

LIBERTY CITY LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER DEMOCRATIC CLUB

2009 JUDICIAL PRIMARY ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name Judge Angeles Roca Office Sought Judge, Court of Common Pleas Date 3/17/09

- 1) What is your experience with the LGBT community both generally and/or professionally?
As an attorney I represented members of the LGBT community. For me, sexual preferences and/or the color of a persons skin does not make a difference. We as human being are all equal and I believe we should be treated as such.

As a Judge I treat everyone that comes before me in the Court with respect. I have had the opportunity to hear cases that involve members of the LGBT community and I feel that I treat everyone fairly without biases or prejudices.

In my professional life I employ a member of the LGBT community.

In my personal life I embrace the differences between races, cultures and sexual preferences.

- 2) How have you advanced, through professional and personal achievements, the rights of the LGBT community, racial and ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities?

First, as a Latina and a female, I am a member of an ethnic and gender minority. I have advanced the rights of the LGBT community, racial and ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities by treating everyone fairly and equally. As an attorney, I represented all people including but not limited to members of all groups, races and gender to the best of my ability. I do not judge but rather seek justice and fairness. On the bench, I treat everyone with dignity and respect and give everyone that appears before me the opportunity to be heard.

- 3) Do you support the rights of LGBT people to the following:
- a. Marriage? Yes
 - b. Civil Unions? Yes
 - c. Domestic Partnership? Yes
 - d. Second-parent adoption? Yes
 - e. Protection from workplace discrimination? Yes
 - f. Protection from housing discrimination? Yes
 - g. Protection from acts of violence based on their sexual orientation or gender identity?
Yes

- 4) Do you consider transgender rights a civil rights issue? Explain your answer.

Yes, I consider transgender rights a civil rights issue because the same would work for transgender Equality. Transgender people are and have always been an integral part of our community and the struggle to establish civil rights protections for transgender people cannot be separated from the struggle to win freedom and equality for members of the LGBT community. Transgender civil rights would prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and expression which would ensure that the range of transgender and gender non-conforming people are protected.

5) How should a judge support public accommodations for transgender individuals appearing before them or otherwise within the criminal justice system?

By promoting and encouraging any legislation that would protect transgender persons against discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations.

6) LGBT youth sometimes act out because of harassment at school or in the home due to their gender/sex identity. When ADAs prosecute cases against these members of our community, what will you do to prepare your staff to be sensitive to their issues? Additionally, LGBT youth who spend time in juvenile detention facilities face many dangers. What alternative sentences might you seek in their cases?

First I will say that my staff has to be sensitive to these issues otherwise I would not have hired them. However, I do believe that much work is needed in our justice system to deal with the sensitive issues of not only LGBT youth but all youth within a particular class or race. Unfortunately, at the current time there are not enough resources or facilities to address alternative sentences. We must examine each case on a case by case basis to determine the appropriate sentence. Depending on the severity or non-severity of the crime, community service, probation or house arrest could be an option.

Moreover, understanding the issues of the LGBT youth is crucial to determine the appropriate sentence. We must advocate for more placement options so that youth can be placed in appropriate environments. Judges should encourage changes by requiring facilities to ensure the safety of an LGBT youth. When there is any chance or question about the safety of a LGBT youth in a facility, the Judge should ask the youth and/or their parents if they want to be placed in protective custody.

Also, we must start by developing a system of education and outreach so as to prevent the youth from becoming delinquents. We must implement more training for attorneys, counselors, judges, staff, and anyone working with the LGBT youths so as to be sensitive and understand the issues facing LGBT youth.

7) What has been the general nature of your practice and particular areas of concentration? Please describe any changes throughout the years?

