



## AN INDEPENDENT REPORT ON CORRUPTION AND WASTE IN THE NEW YORK COURT SYSTEM IN 2023

*"The family courts are operating a kidnapping and extortion racket."* – [Dr Stephen Baskerville](#)

*"Our state court system in New York is absolutely insane. It has enabled political people to control the courts, and they don't want to give it up — so it's very hard to get legitimate change that would be beneficial to the public."* – [The Hon. David Saxe, NY Appellate Division Justice \(retired\)](#)

*"There is no system ever devised by mankind that is guaranteed to rip husband and wife or father, mother and child apart so bitterly than our present Family Court System."* -- NY Supreme Court Judge Brian Lindsay

*"[The American family court] is a system that is corrupt on his best day. It is like being tied to the back of a pickup truck and dragged down a gravel [road] late at night. No one can hear your cries and complaints and it is not over until they say it's over."* – Alec Baldwin, actor and producer

*"Family Court in NY is a dumping ground for morons and political hacks* – Judge Judy (once a NY judge herself)

After a thorough survey of litigants, attorneys and judges in New York State's family and supreme courts, and with the cooperation of numerous organizations and individuals, the Families Civil Liberties Union presents this wide-reaching report into the court system of New York. It reveals corruption, cronyism, racketeering, waste and abuse that require urgent public attention.

The purpose of this report is to alert parents and the general public of the severe perils inside the court system. It also provides options for spending cuts, which have become essential now that there is a massive shortfall in the NY State budget: firing the corrupt judges listed below will provide millions of dollars in savings.

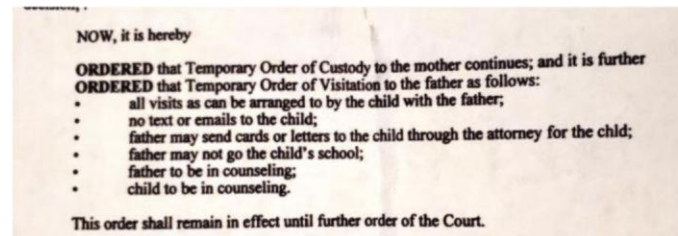
The report begins with a survey of the judges who have most egregiously failed to perform their constitutional and statutory duties over the last few years. The report then documents the agencies which have facilitated, and benefited from widespread judicial misconduct. In the interests of our children and families – and of the citizenry that pays their lofty salaries – they all need to be investigated, audited, and removed from the public payroll.

### FAMILY & SUPREME COURT JUDGES

1. **Esther Morgenstern** (Kings County, Integrated Domestic Violence Court): New York City's most poisonous jurist, Morgenstern weaponizes children to pursue her own goals. A zealous advocate for maximizing Title IV-D funding, she abhors the concept of shared parenting, and always assigns a winner and loser. She is terrified of public scrutiny, employing a cohort of armed officers to patrol the gallery for people photographing or recording her, and then violently detaining them. Those thuggish Court Officers include

Captain John Perrotto, Sergeant Cooney (badge #210), Shaun O'Malley (# 8172), Curtin (#247), and Ciclo (#306). On her orders, she had a litigant violently arrested, and badly injured, in February 2023, for which she is being sued for abuse of power and harassment. A decision she made on March 13, 2023 is a good reason why she needs to fear scrutiny. A father came to her courtroom trying to restore parenting time with his daughter. Morgenstern told him he could only see the child if he underwent therapy. The father told Morgenstern he had been in therapy for six months and sent the court proof of that, on six previous versions. Morgenstern seemed to forget this. She simply ignored him and told him to send proof a seventh time – and then adjourned the case for two months later, with the child still separated from her father. In another case observed by the FCLU, on February 10, 2020, a father of two children had asked Morgenstern to enforce an order she had made a year before to clear up mold in the mother's apartment, which was endangering the children's health. When the mother ignored the order, Morgenstern refused to enforce, and instead ordered the father to pay the mother child support. The father responded that he had just made a \$4,000 payment, and again asked her to protect the children. Morgenstern replied: *"Write her a check, and she will have the mold inspection. Adjourned."* Another order which she signed on December 13, 2017, is another good example of her arrogant disregard for the Law. It stated that *"the father shall pay \$2,000 in child support arrears by Jan 2, 2018. If not, visits are suspended."* This order was an attempt to extort a parent of money, using the threat of ending his parenting time. And Morgenstern carried through on the threat: the children have hardly seen their father since, and not at all since March 16, 2020. Morgenstern's support/visitation linkage is illegal: Under New York law, visitation may not be denied solely for reasons unrelated to the best interest and welfare of the child. As such, the failure of the non-custodial parent to make payments of support is an insufficient basis for a court to deny parenting time. *Stewart v. Soda*, 226 A.D.2d 1102, 1102 (4<sup>th</sup> Dept. 1996); *Resignato v. Resignato*, 213 A.D. 2d 616, 617 (2d Dept. 1995); *Farhi v. Farhi*, 64 A.D.2d 840, 841 (4<sup>th</sup> Dept. 1982); *Engrassia v. Di Lullo*, 89 A.D.2d 957, 958 (2d Dept. 1982). But Morgenstern, working in collusion with the corrupt Children's Law Center (CLC) – a publicly funded firm that she appoints as 'Attorney for the Child' in her cases -- believes she can operate above the law. Favored CLC contractors are Martha Schneiderman and Hilarie Chacker. The effect of most of Morgenstern's orders is to alienate children from one parent, usually the father. When that alienated parent requests remedial action, including reunification therapy, Morgenstern retorts, *"don't you understand that, if you force your child to be with you, you'll ruin your relationship with him?"* One of the cases which the FCLU closely monitored was *Veronica Abella vs Levente Szileszky*. The targeted parent here was the father, Szileszky, from whom she cruelly tore all parental access in October 2016. After excluding the children from him for five months, she made him endure supervised visitation for five years. This order ran against the recommendations even of the forensic evaluator whom she appointed, and who recommended generous parenting time for the father. The principal reason for her hostility to the dad was the improper relationship between Morgenstern and the mother's attorney, Barbara Kryszko, director of the powerful group Sanctuary for Families. Morgenstern also helps to enrich her friends at Comprehensive Family Services, including founder Richard Spitzer, who is charging the father \$300 an hour for "supervised visits" with the children. In 2019, Szileszky appealed to the 2nd Department Appellate Division. The point of his appeal was to challenge a **five-year stayaway order** which denied him any contact with his children. Neither the mother, nor the children's attorney had requested such a brutal measure. Morgenstern justified her decision by claiming that the father had missed a court hearing. In fact, the court had told the dad to turn up two days later than the date on which the court date actually happened. It was the earlier date, February 6 2019, that Morgenstern issued a one-line order that severed the bond between dad and the kids. Even the normally toxic Children's Law Center criticized

Morgenstern for failing to provide any reasoning for her stayaway order. Levente's application to the Appellate Division (which was eventually dismissed, thanks to Morgenstern's sway there) [can be viewed here](#), at 3:18:00 to 3:48:00. Known as 'Mickey' to her family-court friends, Morgenstern is a former law clerk, who came to the bench in 1996 and now receives \$262,000 in salary and benefits from the NY taxpayer. She lives in a massive house on Long Island with her second husband. Believing her powers to be limitless, she often proclaims "I am the Finder of Fact!" She has taken on a huge case-load with the criminal court, divorce, and family courts. That case-load has been increased by her assumption of the cases of another abusive judge, Patricia Henry, who thankfully retired in July 2016. One attorney states: "*Morgenstern was hand-picked by Sheldon Silver's cronies to eviscerate Brooklyn's families for federal money from the Title IV-D program... She is a loyal mutt for a corrupt master.*" A divorcee herself, she takes the bench at a leisurely 11am – [two hours after the 9am start time that Governor Cuomo demanded as a condition for agreeing to the judiciary's request for pay hikes](#). She speeds through cases, removing children from homes, jailing fathers or journalists, suspending trials in the middle of a witness' testimony and then adjourning for three months, and imposing impossible conditions as part of her orders of protection. Here is one of her typical 'temporary orders', which serves to alienate a boy from his dad, while enriching her favored quack psychologists:



Morgenstern's conduct in court is shocking. She interrupts and derides attorneys, scolding one public defender to "grow a pair" when he asked to be relieved from the case, or telling another one "stop with the attitude!". Morgenstern, an Orthodox Jew, has actually issued orders barring parents from taking their children to Catholic Mass, in blatant breach of their constitutional rights. She has also completely "suspended" the parenting time of parents who do not follow her order to go to "parenting classes" with "experts" with whom she has a relationship. She gives pro se litigants very short thrift – and discriminates viciously against fathers, regularly issuing orders for them to pay all of the mother's counsel fees. She took away custody from one father, and went into a furious tirade, stating that father had called the opposing attorney "*a femi-Nazi lowlife.*" Her catch-phrases are: "*Once in IDV, always in IDV!*", "*Enough is enough!*", "*What's the issue?*", and "*You're gonna pay her lawyer's fees!*" Cases drag on years before they come to trial. One father who has come to the FCLU for help has not seen his daughter EVER – and that girl is now 16! The trials she holds are a travesty: defense experts are precluded; the targeted parent's motions get conveniently lost; court favorites are included; targeted parents are given the incorrect dates for court hearings or ordered to submit their health records and be interrogated by her hand-picked 'investigators'. Final decisions after trial can take more than six months. Meantime, the children have no contact with one of their parents – almost always their father – and end up deeply disturbed. In the matter of *Snyder v Walker*, for example, she made a custody order on default, when a hearing on custody was actually being conducted already in Judge Alan Beckoff's courtroom.

