

MEET YOUR JUDGES: NAVARRO AND DU TWO FEMALE “FIRSTS”

BY NEVADA LAWYER STAFF

Two of Nevada’s newest U.S. District Court Judges are making history on the bench. Judge Gloria M. Navarro is the first Latin-American woman on Nevada’s district bench and Judge Miranda Du, a first-generation American, is the first Asian-American woman to hold the same position. Though Navarro has been on the bench since 2010 and Du is just getting started, both bring a mix of diversity and experience to the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada.

GLORIA M. NAVARRO

Las Vegas native Gloria M. Navarro received her nomination to the United States District Court, District of Nevada, from President Barack Obama on December 24, 2009. A unanimous Senate vote confirmed her appointment on May 5, 2010, and she took the bench on May 25 of the same year, becoming the first Latin-American woman to serve as U.S. District Court Judge for the District of Nevada.

Navarro was born and raised by her Cuban immigrant parents in Las Vegas. She attended the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, earning her bachelor’s degree in 1989. In 1992, she received her law degree from Arizona State University.

Navarro began her legal career working as an extern for Judge Philip Pro during her second year of law school. That summer, she clerked for the Office of the Federal Public Defender and returned there after graduation as their first Research and Writing Specialist. She worked as an associate attorney at a Las Vegas law firm, Kelly & Sullivan, for several years before going into private practice in 1996. Navarro’s firm represented criminal clients in both state and federal court, and handled family law cases. Navarro’s pro bono representation of a non-English-speaking domestic violence victim earned her the



State Bar of Nevada, Access to Justice Louis Weiner Pro Bono Service Award. While she was still in private practice, the Federal District Court appointed Navarro to provide indigent defense services as a Criminal Justice Act Panel Attorney.

Navarro served as a Clark County Deputy Special Public Defender from 2001-2005. During that time, she represented indigent murder suspects facing the death penalty. Her work was soon recognized again by the State Bar of Nevada's Access to Justice Commission; in 2002 the organization named Navarro Pro Bono Public Lawyer of the year. In 2005, Navarro accepted the position of Chief Deputy District Attorney for Clark County, in the civil division. Navarro was tasked with the defense of both Clark County and the Board of County Commissioners from civil lawsuits. She held this position until 2010.

It was while serving in this capacity that Navarro caught the eye of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. Reid recommended Navarro to Obama as a candidate for district court. In a press statement released on the occasion of Navarro's confirmation, Reid spoke of his respect for Navarro. "[She]... has proven throughout her personal and professional life that she embodies the values our country cherishes: hard work, discipline and respect for the rule of law," he wrote. "I have been impressed time and again by this Nevadan's professional record and her commitment to public service in all areas of her life."

The public service of which the senator spoke is in clear evidence when reviewing Navarro's accomplishments and contributions on and off the bench. The organizations, programs and charities to which she has donated extensive time and energy include: the Las Vegas Junior Achievement Program, the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce Leadership Program, the Youth Advocacy Program, Yes, Inc., Summer Business Institute and Trial By Peers. Navarro is a past president of the Latino Bar Association of Southern Nevada and, through that organization, helped establish an award-winning mentorship program called Huellas ("footprints" in Spanish).

Navarro's dedication to the legal profession is not bound by borders. She recently shared her expertise with prosecutors and investigators in Mexico. This work stemmed from her participation in a program designed by the Nevada Attorney General's Office to help Mexico make major reforms to its legal system. She has also been the keynote speaker at various events such as the 2010 Hispanic Baccalaureate Ceremony held in the Thomas and Mack Center for graduating high school students; the Grand Marshal of the Hispanic Day Parade in Henderson, Nevada; and a judge for the finalist of the Moot Court at the Hispanic National Bar Association.

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JUDGE MIRANDA DU

In March, the Honorable Miranda Du became the first Asian-American judge to be appointed to the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada. For Du's parents, the appointment affirmed their decision to leave Vietnam when Du was a young girl to pursue the American dream.