My practice focused on family law, domestic relations issues. I also practiced civil litigation (personal injury), small claims, and landlord tenant issues. Before October, 2008, my practice had not changed throughout the years other than the increase in volume where I appear in Court almost on a daily basis. In October, 2008 I was appointed Judge in the Court of Common Pleas by Gov. Rendell. Today, I am a Judge sitting in the Domestic Relations Division (Family Court) where I hear matter involving custody, support, Protection for Abuse, divorce and any other matter that has to do with Family Court.

8) Describe a few of the most significant cases you have litigated. Please give a summary of the substance of the cases, the citations if available, and why you believe they were significant.

As I replied in 2007, my practice primarily concentrated on Domestic Relations matters for low income individuals and for that reason I did not have highly contested matters that were subject to appeal. Financially my client base could not afford the litigation process particularly, the cost of the appeal process. I did however have the opportunity to litigate and challenge an Acknowledgment of Paternity in the matter of Kirchner v. Evans, which was heard in the Court of Common Pleas, Philadelphia County, Docket Number 0C0502282. In that case, I along with James Rocco, Esquire, succeeded in vacating/rescinding an Acknowledgement of Paternity

that was executed upon the birth of the child. The parties agreed that Mr. Evans, would executed the Acknowledgement of Paternity even though they know that a possibly existed that Mr. Evans, was not the biological father of the child. The Court ordered that the Acknowledgment of Paternity executed by Evans and Mother be rescinded due to fraud. On appeal the Superior Court reversed the trial court's ruling however, we filed a Motion for a Hearing before an En Banc panel in Superior Court. The Motion was granted and upon hearing the argument, the matter was affirmed and the Court found that an Acknowledgment of Paternity can be challenged when it was executed fraudulently.

9) State briefly why you are seeking the Democratic nomination to be a judge in Philadelphia, and what qualities you believe you possess that would serve you especially well if you were elected to the Court.

I am seeking the Democratic nomination to be a judge in Philadelphia because I feel I am an asset to the City of Philadelphia. As a family law attorney I tried to mediate and make agreements for custody, support, and divorce matters so that everyone will feel like they are part of the process. As a Judge in Family Court I continue to work in that same fashion. I treat everyone equally with respect and dignity. I come from very humble beginnings and as such I learned early in life that you must work hard to achieve success. In my years as a member of the bar, I always strived to be honest and hardworking and I carried those traits to the bench. I believe I am fair and impartial and competent and apply the law as indicated.

10) What are the most pressing needs of reform in our judicial system in your opinion?

1. Mandatory sentencing. I believe that one must look at each case separately and weight all the circumstances in the matter including social status, race, rehabilitation possibilities and age, among other factors, to determine the sentence for any given crime so as to provide each person with the opportunity to become a responsible member of this society.
2. Education, particularly among our youth so as to prevent repeat offenders.
3. Judicial accountability. Judge must be on time and move the case loads in a timely matter. This would result in less of a waste of our judicial economy thus providing more resources for other issues such as job training programs and child care in the judicial system.

11) For what organizations have you done pro-bono work?

The Police Barrio Relations Project.
CEIBA
Philadelphia Democratic City Committee
APM

Also, as an attorney I serviced the needs of our community on a daily basis. The doors of my law practice were always open to the community. I provided numerous services such as helping senior citizens with their rent rebate and utility refund applications. I made telephone calls and wrote letters to help solve minor problems for the many community members that frequent my offices without charge. I read letters and/or legal documents and explain them in Spanish to the non-english speaking client. I made Wills and Living Wills often times free of charge to the SSI or welfare recipient.

12) Do you support a woman's right to choose? Yes, Yes, Yes!

13) Have you ever been sanctioned for any alleged breach of ethics or professional conduct by any court, administrative agency, bar association, disciplinary committee, judicial conduct committee, or other professional group? No. If so, please explain the nature of the sanction.

14) Have you been recommended by the Philadelphia Bar Association? Yes

Please return by Friday April 3rd via e-mail to matt@libertycity.org

Or via mail to:

Liberty City Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club

C/o Matthew Woodcock

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