She has her favored court experts, especially forensic examiner **Dr Amal Madani**, to whom she gives an estimated \$400,000 a year in court-ordered appointments. Madani's reports are slapdash,

and her notes are so illegible that one attorney asked if she had submitted them in Arabic. One parent commented: *"Madani is amazingly sloppy. The easiest facts, like rent amounts, number of events etc, are already wrong in her reports - so you can imagine how precise the rest of the report. For instance, she claimed I said that I have alcohol twice a week in bars which I never said. I did say I watch a hockey or a baseball game once or twice a month, drinking 2-3 beers during a 3+ hours long game. She then immediately extrapolated that I am abusing alcohol and so on - then restated it in court, only to admit, in our cross-exam, she has no training, no experience in alcohol or any substance abuse field, that being 6'2" and over 230 lbs it's not much, that I had never had been arrested, cited or any way connected to alcohol - in fact I never had a ticket in my life for anything... absolute lowlife, she literally created a single "fact" out of nothing and that was used for a damning "finding."* Morgenstern allows Madani to charge parents \$1,500 for a single court appearance.

Morgenstern uses her armed court officers like a personal Gestapo, especially Officer Shaun O'Malley (badge 8172), Sergeant Cooney, and Captain John Perrotto. On February 10, 2020, Morgenstern used those officers to arrest the FCLU's executive director, Sebastian Doggart, who was observing a case. Here is his account of what happened, as filed in an official complaint:

"At 11:20 am, I was in court to observe Judge Morgenstern on the 18th floor of Kings County Supreme, Court, 330 Jay Street, Brooklyn, NY. In the corridor outside Judge Morgenstern's courtroom, I happened to meet Mr Schwartz. I approached him courteously and asked him if he had received my email. He replied: "I did receive it, but I really can't talk to you." I asked him why, and he repeated, "I can't talk to you." I asked him if he was happy that everything was accurate in the report, and he again stated. "I can't talk to you." I asked him if he had a response to our request for an interview, and he turned to me and, said pleadingly: "Why are you doing this? I am just doing my job." I replied with a question: "Does that job including writing articles for the Brooklyn Eagle that sing Judge Morgenstern's praises, when you do not even disclose to the readers that she is your boss?" He replied again, "I can't talk to you," and hurried back into the courtroom.

At approximately 11:30am, after I had returned into the courtroom, I observed Mr Schwartz approach the bench speak into the ear of Judge Morgenstern. I could make out him mouthing my name. He then gestured towards me, and her gaze followed that gesture. She shook her head angrily, looked at a document he showed her (which I have reason to believe was the email I had sent earlier this day.) She again shook her head, glared at me for a moment, and then proceeded to give him some instructions. He nodded and walked away.

At approximately 11:40am, I observed Mr Schwartz speaking to one of the armed court officers, whose name I would later learn was Officer **Shaun O'Malley** (badge number 8172).

At approximately 12:17pm, Officer O'Malley approached me aggressively and ordered "Come with me outside." I asked him why, and he repeated "come with me outside, you are recording on your phone." I replied, "I am not recording on my phone." He became more aggressive, and said "Come outside now, or I will arrest you." Terrified, I obeyed this order, and went outside into the small ante-chamber between the court-room and the hallway. At least one witness Levente Szilesky observed the following exchanges.

O'Malley again stated, "I saw you recording on your phone, give me your phone."

I replied, "I was not recording anything. You have no right whatsoever to take my phone, or order me to open it."

He stated: "I saw you using a transcribing app on your phone. Give me your phone, or I will arrest you."

I replied, "I am a journalist and you are legally barred, under the Shield Law, from harassing and intimidating me. Please step aside and let me continue my work inside."

"You are goin' nowhere," he said, blocking my entrance back into the court-room.

At this point a second officer came into the hallway. I would later find out his name was **Sergeant Jason Valentine** (badge number 618).



He was more reasonable and explained: "There's a lot of problem with social media. That's why we can't have people filming in here."

"I was not filming here," I replied.

"He was using his phone," O'Malley said to Valentine.

"I did send a couple of text messages, but everyone in the gallery is using their phone, and no one ever told me not to."

"Were you here when we made an announcement that no one is to use their phone?"

"No," I replied. "When was that?"

"When the court opened," Valentine replied.

"I did not arrive til 11:10am," I replied.

"I can vouch for that," said Szilesky.

"Fine," I said. "I will not use the phone again. Please now allow me to return to my court-watching duties."

"No," barked O'Malley. "I saw you using a transcribing app. We need to see the contents of your phone."

"I have no transcribing app on this phone," I said. "I didn't even know such an app existed."

"Open your phone then," O'Malley sneered.

"You have no authority to demand that," I replied. "Numerous case laws, and statutes, prevent you demanding I open up my phone without a judge-issued warrant."

"Give me the phone," O'Malley ordered loudly.

At this point one of the court staff came into the ante-chamber: "Take this outside, you're too loud."

Furious, O'Malley hustled me out of the ante-chamber into the call, where he went up to another court officer sitting behind the reception desk, and told her. "This guy was filming inside."

"That is a lie," I restated, as the woman picked up the phone, apparently to make a call for 'back-up'.

"Then show me your phone," he ordered again.

"I will not," I repeated. "I am a journalist investigating corruption in this very courtroom. You are a colleague of Judge Morgenstern. I saw her court attorney instruct you to go after me. I am not going to show you anything. What is your name?"

"O'Malley."

I started to write his name down. He then grabbed my notepad from my hands, and started reading my notes.

"Those are private papers, you have no right to read them," I told him.

He ignored me and then took away my ink-pen.

At this point, seven more armed officers appeared, surrounding me.

"Why are there 10 armed officers seeking to intimidate me?" I asked O'Malley. "Give me back my pad!"

O'Malley held on to the pad, looking through my notes. Shortly after, an eleventh officer appeared. I would later discover he was their boss, **Captain John Perrotto**.

"I am being falsely detained," I advised him. "Please allow me to return to my work."

"He was filming inside," O'Malley said again.

"That is untrue. Ask the other officer," I said pointing at Sergeant Valentine. "Did you see me filming or recording?"

"I did not," said Sergeant Valentine.

I said: "This officer is acting under orders from Judge Morgenstern and her court attorney Matthew Schwartz to try and shut the FCLU down. Isn't that right?"

"I have no idea who you are," shrugged O'Malley.

"Open your phone and show us all of your photos, videos and applications!" barked Captain Perrotto.

"I cannot and will do that," I said. "I am a journalist and have protections under the Shield Law."

"Cuff him now!" Perrotto barked.

O'Malley happily complied. He roughly yanked my hands behind my back and sharply snapped the metal handcuffs down tightly on to my skin. It was the first time I have ever been handcuffed in my life.

"I want to speak to my attorney right now," I demanded.

O'Malley laughed contemptuously. He and Perrotto grabbed my arms and started to move me forward.

"We're taking you to be booked," Perrotto barked as he pushed me into the elevator.

"On what charges?" I said.

"Officer O'Malley asked you to present ID on various occasions, and you did not comply," Perrotto said.

"What?" I protested. "He never even asked me for ID."

Perrotto looked baffled, and looked over to O'Malley.

I said, "Come on, officer, did you ever ask me for ID?"

He remained silent.

"I have witnesses to show he never once asked me for ID," I said. "So if that is the grounds for arresting me, I would find another one, since I have no problem showing you my ID."

Perrotto and O'Malley continued to say nothing.

"If you want ID," I said, "I can give it to you now, you don't want to be arresting journalists for no reason."

"OK, let's see it," said Perrotto.

"I can't get it out because you have handcuffs on me! Take these off now. They are hurting me."

"You have NYPD issued press credentials?"

"What on earth are they?" I asked. "Since when does the NYPD get to choose who counts as a journalist?"

"You see," said O'Malley triumphantly, "he has no credentials."

Three other officers were accompanying us, as O'Malley and Perrotto frog-marched me out of the elevator and down a corridor until we reached an office which I believe to be the Supreme Court booking room. At least five other officers, some of them clerical staff, were in that room and witnesses to what transpired.

"We're bringing him in for filming in the courtroom?" said Perrotto

"That is a false accusation," I replied.

"I saw him using a transcribing app on his phone," said O'Malley.

