

National Association of Women Judges

Panel on Families in Crisis

The Impact of the Pandemic on Families in the Wake of COVID-19

Participant Biographies

(in alpha order)

ATTORNEY VANESSA BATTERS-THOMPSON



Vanessa Batters-Thompson develops and nurtures innovative collaborations to address the civil legal needs of people living on low incomes. She joined the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center in 2014 as their Managing Attorney for Family Law Programs. In this role, she helped launch, and now directs, the Family Law Assistance Network, a joint endeavor of several legal service providers to offer low-income parents or caregivers free and confidential family law services through a single, accessible, intake point. She also spearheads a partnership with the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, and other key

stakeholders, to produce and maintain an extensive library of pleadings and resources for self-represented family law litigants.

As co-manager of the Pro Bono Center's Advocacy & Justice Clinic, Attorney Batters-Thompson oversees intake and placement of clients with pro bono attorneys from private law firms and the public sector. She additionally provides guidance and direction to the Pro Bono Center's training program, which last year prepared more than 500 new volunteers to serve their community. An experienced mentor and public speaker, she frequently presents to diverse audiences on a variety of topics related to lawyering, public service, and litigation skills. Prior to joining the Pro Bono Center, Attorney Batters-Thompson worked for Bread for the City, an anti-poverty organization. She provided direct representation to clients and systematic advocacy regarding child support issues. From 2009 through 2011, she served as a Friedman Fellow for the George Washington University Law School, teaching and supervising students handling domestic violence and family law cases through the Jacob Burns Community Legal Clinics. While in law school, she clerked for the Mental Health Division of the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia, as well as the Humane Society of the United States.

She obtained her J.D. from the George Washington University Law School, and her B.A. from American University with a certificate in Women, Policy, and Political Leadership. She currently lives and works in Silver Spring, Maryland with her husband, daughter, and dog.

THE HONORABLE ANNA BLACKBURNE-RIGSBY



The Honorable Anna Blackburne-Rigsby was sworn in as Chief Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals on March 17, 2017. As Chief Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby chairs the Joint Committee on Judicial Administration for the District of Columbia. Prior to being designated Chief Judge, Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby was nominated by President George W. Bush in August 2006 to serve as an Associate Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. Before that, Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby, nominated by President William Jefferson Clinton, served as an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia from 2000-2006, and served as a Magistrate Judge on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia from 1995-2000.

Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby chaired the District of Columbia Courts' Standing Committee on Fairness and Access, and served on the District of Columbia's Access to Justice Commission. Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby was the Chair and Moderator of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts and is the Past President of the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ) for the 2013 - 2014 term.

Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby graduated from Duke University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science, and received the Duke University Presidential Leadership Award. Following graduation from Duke University, she was selected to be one of twelve Public Affairs Fellows of the Coro Foundation in San Francisco, California. She earned her law degree from Howard University School of Law, graduating in the top five percent of her class. While in law school, she served as the Lead Articles Editor of the Howard Law Journal and served as the Co-Captain for the Charles Hamilton Houston Moot Court Team.

Following law school, Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby was an associate at the law firm of Hogan Lovells US LLP (formerly Hogan and Hartson) in Washington, DC, where she litigated commercial, real estate, employment discrimination, and education matters before state and federal courts and administrative agencies. Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby later joined the District of Columbia Office of the Corporation Counsel (now the District of Columbia Office of the Attorney General), where she served as Special Counsel to the Corporation Counsel, working as part of the senior management team. She then served as Deputy Corporation Counsel in charge of the Family Services Division, where she managed the Division's 65 attorneys and support staff, responsible for handling child abuse and neglect, child support enforcement, and domestic violence cases.

Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby has taught Trial Advocacy at the Harvard Law School and teaches Professional Responsibility as an Adjunct Professor at the David A. Clarke School of Law at the University of the District of Columbia. She has also taught Continuing Legal Education courses for the District of Columbia Bar.

Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby has held offices in several judicial organizations. Through her work with these organizations, Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby has sought to promote the rule of

law and equal access to justice. Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby has received awards for her legal, judicial and community service, including the Business and Professional Women's League "Sojourner Truth Award", the Women's Bar Association of the District of Columbia "2014 Star of the Bar Award", the National Bar Association "Heman Sweatt Champion of Justice" Award, and the Greater Washington Area Women Lawyers Division (GWAC) Charlotte E. Ray Award.

Chief Judge Blackburne-Rigsby is married to Judge Robert R. Rigsby, Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, former Corporation Counsel for the District of Columbia, and a retired Colonel and Military Judge of the United States Army Reserves. They are the proud parents of a son in college.