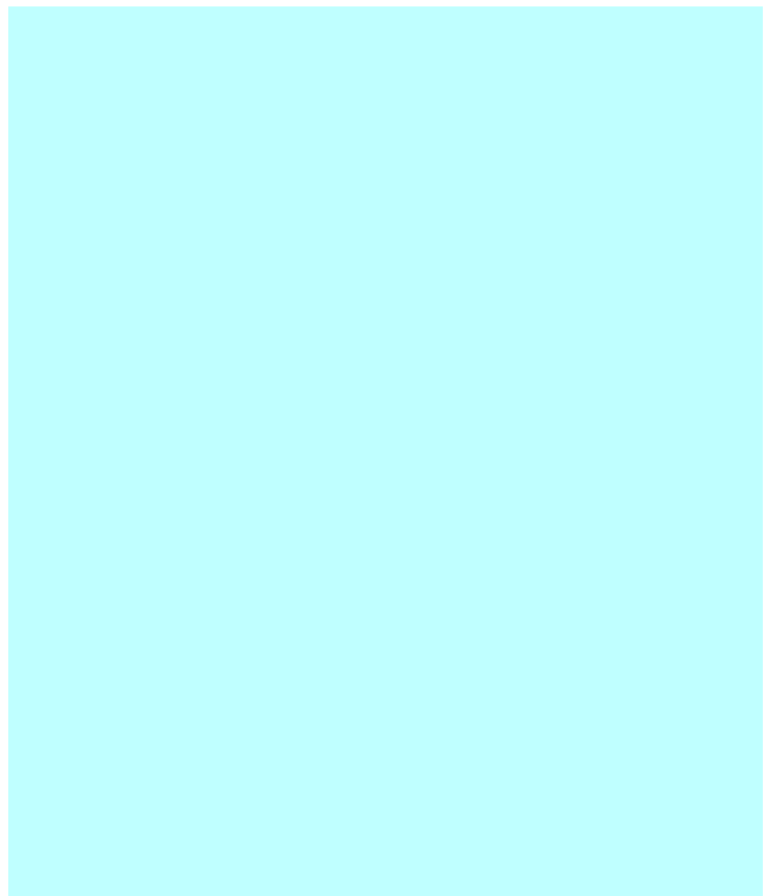
When Du was just 8 years old, her parents decided to leave Vietnam, which had recently been taken over by the Communist North Vietnamese. The family fled by boat and lived in Malaysia as refugees. When Du was 10 years old, her family immigrated to the United States and settled in Alabama. When she enrolled in her first American school and entered the third grade she did not speak English, but according to Nevada Senator Harry Reid, she quickly learned the language.

Senator Reid recommended Du to fill the vacancy left by Judge Roger Hunt. Reid said he was impressed by Du's litigation experience and her devotion to Nevada. President Barack Obama recommended Du to the Senate, which confirmed the president's nomination via a vote in late March.

It has been only five months since Du joined the bench, but in this short amount of time she says she's worked harder than she's ever worked before to understand her cases and her new job. Du said the camaraderie among the other judges in the district and their helpful natures made her transition an easy one.

"I really enjoy [being a U.S. District Court judge]; I love the work, love the diversity of the cases. I am enjoying learning about criminal cases," Du said. She welcomes the challenge of transitioning from handling civil cases at her former firm, McDonald Carano Wilson, to dealing with criminal cases. Du said she is surprised by the number of times criminal attorneys appear before the court. She also finds one other aspect of criminal law, the sentencing of a newly convicted criminal, more time consuming than she had imagined it would be; making such an important decision takes a great amount of deliberation.

Prior to her nomination for the U.S. District Court, Du worked as a partner at McDonald Carano Wilson's Reno office. She headed the firm's employment law group. Du earned her undergraduate degree in history and economics from the University



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of California, Davis and attended the University of California, Berkley’s law school. Du came to Nevada just after law school and was admitted to the Nevada bar in 1994.

Becoming one of a very small group of District Court judges for the District of Nevada came as a surprise to Du, who had not envisioned a career as a judge. It is not her first career surprise, however; Du said while she was at law school she never imagined herself going into private practice either, but once she began working for McDonald Carano Wilson, she found the environment to be extremely nurturing and enjoyable. Until her nomination, she hadn’t envisioned leaving the firm.

“I never thought this would be possible for me,” Du said. “I was extremely honored.”

In the coming years, Du says she intends to become efficient and concise on the bench. She hopes she can quickly and effectively find just resolution for those appearing before her. She says she doesn’t want to forget what it is like for the litigants and wants to make sure the rules in place are clear to all parties so there are no surprises.

She hopes those litigants will keep the limitations of her job in mind as well. “I thoroughly enjoy the work,” she explained. “And, understanding the challenges with caseloads, I ask for patience.” ■



- What:** Annual CLE program of the IP Section of the Nevada State Bar
- Where:** University of Nevada, Las Vegas – Stan Fulton Bldg
- When:** Friday, November 2, 2012, 9 AM to 5 PM
- Why:** Heaps of learning, good fun, and camaraderie
- How:** register online at www.nvbar.org/cle
discount for registration by September 20, 2012
- Party:** informal reception Thursday evening, November 1, 2012

CLE Program

- 9:00 - 10:00 am Trademark Year in Review – *Prof. Mary LaFrance, Boyd Law School*
Copyright Year in Review – *Prof. Marketa Trimble, Boyd Law School*
- 10:10 - 11:10 am Intellectual Property Strategy War Stories by the Socratic Method
Mikio Ishimaru (Ishimaru & Associates, San Jose)
- 11:20 am - 12:30 pm Lunch Speaker – *Judge Philip M. Pro, U. S. District Judge, District of Nevada*
- 12:40 - 1:40 pm Track A – Trademark Filing Tips, *Paul Gast, USPTO (ret.)*
Track B – Patentable Subject Matter under Section 101
Jason Smalley, IP Counsel, IGT (Las Vegas)
- 1:50 - 2:50 pm Track A – Copyright Cases of the Year
Kate Spelman, Cobalt Law (Berkeley)
Track B – Top 10 Patent Cases of the Year
Robert C. Ryan, Holland & Hart (Reno)
- 3:00 - 5:00 pm Ethics – *Sean Carter (Humorist at Law)*

