



BROWARD COUNTY HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION

JUDICIAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **Full Name:** Alfreda D. Coward, Esq.
2. **Current County of residence:** Broward
3. **Date and place of birth:** Born in Dade City, Florida on December 15, 1970.
4. **Does your campaign have a website or Facebook page? If so, please list it.**

www.AlfredaCoward.com FB: Alfreda Coward for County Court Judge Group 14
5. **List the colleges and law schools you have attended, including your dates of attendance and degrees awarded.**

University of Florida, Juris Doctor, 1992-1995

University of Florida, B.S., 1988-1992
6. **Have you ever served in the military?** No.
7. **List where you have been employed since graduation from law school, including dates employed, your position and the nature of your employment responsibilities.**

Coward & Coward, P.A., Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Partner, May 2004 – Present

Represent clients in the areas of criminal law, family law and general civil litigation, including governmental law. Conduct all aspects of trial preparation including witness interviews, legal research, pre-trial motions, depositions, conferences and hearings. Conduct non-jury and jury trials.

One Voice Children's Law Center, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Founder, July 2004 - Present



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Provide pro bono representation to indigent cross-over children who have pending cases in the dependency, delinquency and/or educational systems. Conduct all aspects of trial preparation. Supervise volunteer lawyers.

FIU College of Law, Miami, FL

Adjunct Professor, July 2007 – June 2008

Supervised students in the Educational Advocacy Clinic. Taught the seminar portion of the program. Supervised and provided direct client representation in suspension/expulsion and special education matters. Conducted community outreach activities. Collaborated with community agencies and other legal providers.

Office of the Public Defender, 17th Judicial Circuit, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Assistant Public Defender, Felony/Career Criminal Division, May 2000 - May 2004

Represented clients that had been classified as habitual felony offenders. Co-counseled capital murder cases. Conducted over a hundred jury trials including two televised trials on Court TV and NBC Dateline. Argued and presented case law in support of various motions; deposed witnesses; and performed all other aspects of trial preparation. Attended training workshops ranging from basic trial techniques to defending capital murder cases.

Office of the Public Defender, 8th Judicial Circuit, Gainesville, FL

Assistant Public Defender, Felony Division, July 1996 - May 2000

Represented hundreds of indigent clients in criminal cases. Conducted all aspects of trial preparation.

8. **Have you ever been arrested? Explain.** No
9. **Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Explain.** No
10. **What is the general nature of your practice? Indicate areas of practice in which you concentrate or concentrated?**

Criminal Law, Family Law, Municipal Representation, General Litigation
11. **If you are currently a judge, what type of cases do you typically preside over in your court?**
N/A
12. **If you are currently a judge, have any of your decisions ever been appealed and overturned? How many times in the last two (2) years? When and what case?** N/A
13. **What percentage of your litigation or trial experience was related to:**
 - a. **Civil?** 30%



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b. Criminal? 70%

14. How many cases have you tried to verdict? Approx 200 jury trials

15. Describe three of the most significant litigated matters, which you personally handled and give the citations thereto, if the cases were reported.

State v. Davion Parson, 08-CF-3893, Polk County, Triple Homicide Trial

Broward County School Board vs. S.Burgos, Educational Matter

Derrick Hansberry, 05-2288-CFAES Pasco County, Attempted First Degree Murder

16. Why do you want to be a judge (circuit or county)?

Many candidates say that they have always wanted to be a judge, that they had a parent, neighbor or family friend that was a judge and inspired them to become one. However, that is not my story. My only career aspiration was to make a difference in the lives of others. Thus, I had already met my career goal when I became a member of the Bar and represented my first client almost 21 years ago.

However, that changed in April 2016 when I was advised that Judge Mary Rudd Robinson would likely retire this year and she would no longer seek re-election. In response, I received numerous communications encouraging me to run. Initially, I was reluctant to do so because I genuinely enjoy being an advocate and serving as the voice for others who otherwise may not have one. But after much prayer, deliberation and consultation, I decided to seek election. It was an easy decision once I realized that as a lawyer, I have the power to make a difference in the life of that one client at a given moment in time. However, as a judge in county court, I would have the power to make a difference in the lives of over 100 individuals or families on a single day. Thus, becoming a judge is just another opportunity for me to serve the public. Upon that realization, I have been pursuing election with a passion and a continued commitment to service ever since.

17. What qualities do you believe are most important in a judge? Explain how you have demonstrated that you possess those qualities.