THE HONORABLE TONI E. CLARKE



The Honorable Toni E. Clarke served as Associate Judge for the Prince George's County Circuit Court, 7th Judicial Circuit, February 6, 1998 to August 31, 2018. She retired on August 31, 2018. Her judicial service included: member, Public Awareness Committee (2001-15); Maryland Judicial Conference; Chair, Public Defender Regional Advisory Board No. 3 (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's & St. Mary's counties (2001-09); member, Court Access and Community Relations Committee; Judicial Council, 2017- (chair, language access subcommittee, 2017-present). Before joining the Court, Judge Clarke was Associate County Attorney, Prince George's County, 1987-89. She served as a member of the Special Joint Committee on Minorities in the Legal Profession (1987); member of the Redistricting Commission, Prince George's County (1991); and Government Operations Review Commission, Prince George's County (1992-93). State's Attorney, Prince George's County, 1994-95. She was also a member of the Governor's Task Force on Judicial Nominating Commissions, 1995; and State Administrative Board of Election Laws, 1995-98.

Her professional associations include: admitted to the Maryland Bar (1986), and the District of Columbia Bar (1993); Member, American Bar Association; National Bar Association; Maryland State Bar Association (co-chair, special committee on leadership academy, 2002-; member, special committee, on civics & law, 2011-); J. Franklyn Bourne Bar Association (president, 1992); Women's Bar Association of Maryland (president, 1994-95); Prince George's County Bar Association (president, 1998-99); Member, Marlborough Inns of Court, 1989-94; Board of Directors, Law Foundation of Prince George's County, 1990-93; People's Pro Bono Action Center; Member, Joint Bar Association Advisory Committee of the Southern Division of Maryland, 1994-; Member, Alan Goldstein Inns of Court, 1995-; Alumni board member, University of Maryland School of Law, 1995-; Board member, University of Maryland Foundation, Inc., 1996-98; Secretary, Judicial Division Executive Committee, National Conference of State Trial Judges, 2010-11.

Awards and recognitions include: Distinguished Woman Award from the Alliance of Black Women Attorneys of Maryland, 1997; Maryland's Top 100 Women, Daily Record, 1999, 2001; Howard County Women's Athletic Hall of Fame, 2000; Wilde Lake High School Hall of Fame,

2000; Maryland Leadership in Law Award, Daily Record, 2004; and Rita C. Davidson Award, Women's Bar Association of Maryland, 2009.

Judge Clarke was born in Washington, DC, January 24, 1958. She attended Wilde Lake High School in Columbia, Maryland. She is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University, B.S., 1979; and University of Maryland School of Law, J.D., 1986.

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' 300th 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.

PROFESSOR DEBORAH EPSTEIN



Professor Deborah Epstein has spent the past 30 year as Co-Director of the Georgetown University Law Center's Domestic Violence Clinic, representing hundreds of women in civil protection order cases and training hundreds of students to advocate for the rights of domestic violence survivors. She co-chaired the design and implementation of the D.C. Superior Court's Domestic Violence Division, which fundamentally restructured the way civil and criminal family abuse cases are handled. For the court's first five years, Epstein also co-directed the Court's Domestic Violence Intake Center, a one-stop office where survivors can obtain assistance and advocacy in their civil and criminal court cases as well as crisis intervention counseling and support. Epstein has served as the Chair of the D.C. Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board and as a member of the D.C. Mayor's Commission on Violence Against Women, the D.C. Superior Court Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, and the Board of Directors at both the D.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the House of Ruth shelter program. Her book, *LISTENING TO BATTERED WOMEN: A SURVIVOR-CENTERED APPROACH TO ADVOCACY*, offered an early critique of the current one-size-fits-all, over criminalized systemic response to intimate partner violence, and called for a more woman-centered, contextualized approach that recognizes the wide variety of needs and circumstances of differently-situated survivors. Epstein has lent her expertise as a member of the Commission on Violence for the National Football League Players' Association, from which she publicly stepped down in 2018, when the NFL failed to take meaningful action.

CONGRESSWOMAN MARCIA L. FUDGE



The Honorable Marcia L. Fudge represents the 11th Congressional District of Ohio. First elected to Congress in 2008, she is a committed public servant who brings a hard-working, problem-solving spirit to the task of creating jobs, protecting safety net programs, and improving access to quality public education, health care and healthy foods.

Congresswoman Fudge serves on the Committee on House Administration, House Committee on Agriculture and House Committee on Education and Labor. She is the Chair of the Committee on House Administration Subcommittee on Elections and Chair of the Committee on Agriculture Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight and Department Operations. She serves on the Subcommittees on Conservation and Forestry (Agriculture), Civil Rights and Human Services (Education & Labor) and Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions (Education & Labor).