"Really?" I said, more than confident that I have no transcribing app on my phone. "Are you all witness to this? Officer O'Malley is making an allegation in front of all you that he witnessed me recording on a 'transcribing app' in the courtroom? Are you all a witness to that?"

No one replied.

I continued: "Because when an independent observer analyzes my phone and finds no such app or recording exists, he must be held accountable for false testimony and intentional infliction of emotional distress. You sure you witnessed me recording, Officer O'Malley?" I pressed.

He said nothing. One of the booking room staff asked me for ID.

"I can't get my wallet out, because you have handcuffed me. Please remove the handcuffs."

There was an awkward silence.

"OK, uncuff him," said Captain Perrotto.

O'Malley then clumsily unlocked my handcuffs, leaving my wrists red.

I then handed my FCLU business card to Perrotto, who just said, "This is not a Press ID. You have any other ID?"

I gave him my driving license.

Perrotto again ordered, “You need to open your phone and show us everything that’s on it.”

“I cannot and will not do that. And you cannot and should not order me to do that.”

“If you don’t show us the contents of your phone,” he said, “we will impound your phone, put you under arrest, and incarcerate you.”

“This is way out of line,” I said. “That would be a complete violation of my constitutional rights. And it’s coming because a verifiably false allegation by Officer O’Malley. Come on, are you going to lie outright? Did you or did you not see me recording in the courtroom on a transcribing app?”

“I did,” he said.

“You really sure you want to lie like that?”

At this point, one of the other armed officers came right up into my face and said: “Sit down... NOW!”

Shocked, I told him, “You are harassing and intimidating me. Back away from me!”

“Sit the FUCK down!” he said, his fetid spittle spattering my face.

“Tell him to back off, Captain,” I said to Perrotto.

He did nothing, as the officer pushed me down on to the chair.

“What is your name, officer?” I demanded.

“Nicholas,” he said angrily.

“Nicholas what?” I replied

“Cisco,” he said.

“Badge number?”

“Three zero six.”

I reached for my pad and pen, and started to write it down. He wrenched the pen from my hand forcefully.

“Stop writing this down, or I will throw this pen right down the corridor,” he shouted.

“Captain Perrotto, he is threatening me. Is this appropriate behavior for one of your team?” I asked.

He shrugged. “He’s just doing his job.”

“Just like lying is part of Officer O’Malley’s job, right?”

“Look, either open up you phone to us, or we incarcerate you,” Perrotto said.

At this point, I was faced with a big dilemma – either stand up for my rights, and lose my phone and freedom; or capitulate to the abusive and illegal demands of six armed officers staring down at me.

“I completely object to this intimidation and abuse of process,” I said, “but I do not have anything to hide. So I will show one of you that I did not record anything. But I want to choose which one of you does that.”

Perrotto hesitated and said, “You can choose.”

I pointed to Officer Valentine, who seemed the most decent and truthful of all this disgraceful bunch.

“Sit down next to me, and I will show you,” I said. He complied.

First, I showed him the photos and videos from my phone Gallery. The last photo taken was of my nine-year-old daughter the day before, at a soccer tournament. The last video taken was two days before.

“Nothing here,” Valentine said.

Perrotto looked frustrated. O’Malley looked concerned.

“Check the apps,” said the office clerk. She then reeled off a number of ‘transcribing apps’ with which she was clearly familiar, from other people who had been seeking to make a record of abusive practices within the court.

I then took Officer Valentine on a tour of all my Apps, highly personal information.

“This was a complete invasion of my privacy,” I objected.

Valentine stopped at one:

“Revel? What’s that?”

“How do you spell that? One or two Ls?” said the clerk. “I can look it up”.

“One L.”

There was a moment of excitement that maybe Revel was the smoking gun against me.

“Come on, it’s a moped rental app!” I said.

The clerk completed her search and nodded.

Valentine shook his head, clearly embarrassed by the whole process. He went through all my remaining apps, and shook his head.

“Nothing?” said Perrotto.

“Nothing,” said Valentine.

I reached again for my pad, and started to write notes. Another officer – whose name I would later find out was Sergeant Cooney -- tore it out of my hands, and said, “Stop that, or I will throw that pad down the corridor.”

Again, I approached Captain Perrotto: “Are you going to stand by while your officers behave in this way?”

“He’s just doing his job,” Perrotto parroted Perrotto.

“Well, I now want to make a formal complaint about the conduct about three officers: Cooney and Cisso for intimidation, bullying and intentional infliction of distress; and O’Malley for verified false witnessing, and also intentional infliction of distress.”

“I’m not accepting any formal complaints,” Perrotto said. “Now move along and out of here.”

Sergeant Cooney pushed me forward, down the corridor, right up to the elevator. As the elevator doors opened, he shouted at me, “GO BACK TO YOUR OWN COUNTRY!”

I was gobsmacked. “Really, Sergeant Cooney? You are a disgrace to your badge.”

I turned to Officer Valentine, “You heard that right?”

He nodded.

Valentine then went with me back to the 18<sup>th</sup> floor, where I took my seat again to observe proceedings in court.”

Until May 2018, Morgenstern had a brutish court attorney, Brian Kieran, a character straight out of *The Sopranos*, who intimidated litigants by pressing his face right into theirs, so that his anger and halitosis caused nightmares for weeks to come. Following complaints to the Chief Judge and Commission on Judicial Conduct by the FCLU, Kieran was replaced by a more effete operator, [Matthew Schwartz, who came from Judge Sunshine’s chambers](#). As an example of how incestuous NY family court is, Schwartz is [married to Stephanie Paige Schneider](#), whose mother, Harriet R Weinberger, is the Director of the Office of Attorneys for Children. As a further instance of cronyism, Schwartz used his influence to persuade the Democrat rag *The Brooklyn Eagle* to publish [this puff-piece](#) on Morgenstern for “leading the way in helping domestic violence victims”. To ensure the hagiography had maximum impact, the piece does not include a disclaimer that Schwartz was already working for Morgenstern at the time of publication.

Judge Morgenstern’s actions bring into disrepute the court both inside the courthouse and outside. She is regularly featured in media reports about fraud, waste, and abuse in the NY family court system, [including this exposé in the NY Post](#). Morgenstern is also the main villain in the book *A little lynched: A Judge-ordered kidnapping* by Aleah Holland RN. In the book, Holland details the ex parte hearings held by Morgenstern, and charts how Morgenstern alienated her children from her after she refused to accede to her requests to make false allegations of abuse against the child’s father. Judge Morgenstern and her court attorneys have conducted unethical, ex parte communications about the case with Children’s

Law Center attorneys like Patty Hurtado, Laura Deewald, Helen Singh, Hilarie Chacker, Genevieve Tahang-Behan, Lauren McSwain and Cynthia Lee. These *ex parte* communications are a violation of the judicial canon to which Morgenstern is bound, specifically Section 100.3(B)(6) *A judge shall not initiate, permit, or consider ex parte communications, or consider other communications made to the judge outside the presence of the parties or their lawyers concerning a pending or impending proceeding.*”): So cozy is Morgenstern’s relationship to the CLC that she even kept a mailbox openly on view in her courtroom for her correspondence with the CLC. (She took this away after the FCLU published a related story in April 2020). Morgenstern allows the CLC to testify in cases before her, in violation of the attorney-witness rule. She also has an improper relationship with Safe Horizon, an organization to which she sends many families for “supervised visitation”. In return, Safe Horizon gives her regular “honors” such as the “Annual Award by the New York State Chapter of the Supervised Visitation Network.” Morgenstern’s inappropriate relationships with the CLC and Safe Horizon place her in violation of judicial canon, Section 100.2 (A): “*A judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.*” She also has a track record of changing (aka falsifying) court records. According to one parent, Cynthia Walker, she responded to a complaint to the CJC that she had failed to rule on a motion in a timely manner by filing an “update” on December 24, 2018 that she had made the ruling on August 2, 2018, when records showed that no hearing had been held on that day. Morgenstern’s conduct is a fraud upon the Kings County Supreme Court, the Unified Court System, the children whom the CLC and the court purport to represent, and every New York taxpayer. She was elected to the Queens County Integrated Domestic Violence Court in 2003 and to the Supreme Court of Kings County in 2006. She was ‘re-elected’ on November 5, 2019, after both the Democratic and Republican party machines nominated her, and no other candidate stood against her. Even with this institutional backing, she only [secured a risible 15% of the vote](#). Two separate petitions are calling for her removal, one here, and [the other here](#).

2. **Douglas E. Hoffman** (New York and Bronx): A very powerful figure in the family court system, Hoffman has been a NY State judge since 1996, and now acts in the Matrimonial Division of New York Supreme Court, working out of a majestic courtroom at 60 Centre Street. From 2009 to 2015, Hoffman was the supervising judge of Family Court in Manhattan. He has chaired various committees including the Family Court Advisory Committee of the Appellate Division, First Department; the New York County Child Protective Work Group; and the New York County Family Court’s Committee on Permanency for Children; and is the co-chair of the very sketchy Child Protective Case Management Committee. Judging is definitely a family matter for Hoffman: [his wife is Bernadette Black, a judge on the NY County Housing Court](#).