The most important qualities of a judge are proper judicial temperament, a record of community service and involvement, and an ability to relate to the litigants and an ability to lead by example. Please see responses to questions 7, 18, 19, 27, 31, 32, 34 and 38 to see how I have demonstrated those qualities.

18. Why do you believe that you are the best candidate for the seat you are running for?

I believe that my legal experiences, leadership skills and my genuine commitment to service have best prepared me to be a county court judge. As it relates to my legal experiences, I have



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been practicing law for approximately 21 years with a significant diversity in practice areas. I have practiced in state court as well as federal court; handled criminal cases and civil cases; tried misdemeanors and felonies; assisted families and governmental entities; and also represented plaintiffs and defendants. So regardless of what division I would be assigned to, I will be uniquely prepared on the first day. Additionally, I have tried over two hundred cases and would bring my vast knowledge of trials to the bench.

As it relates to leadership skills, I am a member of numerous organizations and oftentimes serve in leadership positions. Currently, I serve as the Chapter President of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. I also serve as the First Vice-Chair of the Early Learning Coalition of Broward. Previously, I served as the President of the T.J. Reddick Bar Association and on the Broward County Operating Board of the American Cancer Society.

Last, but certainly not least, my family upbringing and resulting commitment to public service has probably prepared me the most to serve the community as a county court judge. I have dedicated my personal and professional life to serving others. Professionally, I co-founded a non-profit organization that represents children on a pro bono basis in the areas of dependency, delinquency and educational matters. I am also trained as a foster parent and ultimately became a relative caregiver for a teenage girl. As a result, now proudly serve as the mother of eight year old Malachi since the young age of 3 weeks old.

19. Describe your civic activities and community involvement for the past five (5) years, listing what years you participated in each activity or were involved?

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

American Bar Association:
Section of Litigation: Council
General Practice, Solo & Small Firm Division: Council
Young Lawyers Division: Former Council Member
T.J. Reddick Bar Association, Past President
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., President
Early Learning Coalition of Broward County, Inc., First Vice-Chair
City of Lauderhill Retirement System, Board of Trustees
American Cancer Society, Operating Board, Former Event Chair
Broward County Ethics Commission, Former Commissioner

TASK FORCES AND COMMITTEES

The Florida Bar Juvenile Rules Committee, 2005-present
School-to-Jail Pipeline – Statewide Initiative, 2008-present
Florida Advisory Board Youth Empowerment Project, 2008-present
ABA Young Lawyers Division Children and the Law Committee, 2001-2007
ABA Young Lawyers Division Minorities in the Profession Committee, 2001-2007



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ABA Section of Litigation Children's Rights Litigation Committee, 2001-present

ABA Section of Litigation Woman Advocate Committee, 2001-present

ABA Section of Litigation Minority Trial Lawyer Committee, 2001-present

ABA Section of Litigation Diversity Task Force, 2001-2005

ABA Death Penalty Representation Project Steering Committee, 2005-2007

NAACP: Legal Redress Committee, 1996-present

20. Please list noteworthy professional or personal accomplishments.

City of Lauderdale Women of Distinction Award, March 2016

T.J. Reddick Bar, Exceptional Service to the Profession Award, June 2015

25 Most Influential and Prominent Black Women in Business for 2014

American Bar Association Child Advocate of the Year 2010

National Bar Association Nation's Best Advocates Under 40 2010

21. Please list the federal and state courts where you are admitted to practice.

U.S. District Court for the Southern, Middle and Northern Districts of Florida
2001-2003

The Florida Bar, Admitted November 1995

22. How many times did you take the Florida Bar Exam? One

23. Have you ever failed Bar exams in any state? If so, when and where? No.

24. Have you ever been investigated by a State Bar grievance committee or by the State Commission on Judicial Conduct? No.

25. Have you ever been disciplined or reprimanded for your conduct as a lawyer or judge? If the answer is yes, please explain? No

26. Have you or your law firm ever been sued by a client? If so, please explain. No

27. Please discuss your view/opinion of proper judicial temperament.

According to the American Bar Association, judicial temperament means compassion, decisiveness, open-mindedness, sensitivity, courtesy, patience, freedom from bias and a commitment to equal justice. I share in those ABA sentiments one hundred percent. However, I would emphasize that the appropriate judicial temperament includes the ability to treat



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everyone in the courtroom equally and with mutual respect. Simply stated, it goes back to the old adage, “treat others like you want to be treated.”