In the 115th Congress, the Congresswoman served on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce Subcommittees on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education and on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions. She also served as Ranking Member on the House Committee on Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry and a member on the Subcommittee on Nutrition. She is a member of several Congressional Caucuses and past Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Congresswoman Fudge consistently fights for voter protection, equitable access to a quality education from preschool through post-secondary programs, child nutrition, food stamp (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) recipients, access to locally grown, healthy foods, fair labor practices, and civil and human rights, among other issues. Additionally, she remains a steadfast advocate to strengthen and preserve Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

Congresswoman Fudge has served the people of Ohio for more than three decades, beginning with the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office. She was later elected as the first African American and first female mayor of Warrensville Heights, Ohio, where she led the city in shoring up a sagging retail base and providing new residential construction.

Congresswoman Fudge earned her bachelor's degree in business from The Ohio State University, and law degree from the Cleveland State University Cleveland-Marshall School of Law. She is a Past National President of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and a member of its Greater Cleveland Alumnae Chapter.

Congresswoman Fudge's work ethic, problem solving approach, and ability to build collaborative relationships have earned her a reputation among her colleagues in Washington and at home as an insightful leader and knowledgeable legislator. As a dedicated public servant, she begins each morning with a firm promise "to do the people's work." It is this simple philosophy that defines Congresswoman Fudge as a Member of substance and character who always keeps her promise.

THE HONORABLE ANITA JOSEY-HERRING



The Honorable Anita Josey-Herring was selected Chief Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia by the District of Columbia Judicial Commission in August, 2020. She was appointed to the bench in November, 1997 by the President of the United States. As an Associate Judge, she has served in the Family, Civil and Criminal Divisions of the court. In 2000 Judge Josey-Herring was appointed by the Chief Judge to serve as the Deputy Presiding Judge of the Family Court and later served as the Presiding Judge of the Family Court from 2006 through 2008.

Judge Anita Josey-Herring is a 1987 graduate of Georgetown University Law Center. While attending Georgetown as an evening division student, she was a member of the Legal Ethics Law Journal and was employed full time in various legal support positions. Judge Josey-Herring obtained a judicial clerkship position with the Honorable Herbert B. Dixon, Jr. in Superior Court of the District of Columbia. As a judicial clerk, she worked on a variety of civil law issues including family law, contract disputes, and landlord and tenant issues. In 1988, Judge Josey-Herring joined the District of Columbia Public Defender Service as a staff attorney. While in the trial division, she handled a heavy caseload and litigated juvenile, misdemeanor and felony cases in the Superior Court and supervised staff attorneys. She also served in the Public Defender Service's appellate division arguing cases before the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. In 1994, while handling serious felonies and homicide cases, Judge Josey-Herring was appointed by the Board of Trustees of the Public Defender Service to the position of Deputy Director of the agency. As Deputy Director, Judge Josey-Herring assisted the Director in all aspects of management and administration, including budgetary decision-making and supervision of agency staff. She also directly supervised the Investigations Divisions, the Prisoner Rights Program, and the Criminal Justice Act Office that is responsible for coordinating the appointment of counsel in all criminal cases in the District of Columbia. In addition, she administered the agency's grant funded programs and coordinated the attorney and law clerk hiring programs. She also monitored the agency's personnel policies for compliance with personnel law and handled personnel matters along with the Director. In addition, she testified before the District of Columbia City Council on proposed criminal law legislation and other matters.

During her service in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, Judge Josey-Herring has led numerous initiatives to improve the quality of justice and service to litigants and attorneys alike. She led the highly regarded Family Treatment Court Initiative that provides drug treatment and social services to mothers charged with neglecting their children due to substance abuse. Additionally, Judge Josey-Herring presided over the Family Treatment Court calendar from its inception and collaborated with District agencies to deliver services to parents and children in the neglect system. She also presided over the Juvenile Drug Court prior to the establishment of the Family Treatment Court. Judge Josey-Herring played a significant role in the development and implementation of the D.C. Family Court and implemented numerous programs, in her role as Deputy Presiding and later Presiding Judge of Family Court, to improve the quality of justice provided to District families.

Judge Josey-Herring has also served on numerous committees, including the Superior Court of the District of Columbia Rules Committee, the Strategic Planning Council, the Criminal Justice Act Panels Committee, the Committee on Appointment of Magistrate Judges, the Superior Court of the District of Columbia Training Committee, the Court's Privacy and Access Committee, and was a participant on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia's Court-wide Performance Standards Committee. In 2007, Judge Josey-Herring was appointed by the Mayor of the District of Columbia as a Commissioner on the Selection and Tenure of Administrative Law Judges.