His judgeship has been dogged with controversy, no more so than by [a sexual harassment case brought against him in Federal Court by his own law clerk, Alexis Marquez Esq.](#) [In that complaint](#), Marquez alleged that:

*"During the first three weeks of Plaintiff's employment with Hoffman, Hoffman engaged Plaintiff in relentless personal inquiries and conversation; suggested that Plaintiff should have lunch with him every day; told Plaintiff stories about past cases involving sexual relations; instructed Plaintiff to come or sit closer to him; invited Plaintiff to imagine she was married to him; invited Plaintiff to remove her suit jacket; asked Plaintiff to walk him to his car after work; showed Plaintiff personal texts and videos; constantly infantilized Plaintiff; constantly subjected Plaintiff to offensive and stereotypical jokes and comments; refused to*

*assign Plaintiff legal work; and attempted to treat Plaintiff as a wife, girlfriend, personal companion, and personal assistant.”*

More on this case can be read [in the NY Post article here](#). As proof that the NY Court system is deaf to the lessons of the #metoo movement, no disciplinary action was taken against Hoffman when the allegations were first made. Marquez then expanded her complaint to include Hoffman’s “supervisors” including Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks and Chief Judge Janet DiFiore. Hoffman and his cronies, including Judge Lori Sattler, then launched a retaliatory campaign against Marks, deluging her with discovery demands and other litigious demands. Eventually, Marquez decided she could not continue the litigation and sought to drop the suit, on the grounds that “she [does] not have the resources to litigate this case on two tracks where discovery is proceeding on her claims against Hoffman and she is simultaneously responding to dispositive motions by the remaining 18 defendants.” However, she sought to dismiss her suit “*without prejudice*”, meaning that she could still assert that the complaints made were legitimate. Hoffman pursued her further, to try and persuade the Federal Court to make the withdrawal “with prejudice”, in order to clear his name completely, and complete the humiliation of Ms Marquez. [But the Federal Court dismissed that application](#) and upheld Marquez’s motion to withdraw “without prejudice”. Judge Andrew L. Carter added this very rare criticism of another sitting judge: *“Plaintiff Marquez’s claims raise troubling allegations of sexual harassment and discrimination, Defendant Hoffman provides no support to indicate that the claims are “frivolous” or that Plaintiff is acting with ill-motive, and there are legitimate, non-frivolous grounds for Plaintiff to initiate a lawsuit such as this one.”* Hoffman has not taken no for an answer and, enlisting Attorney General Letitia James, has filed a new motion to sanction Ms Marquez for what he claims are repeated failures to comply with discovery demands. The sanction that he is seeking is that she will be compelled to withdraw her allegations “with prejudice” and thus that Hoffman can be completely exonerated. In a letter to the court in February 2022, Ms Marquez explained the toll that Hoffman’s action was taking on her: *“For months, overlapping litigation deadlines have caused me to lose weight, sleep, and experience chest pains. This can no longer continue. I continue to litigate this case across two different forums and against three sets of attorneys – without any sequencing and coordination from the Court. Over the course of three years, the defendants have been represented by at least 15 different attorneys.”* Since that letter, Hoffman’s attorneys have further harassed her by opposing her reasonable requests for extensions to file responses in their vexatious discovery demands. [More info on this ongoing case is here](#).

Hoffman’s misconduct is rampant. He regularly compromises the identity of minor children by allowing their names to be used in open court. At a February 14, 2019 hearing in the matter of Anonymous CT v Anonymous CS, children were publicly named 25 times, by Hoffman and other attorneys whom he appointed, specifically **Susan Bender** (from Bender & Rosenthal, LLP) and **Daniel Lipschutz** (from Aronson, Mayefsky & Sloan, LLP). He also permits his “attorneys for the children” (AFC), to inappropriately involve children in custody cases. For example, in an effort to thwart scrutiny of his actions by the media, Mr Lipschutz informed his 6 and 12-year-old clients of media requests to cover the case. That enabled him to go back to Hoffman to try and exclude the media from covering the case, even after the media entity which had sought to cover the case had sworn on the record that it would never involve the children, or disclose their identity. Ms Bender, following Mr Lipschutz’s reckless action, did the same with their older sibling. Both Lipschutz and Bender successfully convinced the judge to disallow media coverage of the case. But she did so at the high cost of creating undue distress and anxiety in the three children, none of whom had any idea that the media was covering their case until these attorneys alerted them of that fact. Hoffman allowed these fellow attorneys to get away with this breach of attorney ethics



with full impunity instead of reporting them for breach of ethical responsibility and causing unwarranted distress to the children.

In relation to Bender, Hoffman allows her to cite confidential, sensitive information from the forensic report in open court and through numerous, unsecured emails. In doing so, she not only violated her role as AFC but jeopardized the privacy of the three children and their parents. Hoffman allowed Bender to do this even though he had expressly ordered that the forensic report was not to be quoted from. But when the targeted parent and his counsel tried to do what Bender had done and quote from the forensic report, Hoffman blocked them from doing so. As further evidence of his favoritism to Bender et al, he allows those attorneys to have numerous “breaks” in order to consult with each other on legal strategy, while not affording the same privilege to the targeted parent and his attorney.

Hoffman has a coterie of friendly attorneys (eg Lisa Zeiderman, Judy White, David Aronson, Tara Diamond, Elizabeth Fee, Sue Moss, Rosemary Riviuccio, Paul Rudder, Karen Rosenthal) and psychologists he likes to appoint (especially Dr Alan Ravitz and Elie Aoun), enriching them all at the expense of our families. In the above-mentioned case, for example, he appointed his two favorite “attorneys for the child” -- Bender and Lipschutz – and allowed them to charge the family \$550 and \$500 an hour respectively. He also permitted Bender to snarl up the case in motion practice: she filed three frivolous and vexatious ‘Orders to Show Cause’, including a motion that sought to ban the FCLU and media from the courtroom; and another motion to force the parents to pay her exorbitant fees, including those incurred by filing those motions. Hoffman allowed this while condoning Bender's refusal to see her client for over five months despite numerous requests by her child client to see her so he can spend more time with his father. In the case of Lipschutz, he looked the other way when he physically attacked an FCLU director and served him with a “judicial subpoena” which fraudulently claimed to have the authority of the judge, rather than just of an attorney.

As well as allowing his own appointed attorneys to enrich themselves and their buddies, Hoffman forces parents to hire a litany of very expensive “experts”. In the above-mentioned case, Hoffman ordered the family to undergo a “forensic evaluation” with “Dr” **William Kaplan**, at a cost of \$575 an hour. After two separate evaluations so flimsy that Kaplan did not even pay a home visit, or interview the children’s teachers, Kaplan slapped the parents with a bill for \$55,500, which could rise to over \$70,000 after trial. To twist the knife even further into the family’s heart, Hoffman granted an application by Susan Bender to bring in [her friend and cohort, Sherill Sigalow](#), to do a “review” of Kaplan’s forensic report. Hoffman permitted Sigalow to charge the family \$500 an hour, and to levy an initial “retainer” of \$12,500. Hoffman also allowed Bender to suggest the appointment of another one of her friends, Sue Moss, at \$500 an hour, as “Parenting Coordinator”, although Ms. Moss is a lawyer, not a mental health care professional.

Meantime, Hoffman allows big law firms like Phillips Nizer (the firm which employed as a partner the disgraced and imprisoned attorney Michael Cohen) to ‘churn’ cases and ignore his orders. He kowtows especially low to [Elliot Wiener](#), the multi-millionaire Chair of Phillips Nizer’s Matrimonial & Family Law division. This deference is one of the reasons that Hoffman’s cases drag on for years. The case of Anonymous CT v Anonymous CS first came to Hoffman’s desk in January 2018. But it took 17 court appearances, and over \$1mm in legal fees sunk by the family, before Hoffman finally, on November 20, 2019, Hoffman set trial dates, for 2020. The custody case settled in January 2020, which vacated those dates, with no new dates set for the financial trial. This means that, on a liberal estimate, there will no final judgment on this case until an indefinite period in the future. [The FCLU’s short film on this case can be viewed here.](#)

Another case which exemplifies Hoffman’s delays is Alizadeh vs Lindo, which came to his courtroom in 2017 and has still not had trial dates set. In another case, Boyajian vs

Boyajian, it took Hoffman NINETEEN months – from November 2020 to June 2022 -- to issue a Decision and Order on a simple motion for *pendente lite* spousal maintenance.