28. If you are seeking election or re-election to a criminal court, discuss your view of plea bargains and when they should and should not be accepted.

I have practiced criminal law for most of my legal career and thus have quite a bit of experience relating to plea bargains. Generally speaking, I believe that plea bargains should be examined and considered on a case-by-case basis while giving great deference to the parties who are most familiar with the facts and law relating to the case.

29. Tell us about any plans you have to improve the administration of the court or make it more efficient.

I think we can make significant progress in improving the efficiency of the court process. For the purpose of this inquiry, I will focus on things that I could do as a judge to improve the process. Some examples include resolving as many issues in chambers as possible, especially where a hearing is not being sought by the litigants. Instead of having 50 cases on the docket seeking a continuance, I would encourage attorneys to file written motions that can be ruled on in advance of the hearing. I would also generate form documents or checklist that the attorneys could complete prior to the judge taking the bench that has the effect of expediting standard calendar calls and other routine hearings. Taking the above steps would allow the pro se litigants to return to work instead of taking off an entire day from work. It would also assist attorneys in scheduling matters.

30. Have you ever taught any law school courses or any continuing legal education courses? If so, describe the extent and nature of those teaching experiences.

FIU College of Law, Miami, FL

Adjunct Professor, July 2007 – June 2008

Supervised students in the Educational Advocacy Clinic. Taught the seminar portion of the program. Supervised and provided direct client representation in suspension/expulsion and special education matters. Conducted community outreach activities. Collaborated with community agencies and other legal providers.

31. List any significant pro bono work completed since graduating from law school.

I have provided pro bono legal work in numerous areas over the years. I have represented children in dependency, delinquency and educational matters. I have represented senior citizens in estate planning matters. I have provided pro bono representation to families in landlord/tenant matters. I have also volunteered at legal clinics providing free legal advice.



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Please see resume attached for additional information.

32. List any leadership positions, or participation in any committees in voluntary bar associations and/or professional societies, which you believe to be of particular significance (e.g. judicial selection committees, disciplinary committees, grievance committees, etc.).

T.J. Reddick Bar Association – Past President
American Bar Association
Section of Litigation-Council Member
General Practice Solo Small Firm –Council Member

Please see resume for other professional affiliations.

33. List all organizations and associations, or professional societies, other than bar associations, of which you are or have been a member, including civic, charitable, religious, educational, social, and fraternal organizations.

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Chapter President
Early Learning Coalition of Broward County, Inc., First Vice-Chair
City of Lauderdale Retirement System, Board of Trustees
American Cancer Society, Operating Board, Former Event Chair
Broward County Ethics Commission, Former Commissioner

34. What is your judicial philosophy?

My judicial philosophy simply stated is to follow the law. I will review and research the issues in advance to make sure that I am sufficiently prepared to make an informed decision. I will create an environment of equal treatment and mutual respect in the courtroom. I will hear all cases with compassion, courtesy and courage in an effort to maintain or restore confidence in the judiciary.

35. Describe what contributions you have made to the Hispanic community in the past five (5) years.

I have collaborated with members of the Hispanic Bar and Founders of the Hispanic Vote in a united effort to obtain greater diversity on the bench. I have dedicated the majority of my legal career challenging inequality and injustices no matter where it manifested itself.

36. Are you a Member of the Broward County Hispanic Bar Association? No.



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37. As a prospective judge, or as a current Judge, what do you consider your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

My greatest strengths are that I am an experienced jurist/litigator, a proven leader with a genuine commitment to public service. I have an unyielding devotion to equal rights and access for all people. I have the compassion and the respect for the dignity of all people. Additionally, I have the ability to demonstrate good judgment and make impartial unbiased decisions. I would also bring ethnic and gender diversity to the bench which is much needed in Broward County.

As it relates to weaknesses, I would say that my greatest weakness is my belief that I can do all things. That belief urges me to take on many causes in an effort to make a difference in the lives of others, oftentimes to my own detriment. However, this weakness is also a blessing because it gives me great intrinsic reward to help others live happier lives.

38. Why are you the best candidate for the position you are seeking?

I am the Right Candidate at the Right Time! What makes me the right candidate is the fact that (1) I am an experienced litigator with approximately 21 years of legal experience; (2) I am a proven leader and (3) I have a genuine commitment to public service!

ON BEHALF OF THE BROWARD COUNTY HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION, THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION!