

A portrait of Judge Tara Clark Newberry, a woman with short brown hair and blue eyes, smiling. She is wearing a black judicial robe. In the background, an American flag and a blue flag are visible.

## NEVADA TRAILBLAZERS

# Meet Tara Clark Newberry:

## Local Judge has Broken Barriers Throughout Distinguished Career

BY MARY BACON, ESQ. AND RYAN GORMLEY, ESQ.

**Tara Clark Newberry is no stranger to breaking barriers. In 2020, she became the first openly LGBTQ judge elected to Clark County's district court. This feat was just one of many groundbreaking roles in Judge Clark Newberry's life.**

Clark Newberry was born in rural northern Louisiana, near Shreveport. At 9 months old, her family moved to Atlanta, then to Ohio, and eventually to Texas.

Born into a family of creative entrepreneurs and small business owners, Clark Newberry understood the value of a day's work from an early age. When in Ohio, Clark Newberry helped with her mother's embroidery business throughout her pre-teen and teen years. When she visited her maternal grandparents in northern Louisiana during the summer months, between fishing and water-skiing trips on the surrounding bayou lakes (despite the lurking threat of nearby alligators and snakes), Clark Newberry was responsible for "rolling" (collecting) the freshly fallen pecans from her grandparents' pecan trees. And during her frequent visits to a family member's ranch in Oklahoma, she was riding a horse to wrangle cattle as early as 10 years old.

It is no surprise that in high school, Clark Newberry's work ethic translated into academic and athletic success. She initially tested into and attended a prestigious magnet school in Cincinnati before moving to Texas for the last couple years of high school. She maintained straight As and was involved in several student organizations, including Students Against Drunk Driving, after the tragic death of both her family friend and classmate due to drunk driving.

As for sports, she lettered in basketball, soccer, track, cross country, and softball. Soccer was her specialty, where she played goalkeeper. Her goal, to obtain an athletic scholarship to college, was within her grasp when she received an offer to play soccer at the University of Michigan. But, after breaking her back in a car accident her senior year, the pain was too great to continue playing and brought a premature end to her athletic career.

With her hope of collegiate athletics dashed, Clark Newberry returned to Ohio to attend University of Cincinnati. There, she initially majored in history and secondary education with plans of becoming a teacher. But, after experiencing teaching during a practicum internship, she looked for a different career path.

A meeting with a guidance counselor put criminal justice on her radar. Two internships later, the first with a private

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investigator where she helped locate teenagers who had been sold into prostitution, and the second with the Cincinnati Police Department, Clark Newberry realized she wanted a career in law enforcement.

Prior to her senior year at the University of Cincinnati, Clark Newberry applied for the Cincinnati Police Department. More than 4,000 people sat for the initial test that year, but, in the end, Clark Newberry was one of only 49 who were appointed to the police academy, and one of 48 who graduated and were promoted to police officer.

During the academy, Clark Newberry thought she ruined her chances of graduating, when, at a diversity training seminar, a fellow trainee asked her: “How do you know so much about gay people?” to which, Clark Newberry said she was a lesbian. At the time, Cincinnati had a law that allowed for the firing of LGBTQ people based on their sexual orientation. Yet, when she was called into her sergeant’s office the next day, where she thought she was going to be fired, he told her that discrimination would not be tolerated on his watch.

Clark Newberry would go on to become the first openly LGBTQ police officer in Cincinnati. She worked for the Cincinnati Police Department for eight years, serving as a patrol officer in the most dangerous district in Cincinnati and as an undercover detective in the Vice Unit (prostitution and drugs), leading the department’s grant unit as part of its research and development efforts, and as a neighborhood officer/mountain bike patrol. During her career, she also served in a secondary function assisting the SWAT team as an aerial observer/navigator in a helicopter.

Clark Newberry loved her time as a police officer. But with her physical health impeding her job performance and Ohio laws impeding her ability to start a family, she considered a career and location change. A friend, who was a former-prosecutor-turned-judge, recommended law school.

Clark Newberry decided to move to California and attend California Western School of Law. Following her graduation from law school, she was recruited to Las Vegas by a civil defense firm, where she worked for a few years before moving firms, and eventually starting her own firm, specializing in consumer law, real estate, and general civil litigation.

A couple of years ago, with several vacancies on the Eighth Judicial District Court, Clark Newberry considered running for judge. She had always dreamt of becoming a judge, and after receiving encouragement from her colleagues and completing the Emerge Judicial Bootcamp, a program that inspires women to run for office and helps hone their skills to win, she threw her name into the ring for Department 21.

“I am a public servant at heart, it has been a true privilege to serve the community of Clark County, and I hope to serve for many years to come,” Clark Newberry said. “I thoroughly enjoy my current assignment and am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the Eighth Judicial District Court.”

Since winning the election, Judge Clark Newberry maintains a mixed civil and criminal docket and is active in the Commission to Study Best Practices for Virtual Advocacy for the court.

“Tara Clark Newberry is a tremendous asset to the Eighth Judicial District Court in both civil and criminal,” said the Honorable Tierra Jones, who served as a mentor to Clark Newberry upon her election. “Her work ethic is like no other, and coupled with her experience, she definitely enhances the court. It is a pleasure working with her.”

In her personal life, Judge Clark Newberry and her wife, Aimee, have five children together. Along with her judicial obligations, Clark Newberry is a soccer mom, volunteers at her children’s school, and is the resilient parent to a daughter who has been courageously battling cancer.



Judge Christy Craig, Judge Tara Clark Newberry, Judge Bitia Yeager, and Judge Margaret Pickard attend Clark Newberry’s investiture ceremony.



Tara Clark Newberry once worked at the Cincinnati Police Department. She was a District Four Neighborhood Officer along with Officer Alex Hasse.



Judge Tara Clark Newberry and her youngest child practice soccer.



Judge Tara Clark Newberry is sworn in at her investiture ceremony by Judge Tierra Jones, as Clark Newberry’s eldest child watches.