Since 2016, the FCLU had been calling for the removal of Hoffman for numerous violations of judicial ethics. Hoffman has taken on many of the cases from disgraced judge Gloria Sosa Lintner, who was removed from the bench in January 2016 (see below), and from Matthew Cooper, who retired at the end of 2021. However, Hoffman has continued much of those judges' family-destroying conduct. This is especially true in the matter of Allison Scollar vs Brook Altman, where he allowed the case to stall, and neglected to give the parties any fair and comprehensive hearing. This is a violation of the following New York judicial canons: Section 100.3(B) (6) ("*A judge shall accord to every person who has a legal interest in a proceeding, or that person's lawyer, the right to be heard according to law*") and Section 100.3(B) (7) ("*A judge shall dispose of all judicial matters promptly.*")

Another example of Hoffman's erratic and child-damaging conduct was his openly negligent refusal to follow the pleas of both the subject-child, and that child's attorney, Philip Schiff, to return custody to the biological mother. In May 2017, Hoffman admitted that the child had expressed her wishes to him, but he said that he would not act on them until the outcome of a trial, the dates for which he never even set.

Yet another example of Hoffman's irresponsible and suspicious conduct was in his appointment of Dr. Sara Weiss as a forensic evaluator in a case where all parties – including the attorney for the child, Mr. Schiff – opposed her appointment, because of potential harm to the subject-child. When asked by the FCLU why he had ignored the requests of the child and all parties by appointing Dr. Weiss, and whether he had any business or personal relationship with Dr Weiss, Judge Hoffman declined to respond. Hoffman likes to appoint friends and colleagues to take on jobs which pay huge fees.

In 2019, the FCLU made a formal request to film proceedings in Hoffman's courtroom. Hoffman denied the request, claiming dubiously that "Civil Rights Law 52" barred him from allowing cameras. He did include an order that "[the FCLU] may photograph the courtroom itself." However, when the FCLU sought to arrange access to film inside the courtroom, Hoffman and his staff neglected to respond. When the FCLU made an in-person application for Hoffman to comply with his own order, on November 19, 2019, he refused to answer and threateningly ordered our representative to "be quiet and sit down".

[Using arbitrary "Part 44 rules"](#) (and grinning like Mr Burns from 'The Simpsons'), Hoffman discriminates against pro se parents, forcing them to leap through draconian hoops by filing Orders to Show Cause, even to go pro se in the first place, and bullying them into 'explaining' why they prefer not to hire an attorney. On October 2, 2019, he denied a pro se litigant's request to have an attorney as his co-counsel. "*There is no such thing as co-counsel for a pro se litigant,*" Hoffman opined, after telling the parent that only the attorney could address the court. However, there is no legal basis to this ruling, which was made even more unfair because the petitioner-mother had two \$900-an-hour attorneys allowed by Hoffman to advocate for her. Similarly, in August 2023, he denied a pro se litigant the right even to respond to a motion filed against him for sanctions, ruling on the motion BEFORE the defendant's response papers were due.

Using his court attorney, Alexandra Lewis-Reisen, he also ensures pro se parents do not receive transcripts (even when they offer to pay), and fails to issue written orders, thus preventing them from appealing. So intense is his discouragement of pro se litigants, that he sometimes offers litigants to award them counsel fees against the opposing side as long as the pro se parent hires an attorney.

Hoffman's posture towards parents usually favor the less-monied parent, which is almost always the mother. The reason for this is that he wants to extract from families as much matching federal funds for the State of New York as he could. In the case of Anonymous CT v Anonymous CS, Hoffman urged the defendant-father to accept a

‘financial settlement’ that would leave him having to pay \$108,000 per year in ‘child support’ to the mother, who is herself a licensed NY attorney, with a salary of \$1mn per year. Under the twisted Title IV-D program, that would mean matching funds paid by the Feds to NY’s state government to pay for Hoffman’s ever-increasing \$250,000 annual salary and benefits. Hoffman’s proposed levy of \$108,000 was more than double the recommended statutory cap of \$42,900 for non-custodial parents of three kids ([calculated as 29% of a capped combined salary of \\$148,000](#)). By pressuring the parties to settle, the judge was trying to circumvent that cap, because the father would be technically “consenting” to pay more. Even more grotesquely, Hoffman tried to strong-arm the father to agree to a “deal” on the “equitable distribution of marital assets” that would leave the mother walking away with \$8 million, including a \$2.8mn Manhattan property with no mortgage. The mother spied an opportunity to enrich herself even more. She complained to Hoffman that “I will still have no income”, and then demanded that the father also pay 100% of all “add-ons” (private school fees, health insurance etc) -- all in addition to the \$108,000 in child support. The father’s attorney pointed out the mother already had a job that paid her \$1mn and that she had experience working at a top-10 NY corporate law firm, the World Bank, and numerous other positions. Hoffman replied with a “suggestion” that they modify the split on the add-ons so that dad paid “only 80%” and mom 20%. He also urged them to “agree” that mom would have total power over the children’s 529k savings, including the right to liquidate all those assets for her own use. All this discussion was based on the assumption that the mother would be awarded custody of the children, even though trial dates had not even been set at that point.

As further evidence of Hoffman’s clear bias against the father, he agreed to completely exclude three properties owned by the mother in the Caribbean from the calculation of the “equitable distribution” of marital assets. At the same time, Hoffman agreed to the mother’s pleas to value the marital business at \$4.4mn – which was what the valuer SIGMA had appraised it for over seven months ago. That valuation was done prior to an investigation into the business’ activities – specifically the mother’s work as Chief Compliance Officer – that led to a letter threatening termination of the business’ operations. Even Hoffman recognized that this termination letter affected the valuation of the company; yet he pressed the father to accept the old valuation when calculating what he would have to pay the mother to buy her out and save the business.

According to a separate investigation by [the Child Victims of the Family courts](#), Hoffman has “*committed grave errors in legal adjudication which were allowed to go unchallenged because of clear conflict of interest relationships on the Appellate Court and courts were closed to court watchers, violations of the open court system of New York. He is also following the same malignant process of cronyism, overlooking multiple forms of violations; appointment of questionable experts, a get along to go along practice of local politics of an immoral, unethical, improper level of legal practice.*” Partly thanks to complaints by the FCLU, the Scollar v Altman case was re-assigned in 2018, out of the frying-pan of Hoffman’s courtroom, and into the fire of J. Machel Sweeting (see below).

Hoffman was reappointed by Mayor Bill de Blasio, without any public hearing, in April 2015, for a term that will expire in 2025. He also works as an acting justice in the Bronx Supreme Court, and worked in close tandem with Judge Matthew Cooper, who often signed Hoffman’s orders until his forced retirement (see below).

3. **Deborah Kaplan** (New York County Supreme Court). The finest example of a Goddess Complex in the NY court system. As the deputy chief administrative judge for the New York City courts, she is also one of the most powerful members of the NY Judiciary. [The New York Post has called her](#) a “*mafia princess [who] enjoyed a pampered youth as the ‘princess’ daughter of a mob-connected crook and drug trafficker, and loyally defended him*”

even as she rose to become a Manhattan Criminal Court judge.” Apples do not fall far from the tree, and, according to one leading NY matrimonial attorney: *“The daughter of a Luchese associate who ran a mob warehouse and a intermediary for mob hit orders, Judge Deborah Kaplan, aka the Mafia Princess, sat as Co-Chair of the Gender Fairness Committee of the Criminal Court of the City of New York. Ironically, she is anything but gender-neutral. She claims she became a lawyer to get her father out of a 27-year prison sentence, so she can be with him once again. In a perverse twist of fate, she has managed in her short matrimonial tenure to rip countless children away from their fathers, regardless of evidence. This was seen in the famed Madonna v Guy Ritchie case where a mature child did not want to be with the mother and yet was ordered by Kaplan to return to the United States to be with her. Kaplan cherry-picks court-appointed guardians by going through her donors lists. She applies a double-standard ‘rule of evidence’ for men and women, and has a weak grasp of the law in general. She writes sloppy and hasty decisions, often creating more ambiguity and opening up more opportunities for gapping divides in peace between former couples. It was alleged she had been reassigned based on a panoply of complaints, where she sat for a long while as Statewide Coordinating Judge for Family Violence Cases-- despite once testifying against a victim of domestic violence-- citing there were no marks to prove it. But what was thought to be a means of keeping her under a watchful eye within a padded room appears more to have been a wait, sit tight, and forget game. What can be sure to make her late mafia dad proud, the ‘Teflon Donna’ now sits as chief administrative judge of the civil term, first department.”* Kaplan is also on the ‘Judicial Committee on Women in the Courts’ and a card-carrying member/former-president of the insidious and openly misandrist New York Women's Bar Association. According to another NY attorney, who has filed various complaints about Kaplan to the Commission on Judicial Conduct: *“Her procedural foible is to mislead the public about her orders. She has a predilection for labeling initial orders as ‘temporary’ as a ploy to mislead the losing side to accept the order on consent. The litigant believes that the temporary order (for example for custody or support) can be modified later after trial, when in fact Kaplan intends for the temporary order to be permanent. When the litigant fires up the boilers and goes to trial for a permanent order, the burden of proof is unclear (in the case of custody -- initial award/best interests versus modification of an order/change of circumstances) to the litigant and sanctions/losses are the result. However, it is not clear whether this is the result of malevolence toward the general public or whether Kaplan is ignorant of the law of orders.”* Kaplan regularly perjures herself, as she did in the case of Schorr vs Schorr. She had accused David Schorr of violent behavior in court and, to defend himself, Schorr deposed Kaplan. Her court officer, Lieutenant Mazzella, testifying before Kaplan, who was on the stand before Kaplan, testified that Schorr had behaved properly *“with no trace of agitation”*. Kaplan then came out of chambers to testify that Schorr had been “red-faced”, and yelling violently. Schorr then exposed her lies by playing a recording of the proceedings that proved that Kaplan had perjured herself. Kaplan was so furious that she used her judicial powers to retaliate: she initiated a “collateral estoppel” complaint to the attorney grievance committee to have Schorr disbarred. That led to a lengthy and costly series of hearings that have still not ended. Kaplan seems to enjoy taking down alpha-male fathers. A case in point is her persecution of Dr. Eric Braverman, whom she has blocked all access to his children for more than five years. Kaplan incarcerated him on Rikers Island for “civil contempt”, for allegedly