She is also a former board member of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and has participated in numerous extracurricular activities over the course of her legal career. She has received many awards in recognition of her service to citizens of the District and beyond.

THE HONORABLE CATHY HOLLENBERG SERRETTE



The Honorable Cathy Hollenberg Serrette is a Judge for the Circuit Court of Prince George's County, Maryland. She is a member of the Committee on Equal Justice, working to dismantle discriminatory behaviors in all aspects of the Judiciary's functions. She also serves on the Court of Appeals Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services, striving to secure legal services for all those without resources to protect their rights, to expunge criminal records, secure housing, protect children, and more. She is a Commissioner on Maryland's Access to Justice Commission, and vice-chair of the Judicial Conference Domestic Law Committee, where she co-chairs the Special Status Workgroup, focusing on protecting immigrant children in our courts.

In Prince George's County, Judge Serrette heads Model Court, fostering systemic improvements for abused and neglected children in the court system, and co-chairs the Bridge from Y.E.S. Committee, established to create a housing complex and wrap-around service center for youth aging out of the foster care system. Judge Serrette chaired the Task Force to Establish the Prince George's County Family Justice Center for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and elder abuse, and is the Prince George's County Chair of the Maryland Interfaith Domestic Violence Coalition.

As the Maryland chapter president of the National Association of Women Judges, Judge Serrette co-founded the annual re-entry conference at the MD Correctional Institution for Women to ensure returning citizens have needed resources and support. As president of the Prince George's County chapter of the Maryland Women's Bar Association, she initiated innovative programming at the Waxter Detention Center.

Throughout her career, Judge Serrette has been the recipient of numerous awards for her expertise, commitment to justice, and service to the community. She recently received Maryland Pro Bono Resource Center's 2020 Judicial Award. She also received the Maryland Legal Services Corporation's Arthur W. Machen, Jr. Award for extraordinary commitment to increasing access to justice and improving the civil legal services delivery system for low-

income Marylanders. Other accolades include the Prince George's County ACLU Advocate for Justice Award; Prince George's County Human Trafficking Task Force Leadership Award; Innovator of the Year award from the Daily Record; Innovative Partner Award from the Prince George's County Department of Family Services; the Maryland Women's Law Center's Rosalyn Bell Award; the National Association of Women Judges' Edna G. Parker Award; the Daily Record's Maryland's Top 100 Women; Maryland Legal Aid Bureau's Human Rights commendation; Sisters for Sisters' Love Cares Award; Maryland Pro Bono Resource Center Pro Bono Service Award; Women's Bar Association of Maryland's Pro Bono Award; the Prince George's County Bar Association's Distinguished Service Award; Daily Record's Leadership in Law Award; and Community Legal Service's outstanding leadership commendation. She was deeply honored to serve as an international electoral monitor for South Africa's first post-apartheid election after having served as chair of the South African Women's Day Committee, a coalition fighting apartheid.

Judge Serrette received a Bachelor's of Science degree, Phi Beta Kappa, *summa cum laude*, from the University of Pittsburgh, a J.D. from George Washington University, and an LL.M. in International Legal Studies from American University School of Law.

ATTORNEY STEPHANIE TROYER



Stephanie Troyer is a Supervising Attorney in the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia's Domestic Violence/Family Law Unit. She focuses on child custody, child support, parentage, and domestic violence litigation and policy. She worked with partner organizations to create, and now oversees, Legal Aid's staffing of the Child Support Resource Center (CSRC) at the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, a community office providing same day advice and representation for litigants in the Parentage and Support Branch, as well as the Family Law Assistance Network (FLAN), a court based office for limited scope representation in the Domestic Relations Branch. She also manages Legal Aid's Immigrants' Rights Legal Services Project, an interdisciplinary legal services program within Legal Aid, providing holistic legal services to D.C.'s immigrant community. She was co-chair of the D.C. Bar's Steering Committee for the Family Law Community, and is a member of the D.C. Bar's Judicial Evaluation Committee. She has worked on the D.C. Bar's Family Law Task Force and the Superior Court's Working Groups for Guardian ad Litem practice standards and Case Management Plan implementation.

Prior to joining Legal Aid in June 2007, Attorney Troyer was an Assistant Public Defender in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 2009, she left Legal Aid for a brief stint as federal legislative counsel to a national reproductive rights organization. She was also a fellow with the Georgetown Women's Law and Public Policy Fellowship Program.

She graduated with an A.B., magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, from Georgetown University, where she was awarded high honors as a Government major. She also received her J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center.