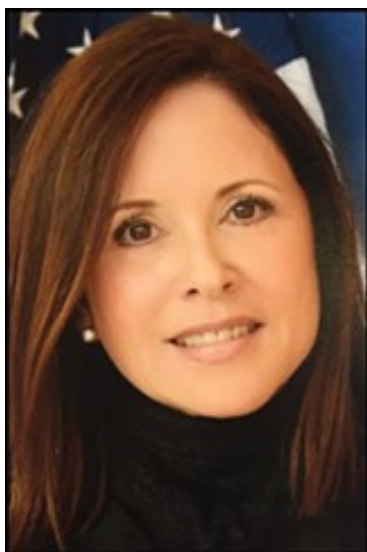
**Lynda D. McGhee**  
**Executive Director, Michigan Children’s Law Center**

Lynda D. McGhee was born, raised, and educated in Detroit, Michigan. She graduated from Cass Technical High School and the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor. She then attended Wayne State University Law School while working full time as a teacher in Detroit Public Schools. Additionally, Attorney McGhee interned at the Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office in the Juvenile Court Division. It was then that she first learned of the turmoil that many children experienced. Following law school, she represented children in neglect, abuse, and juvenile justice cases in the same court. She obtained a position with Michigan Children’s Law Center in 2007 and currently serves as the Executive

Director. MCLC is a law firm that dedicates its practice to helping children in the courts, the schools and the community. Attorney McGhee serves on the court’s Aging Out Committee and the Jet Data Committee. In 2020, she earned a national accreditation in Child Welfare Law from the National Association of Children’s Counsel. She was named as one of only 30 Michigan Lawyers Weekly Women in the Law for the year 2020. Attorney McGhee founded The Ark Nonviolence Program, a non-profit organization with the goal of eliminating violence among students by exposing them to alternative ways of keeping the peace. Since 2001, The Ark has served over 1,000 children and currently exposes them to career opportunities in the criminal justice system through its Choices and Consequences Court Trip to Frank Murphy Hall of Justice in Detroit, Michigan.

Attorney McGhee, along with a few members of her church, formed a Foster/Adoption Ministry at Greater Grace Temple where she served as Director for five years. The goal of the ‘FAM’ was to recruit members of congregations across the Metro-Detroit area to become foster or adoptive parents and provide resources to children within the community. She currently assists local churches with beginning FAMs within their congregations and she is a featured speaker on the topic of Neglect and Abuse.

Attorney Lynda McGhee has been recognized by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute as an Angel in Adoption. She is on the Board of Directors for several community service organizations including Sisters Against Abuse Society and She’s A Genius. She has authored a book of poetry entitled Healing in Poetic Seasons (HIPS) and published a song entitled War Cry. Attorney McGhee currently lives in the Detroit area and can be contacted at LawLynda@aol.com for more information.



**The Honorable Lisa M. Neilson**  
**Third Circuit Court, Detroit Michigan**

Judge Lisa M. Neilson was appointed to the Wayne County Probate Court in 2012 and re-elected in 2016. She currently serves in the Family Domestic Division of the Third Judicial Circuit Court and previously served in the Family Juvenile Division. Judge Neilson is an active member of various local, state, and national associations and is the Michigan State Representative to the National College of Probate Judges. She received her undergraduate degree from Madonna University and her J.D. from Thomas M. Cooley Law School.



**Zena Ozeir**  
**ACCESS Domestic Violence Prevention Program**

Zena Ozeir is an Arab American attorney based in Dearborn, Michigan. She is the attorney for ACCESS' Domestic Violence Prevention Program where she represents survivors of domestic violence across multiple practice areas. Zena earned her B.A. in International Relations from Boston University in 2013. She earned her Juris Doctor from U.C. Hastings College of the Law in 2018, where she concentrated in Social Justice Lawyering. As a law student, Zena interned with the Federal Public Defender, Palestine Legal, and Law Offices of John Burris, a civil rights law firm. She has dedicated her legal career to fighting for racial and gender justice. Zena is licensed to practice in Michigan and California.