removing a document from the court without authorization; and assigned a friendly receiver to extract \$5mn, and ensure he is totally ruined financially. [Kaplan's biggest donor is the notorious Raoul Felder](#), who was the mother's attorney in the Braverman case. Felder is a regular advocate in her court, and Kaplan rules [in his favor every time](#). Of further concern is her regular appointment of donors of her electoral campaign to state-funded positions like attorney-for-the-child and forensic evaluator. These appointments are supposed to be done by lottery, but Kaplan selects and rewards certain people on many more occasions than probability theory would view as legitimate. This is the case with her campaign donors Rosemary Rivieccio and Virginia LoPreto who are regularly appointed as AFCs in her cases, and enriched accordingly.

4. **Hope Schwartz Zimmerman** (Nassau County Supreme Court): The first of various judges with a child's blood on their black robes. In 2017, Zimmerman awarded sole custody of three boys to an NYPD cop, Michael Valva, and issued a six-month order of protection against his estranged wife, Justyna Zubko-Valva, barring her from even seeing the children. Zimmerman made this order without a hearing and was made solely on the basis of unsubstantiated complaints from the father's lawyer and Donna McCabe, a law guardian appointed to represent the boys, both of whom accused the mom of flouting court directives. Her order also completely overturned findings of a previous judge, Fran Ricigliano, who had barred the dad from overnight visits after reviewing hundreds of evidence files, documenting disturbing behavior by Valva, including the dad *"taking pictures of his private parts, penis, and sen[din]g it to other women while he was putting the kids to bed, kids were watching it"*. As Zubko-Valva attempted to represent herself in the proceeding by raising her hand, Zimmerman repeatedly shut her down, at one point telling the desperate mom, *"Stop talking!"* The night after that order, Zubko-Valva rightly forecast: *"[Michael] is going to kill my kids"*. On Dec. 31, 2019, 17 days before the child's death, Wieslaw von Walawender, an advocate for the boy, wrote a letter to Vito Caruso, a senior administrative judge with the Office of Court Administration, decrying Zimmerman's custody decision and the handling of the case by subsequent judges. Von Walawender alleged the boys had been *"starved, kept in (a) cold garage without heat in winter, beaten up, sent to school wearing diapers, dirty."* Neither Zimmerman nor Caruso did anything with the complaint.

On January 17, 2020, Thomas Valva, 8, died of hypothermia after being forced to spend the night in the freezing garage of his father's home. Michael Valva and his fiancée Angela Pollina have been charged with murder.

The child's death [created a public outcry, holding Judge Zimmerman responsible. An online petition to have Zimmerman removed from the bench and disbarred garnered more than 25,000 signatures](#). The child's mother Justyna commented: *"I am the mother of 3 little children (2 of the oldest have special needs) who were brutally, immediately, and without any reason taken away from me by Judge Zimmerman, who completely took away my right to defend myself and my children because I could not afford to hire a lawyer."* "This is fraud across the board," charged Wieslaw von Walawender. "The case is about criminal fraud, collusion, corruption and cover-up." According to Kimberly Berens, an educator at the school where the boy was enrolled in 2016, "The real starting point is how did this mother lose custody based on allegations that could have easily been refuted." One of the answers to this is that Zimmerman treats self-represented litigants like feces on her shoe. And if you question her decisions, her retaliation is swift and draconian, as shown in this response to Justyna Zubko-Valva, who begged for her to review evidence that Thomas was in danger: *"Until my orders are obeyed, I can't listen to all this stuff, and I certainly, I certainly can't read whatever it is that you wrote"*. Long Island attorney Thomas Liotti described Zimmerman's decision in this case as *"crazy. You are supposed to have hearings on these*



*things and you're supposed to be able to substantiate with hard evidence which parent should have custody. You have to have a hearing. You can't just shoot from the hip and expect that you're going to have a reliable situation. In this case it was a death sentence — that's what she gave Thomas."*

Unconfirmed reports state that Zimmerman "voluntarily retired" in late 2020. If this is his true, her record remains a disturbing one. She had a special catchphrase for parents in her courtroom: *"Leaving your life to me is like going to Las Vegas"*. That terrifying, cruel statement is horrific when applied to Thomas Valva. For having his home decided by her was far worse than resigning him to the crazy chance of the craps table; it was indeed signing Thomas' death sentence. As the [New York Post reported](#), *"Zimmerman's fateful Sept. 6, 2017, decision to put 8-year-old Thomas Valva and his two brothers in the custody of their dad, Michael, was made on the fly, the shocking transcripts show, without any formal, court-filed accusation of wrongdoing against their mom, Justyna Zubko-Valva."*

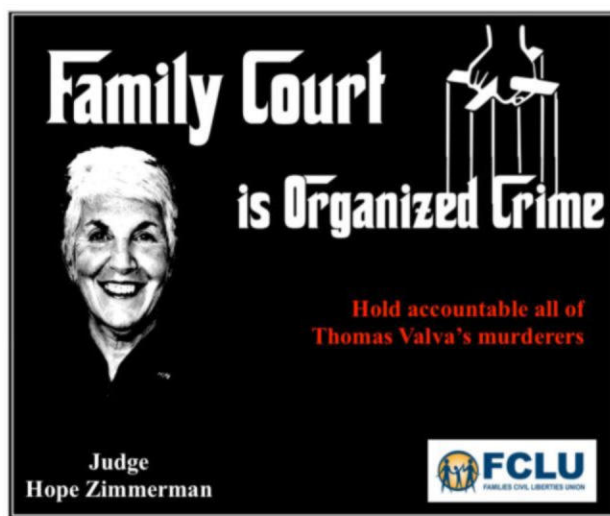
In her day-to-day bench work, Zimmerman created false narratives to justify her punitive financial judgments. Nicknamed 'NoHope' by many parents, she financially ruined numerous litigants, while enriching her favored attorneys. Her highest profile target was Professor Anthony Pappas, who was the Republican candidate in the November 2018 Congressional race eventually won by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. [Professor Pappas speaks out against Zimmerman's "arbitrary and capricious" acts here](#). Quick to anger, Zimmerman accepted allegations of domestic abuse made by mothers as a matter of fact, without any investigation. The only exception to this bias towards mothers is when a father was a campaign donor or an employee of the State, such as police officer Michael Valva. She issued orders of protection against fathers, with no evidence, and allowed mothers to move out of state without even asking permission. According to one parent, Michael Schmitt: *"I asked Zimmerman for an emergency order for the mother to stop hurting my child and was denied. My daughter testified in camera to being hit in the face and numerous other family offenses by the illegal alien mother who is obviously mentally ill. The mother admitted in divorce court before Margaret C. Reilly to committing domestic violence against us and she did nothing also. These bastards encourage domestic violence. They refuse to hear evidence."*

Another parent provided this testimony to the FCLU: *"I'm a plaintiff involved in what I think may be the most outrageous example of judges, AFC, forensic evaluators literally destroying family units through emergency hearings. In my case - my parental rights were effectively terminated without a lawyer present and without any semblance of a hearing or fact-finding session at 3pm on December 19 2018. Your organization is not likely to be surprised that Judge Zimmerman was the judge which issued the order in December 2018. For 12 months after Zimmerman recklessly issued the order, she delayed hearings and eventually informed my court-appointed attorney she was "retiring " and to address her "temporary suspension " in Nassau County Family Court. On June 15 2020, I filed a motion with Nassau County Supreme Court to reinstate my visitation. At the time, I was unaware Zimmerman had just been named in a \$200 million law suit for her involvement in the tragic death of Thomas Valva. Apparently she had yet to "retire." In August 2020 - after Zimmerman made derogatory comments on the record to me, I filed a complaint with Paul Lamana esq. Two days later, I was informed that Judge Joseph Lorintz was taking over the case. If you are unaware, Judge Lorintz was the judge to issue a final order which directly led to the death of Thomas Valva. I wasn't aware of this at the time. On March 1 2021, Judge Lorinz abruptly recused himself from my case after I questioned him on the record to provide factors he was utilizing to continue a 2 year "temporary suspension." His answer to my request was "because I said so." I requested the judge to "so order " the transcript of this proceeding and the following day he recused himself from the case. One day following Judge Lorinz recusal - Dr Peter Favaro phd rescued himself from a forensic evaluation*



*which he failed to perform for over 90 days. Favaro's rationale for recusal was "covid." The simultaneous recusal of Lorintz and Favaro—in conjunction with Judge Zimmerman being "forced to retire" has left me with no options. There appears to be a cover-up regarding the Valva case which seems to now be impacting any judge or forensic to be involved in a Zimmerman/Lorintz case."*

Zimmerman regularly extorted and imprisoned dads for inability to pay child support. She had her favored attorneys – usually donors to her campaign – like John Peter Dimaggio. She granted massive legal-fee applications in their favor, especially when those attorneys were acting on a contingency basis. She allowed them to cut the line and have ex parte meetings with her in her chambers. She refused to sanction attorneys for perjury, even when there was conclusive evidence of lying. She is a [regular panelist](#) for the corrupt Association of Family Courts and Conciliation. A portrait of a [vicious man-hater emerges from this report on her by Janak Shukla](#). There are [a litany of complaints against her at The Robing Room](#). She was elected to the court in 2013 (with just 14.2% of the vote) for a term that technically expires in 2027. Her apparent retirement may have accelerated her departure, but her gross misconduct still warrants sanctions, including the removal of her huge pension.



5. **Theresa M. Ciccotto** (Kings County Supreme Court): Incompetence, and a dire lack of understanding of the Law are the hallmarks of this jaunty blockhead. Elected to the bench, unopposed, in 2013, promising that she was “one of us”, Ciccotto makes up the law as she goes along, especially in relation to relocation by one of the parents. In order to avoid a record being made of her work, she favors “table-side negotiations” between her and the attorneys. She praises parents who spend a lot of money on attorneys, citing that as evidence that they are good parents. And when a targeted parent’s attorney does not go along with her recommendations for a settlement, she tries to drive a wedge between that parent and their attorney, in order to force a settlement. One parent has reported that she “threatened my attorney that her license would be suspended if she continues representing me.” Born on 7/23/1960, and Democratic party operator, she *is* one of the heads of the Catholic Lawyers Guild (see this [picture of her with the CLG's president in this article](#).) Her court attorney is Elaine Schack-Rodriguez, formerly of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, daughter of former [Brooklyn Dem District Leader Dilia Schack](#) and the [late Judge Schack](#), who was himself a [funny, colorful character of Kings Supreme Court](#). Ciccotto's term is due to expire in 2023.
6. **Dean Kusakabe** (Queens & Kings County Family Courts). Incompetence, bigotry, cronyism, cowardice and casual cruelty are Kusakabe’s main characteristics. He came to the

bench in July 2012 with no training as a judge. He was appointed by Mayor Bloomberg, who was trying to burnish his poor record on racial diversity. Kusakabe's M.O. is to prolong cases until the subject-child turns 18, thus releasing him from any obligation to make any actual decision.

His ignorance of the law was vividly demonstrated when he allowed the powerful attorney-mother of a petitioner-mother to represent her daughter, even though she was a principal witness in the case. This was a clear violation of New York's attorney-witness law (Rule 3.7 of the NYRPC) and case-law, established by all of the NY Appellate Divisions. As such, he violated judicial canon Section 100.2 (A) ("*A judge shall respect and comply with the law*"). In violation of another judicial canon (section 100.3 (B)(4)) Kusakabe is deeply biased in favor of mothers. In one recent case, he allowed unsupervised visitation to a mother, despite conclusive evidence that she was mentally unstable. Kusakabe is terrified of pro se litigants, whom he terrorizes. In one case, he delayed court proceedings by six months just to decide whether the father could relieve his attorney, and proceed pro se. Meantime, he denied that father any contact with his daughter, without giving him any hearing on the allegations made by the mother.

Kusakabe has an inappropriate relationship with the taxpayer-funded Children's Law Center (CLC), whom he appoints as the attorney-for-the child in every case he takes. Like Esther Morgenstern, he even has a mailbox openly on view in his courtroom for his correspondence with the CLC. He allows the CLC to testify in cases before him, in violation of the attorney-witness rule. He denies applications to disqualify the CLC, even when conflicts of interest have been proved. For example, he denied disqualification applications when it was proved that the mother's attorney was also employed by the CLC, or when the CLC was employing the babysitter of a subject-child.

Kusakabe's calendar has been managed by his court attorney, Saira Wang, whose previous job was as an attorney for the CLC, for which she worked for six years, first as an intern (2010), then as a trial attorney (2011-2013), and, from 2011 until March 2017, as an appellate attorney. Kusakabe continues to traffic every child to Wang's former colleagues at the CLC. On behalf of Kusakabe, Wang conducts numerous ex parte communications with the CLC -- in person, by telephone, and by email. These ex parte communications are a violation of the judicial canon to which Kusakabe is bound, specifically Section 100.3(B)(6): "*A judge shall not initiate, permit, or consider ex parte communications, or consider other communications made to the judge outside the presence of the parties or their lawyers concerning a pending or impending proceeding.*" Kusakabe's bias towards the CLC places him in violation of judicial canon, Section 100.2 (A): "*A judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.*"

Meantime, Kusakabe has amassed over 1,100 pending cases on to his docket. How can any judge get his head around that number of custody cases? As a result of this gross irresponsibility, Kusakabe regularly gets the names of litigants wrong. He sends orders to the wrong addresses, or just neglects to send them out. The orders he does send out are often ambiguous, or mis-spelled. He neglects to set trial dates for years, and when he does, he stretches trials out over many months, in violation of court rules, and judicial canons, that a trial must complete within 90 days of its start. The case of *Renz v Little*, for example, dragged on 10 years, during which time the father had all contact with his daughter cut off, without a plenary hearing. When Kusakabe finally issued a judgment, the child had already turned 18, so he only had to issue a short order, stating that all motions were moot since the subject had reached majority.

Kusakabe also 'loses' documents that have been submitted to the court under subpoena, especially when such documents do not support one of his arbitrary 'temporary orders of visitation'. According to two sources -- a retired family court judge and a family

attorney close to his former partner -- Kusakabe is a fanatical Christian who gives ten percent of his income to the Church.

Although the 2<sup>nd</sup> Department Appellate Division very rarely overturns a ‘temporary order’ from family court judges, it has done so with Kusakabe. In the case of Lever Lyons, [the AD2 reversed his order](#) on the grounds that he had “*misread and misunderstood the nature and import of the father’s August 28, 2018, petition for modification... Since it was error for the Family Court to have dismissed the modification petition on the ground that it did, we reverse and reinstate the petition. The attorney for the child [the Children’s Law Center] urges us to dismiss the father’s appeal as academic because, subsequent to the order appealed from, the father did file a further petition. However, because the order appealed from dismissed the petition “with prejudice” and such dismissal may impact the scope of the pending proceedings (see Matter of Newton v McFarlane, 174 AD3d 67, 75-78), the appeal is not academic. Given that no hearing has been conducted into the serious matters alleged by the father, and that it does not appear from the record that a full hearing into the child’s best interests has ever been conducted by the courts in New York, the Family Court, Kings County, shall, upon remittal, conduct all further proceedings expeditiously and without further delay.*” Despite this decision, there is no evidence that Kusakabe is seeking to resolve this case “expeditiously.”

The New York taxpayer rewards Kuskabe with a whopping salary of \$222,000 (a base salary of \$172,000 plus pensions and health insurance estimated at \$40,000). In 2015, Mayor diBlasio extended his tenure, without any election, or public hearing, until 2025.

7. **Lori Currier Woods** (Supreme Court, Orange County): Woe betide any parent who questions or appeals this wellspring of rage! Woods makes snap decisions on who is the ‘targeted’ parent, and who is ‘protected’; and she then sticks to that decision, no matter what the concrete evidence. Her weapon of choice is to threaten parents that she will throw their children into the foster-care system if they so much as whisper an objection to her. Here is one example of this kind of bullying, from an official court transcript:

about visitation, it will be being supervised for both of you by the Department of Social Services when I place her in foster care for neglect.

Woods has been targeted with [numerous petitions for her removal](#). In the milestone case of Joe Picone v Frank Golio -- which the FCLU has closely monitored -- she made legal history by removing two children from the custody of the biological father (Golio) and giving it to his ex-boyfriend (Picone). She even ordered the five-year-old twins to be uprooted from their home and school in Florida to move to New York, and start their lives again under her nose. Here is the extract from the official court transcript when Woods cut off Golio’s attorney and changed the twins’ lives:

Okay. **I'm done. I'm not listening to your argument.** I'm moving them back to the State of New York. If you have a problem, you can go to the Appellate Division.