**Tammi Palmer**  
**Director of Case Processing, Third Judicial Circuit Court**

Tammi Palmer is the Director of Case Processing for the Third Judicial Circuit Court of Michigan in Detroit where she and her staff serve as the primary resource to judges and their staff on caseload methods, reporting and procedures, gather and report required data to the State Court Administrative Office, coordinate court reporting and interpreter coverage for all divisions of the Court, assign appellate counsel and family court attorneys and submit transcripts to the Court of Appeals. She has been with the Court for more than 25 years. Prior to serving as the Director of Case Processing, she served in the Third Judicial Circuit Court as a Judicial Attorney for the Honorable Jeanne Stempien, Presiding Judge of the Civil Division and a Judicial Attorney for the Honorable Kathleen Macdonald. Prior to working with the court, she worked in private practice in the Law Offices of Christopher J. Trainor and Boren & Firebaugh, P.C. She also served as an intern with both General Motors and Chrysler. She is a graduate of the University of Detroit School of Law (JD 1992) and Adrian College (BBA, Accountancy, 1989).



**Antoinette Star Porter**  
**Manager of Employment & Labor**  
**DTE Energy**

Antoinette Star Porter is the Manager of Employment & Labor for DTE Energy, where she has been in-house since 2010, advising leaders and human resources on employment issues and matters of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. A two-time graduate of the University of Michigan, Ms. Porter holds a Bachelor of Arts with high distinction and a Juris Doctor. She also earned a Master of Business Administration, with certification in Human Resources. She served as the first Latina President of the Detroit Bar Association Barristers and was named “Barrister of the Year” (2009) for exemplifying their motto, “Service to the Community. Service to the Bar.” She is actively involved with the School Partnership Program bringing exposure of legal careers and issues to students. Antoinette’s pride and joy, however, are her husband and two young “miracle babies.”



**The Honorable Elizabeth Allen White  
Los Angeles Superior Court (Retired)**

The Honorable Elizabeth Allen White retired as a Judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court in July 2020 after serving 23 years on the court. She was assigned to serve as a Justice Pro Tem of the California Court of Appeal, 2d District from February – March 2004, and again in March – June 2020. Her judicial career started in the then Los Angeles Municipal Court in 1997, and she was elevated in 2000 upon unification. She will be joining JAMS in November 2020 as an arbitrator and mediator. Judge White graduated from UCLA and obtained her Juris Doctorate from Loyola Law School in 1981. She presided in Department 48, an Independent Civil Calendar Court at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse in downtown Los Angeles. She served as Chair of the Judicial Education

Seminars Civil Law Subcommittee from 2016 through her recent retirement. As such, she chaired a committee which developed judicial education for all civil judges in the County of Los Angeles. Prior to that she chaired the Civil Law Education Committee for the Judicial Council’s Judicial Education and Research Department. She has been a frequent lecturer for judicial education throughout the State of California, served as Adjunct Faculty at USC’s Gould School of Law’s LLM program where she taught Constitutional Law and Professional Responsibility. She also served as Adjunct Faculty at Loyola Law School where she taught Civil Discovery and as an Instructor for UCLA’s Paralegal Training Program.

She is the author of The Rutter Group’s Paralegal Manual - Civil Procedure Before Trial and co-author of the Paralegal Manual – Civil Trials and Evidence and the Paralegal Manual – Personal Injury. Judge White is the Vice President of Districts for the National Association of Women Judges (“NAWJ”), an organization dedicated to promoting diversity on the bench, fostering collegiality, and providing quality education for judges. She also served as Chair of NAWJ’s 2019 Conference in Los Angeles, and Chair of District 14 which encompasses both California and Nevada. She will serve as NAWJ’s President Elect for the 2020 – 2021 term. Judge White lived in France and is fluent in both French and Spanish.



**Becca Zarras  
Juris Doctor Candidate, 2021  
University of Detroit Mercy School of Law  
Women’s Law Caucus, Vice President**

After graduating from Western Michigan University, Rebecca Zarras spent three years working as a case manager with survivors of sexual assault, domestic assault, and human trafficking. This role as an advocate inspired her to go to law school to help others achieve justice. While at Detroit Mercy Law, she has served as the Vice President of the Women's Law Caucus and is an active member of moot court. In her first year, she externed for the Honorable R. Steven Whalen of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan and volunteered for Project Access, a ten-day traveling expungement clinic. In her second year, she externed at the Federal Defender's Office and assisted with the Federal Pro Se Legal

Assistance Clinic. In her spare time, Rebecca enjoys gardening and playing guitar. After graduation, she plans to pursue a career in litigation and public interest work.