The biological dad, Golio, did seek intervention from the Appellate Division, and

successfully secured **a record eight stays** on Woods' successive temporary orders. Enraged, Woods set about to destroy Golio. She ordered the kids to come to her courthouse for a private 'Lincoln hearing', but when they expressed a wish to return to Florida and live with Mr Golio, Woods ignored their wishes and said that "the children do not know what they want." Once she had secured a lifting of the stay by the Appellate Division (thanks to the Brooke decision issued by the NY Court of Appeals in August 2016), Woods retaliated brutally against Mr Golio. In the trial, she allowed Picone to cite the kids as legitimate testimony, but dismissed similar reports by Golio as hearsay. Two whole years after the case came before her, Woods issued a 13-page Final Order of Custody, captioned RPF v FG, which, along with decimating Golio's time with his children, reads as a vindictive, ad hominem character assassination of Golio. Emboldened by Woods' support, Picone violated Mr Golio's visitation and access rights. Golio complained to the court, but Woods neglected to step in, simply ignoring his violation and modification petitions, and stonewalling his entreaties to enforce her own order. Merciless, Woods then foisted a massive child support bill on Golio, way above what it should have been because she used his attorney bills as "imputed income". These bills crippled Golio financially, and forced him to declare bankruptcy in 2018. Woods refused to downwardly modify the child support order, and then sought to have him jailed for contempt. Although she backed off from this, she then hit Golio where it hurt him most, by issuing an order in September 2019 that reduced his time with the kids to two hours of "supervised visitation" per week.

Backed by the FCLU, and the National Association of Parents, Golio [managed to take the case all the way up to the Supreme Court of the US](#), seeking to assert that parental rights fall within the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

Woods has a coterie of "friends" [who donate generously to her election campaigns](#). She has her favored "experts", whom she appoints at great expense to the families who come before her. Woods' cronies include Marc Mednick, who receives tens of thousands from each family to conduct "forensic evaluations" of dubious quality.

[A chorus of critics](#) says that being in her courtroom is "traumatizing", that "*if there was ever a reason to vote it's now, to get this loony off the bench. It's insane what she gets away with.*" Another parent affirms: "*Arrogant and rude. I appeared before this judge making a lawful citizen's request and was made to feel like I was a criminal the entire time. I was not allowed to speak, and it was clear the judge had not reviewed the materials I submitted. My request was rejected in all of 3.5 minutes. I felt railroaded and disenfranchised, further impacting my trust in my government.*"

In her defense, Woods' anger issues may stem from a tragedy in her family. Her son Zachary, a student at Penn State, [died on May 6, 2014](#), when a car struck him and threw him a hundred feet from an overpass. Since then she has told parents in her courtroom, "*you should consider yourself lucky you even have your children.*"

Born in 1958, Woods is a lifelong Republican. [She began her career in](#) 1983 as an attorney in the California-based Law Offices of Mikin & Kohn. She then served as a deputy district attorney in Orange County, California, from 1984 to 1985. In 1985, she became an Orange County assistant district attorney. She then worked as an attorney for the law firm of Larking & Axelrod from 1988 to 1992. From 1997 to 2001, she was an attorney and law guardian for the Children's Rights Society. She then became a councilperson for the Town of Monroe. Her own resume says she worked in these positions through 2005. She took the family court bench in 2006, and was [re-elected in 2015 on the inaccurate slogan of "Compassionate, Competent. Fair."](#) Unless removed, she will hold office until December 31, 2025.

8. **Bernard Cheng** (Suffolk County Supreme Court. An accomplice to Zimmerman in the death of 8-year-old Thomas Valva, he took over the case after it moved from Nassau county

to Suffolk County, home of the child's father and killer. In October 2018, he received a warning from Justyna Zubko-Valva, the mother of Thomas and his two brothers. "They are in extreme danger of their lives at this point." He did nothing. In February 2019, Cheng received further evidence, via the NY Office of Children and Family Services, that Thomas Valva was being abused by the father. That abuse included complaints that the father was forcing the child to sleep in an unheated garage in the middle of winter. Cheng ignored the complaints, and issued new orders that gave the cop father custody of the children. That was effectively a death sentence for Thomas Valva.

9. **Rachel Adams** (Kings County Supreme Court). Adams prioritizes three things in her courtroom: the sanctity of her orders; a bullying pressure on parties to settle; and the appointment and ingratiation of her favored 'professionals' who have donated to her election campaigns. Adams regularly fails to schedule mandated hearings prior to custody flips. She brutally punishes anyone who objects to her rulings. When Natalya Goberman filed an official complaint against her, Adams responded by using her influence with the District Attorney's office to press dubious, ex parte criminal charges, claiming she had forged the judge's signature on an order dismissing \$77,000 worth of student loans in her divorce. The result of this action was that Goberman was locked up for two years, depriving her children of meaningful access to their mother. Meantime, Adams delays pre-trial proceedings for years. She neglects to issue decisions six months or more after the conclusion of trial (although she is mandated to release decisions within 60 days). In one case, she ordered a mother to undergo years of supervised visitation and ignored Appellate Division directions to reverse the order. Two kids grew up without their mother as Adams delays a final order after trial. In another case, she put a father on "supervised visits" by the disreputable agency Comprehensive Family Services (CFS) for eight years – enriching CFS with \$15,000, but deeply harming the child. She appoints Brad Nacht as 'attorney-for-the-child' in the vast majority of her cases. Nacht charges the parents an average of \$45,000 – all thanks to Adams' appointment. It's no coincidence that [the firm where Nacht worked, Hymowitz & Freeman, was a significant donor to Adams' election campaign](#). In that same case, the attorney for the party to whom she awarded custody, was also a donor to Adams' campaign. As Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy has stated: *"The law is a profession and lawyers are committed to uphold the constitutional system... If an attorney gives money to a judge with the expectation that the judge will rule in his interest or his client's interest that is corrosive of our institutions."*
10. **Anna Culley** (Queens County Supreme Court): Daughter of Anthony Seminerio, a corrupt corrections officer and politician who was [convicted for influence peddling, and died in prison in 2011](#). In 2014, Culley ran on both Republican and Democratic tickets and won her judgeship unopposed. Her record on the bench shows scant regard for due process. In one recent case, she refused to enforce demands that the petitioner-mother produce records of her daycare business which the respondent-father paid for and assisted in starting for mother's benefit. Instead, Culley QDRO'd his pension, but gave him no credit toward his contributions to mother's business. In another ongoing case, Culley ignored an appellate division reversal of a contempt order against father. This would have allowed medical records to enter the case file and would have benefitted the father in the long run. Culley also refused to enter an order of visitation because the kids refused to see their father. An accomplice to her actions is the forensic evaluator Dr. Zvi Joseph Weinreb, to whom she sends lucrative jobs. A petition for her removal has received over 800 signatures, and can be seen [here](#). Unless Culley can be removed sooner, [her term expires on December 31, 2028](#).



11. **Carol Mackenzie** (Suffolk County Supreme Court). Mackenzie has blood on her hands. She presided over the case of Dr. Richard Demato, inciting him to commit suicide, on April 30, 2013, the day before a trial was due to begin in front of her. In that case, Mackenzie had ordered 63-year-old Demato to pay his wife \$5,000, even before a trial had been held. When he was unable to pay, Mackenzie improperly jailed him. The three-month incarceration caused him to lose his medical practice as a podiatrist, his car, and his home. Dr. Demato also lost [any hope of fair treatment](#) at trial. Mackenzie callously registered the case as “*settled, abated by death*.” Thanks to pressure from FCLU officer James Kelly, she was removed from the bench in 2020. Before that, she routinely refused to order drug test results when documented history of drug use has been before the court and child custody, visitation and decision-making are being decided. As in the case of James Kelly, she regularly ordered fathers “*to have no direct or indirect contact with the children pending a forensic psychology examination and further orders of the Court*”, and then reissues that order for years. She also threatened and verbally abused attorneys and litigants. She stormed out of the courtroom when her mistakes were being addressed. She refused to conduct contempt hearings, despite being directed to by the Appellate Division. Without conducting hearings, she went directly to sentencing, especially when she wanted to incarcerate a party for “contempt”. She ignored irrefutable evidence, well-settled statutes and case law. She played favorites; incorporated deliberate arithmetic mistakes to favor one party; and used threats of incarceration to bully litigants into settling with unfair terms.
12. **Lori Sattler** (New York Supreme): This judge not only has suicide on her record, but the murder of a child. On 5/16/2018, Judge Sattler presided over a hearing in the case of Stephanie Adams-Nicolai v Charles Nicolai. The attorney for the child's father, Mr Charles Nicolai, warned the judge that Ms Adams was mentally unstable. Although Judge Sattler ordered the surrender of the subject-child's passport, she did nothing to protect the child from the mother. On 5/18/2018, Ms Adams took the child and jumped from the 25th floor of the Gotham Hotel in Manhattan. Both were killed. The murder-suicide led to significant [media coverage](#) and an outpouring of public grief and outrage. The murder of little Vincent would have been avoided had Judge Sattler erred on the side of caution and ordered either supervised visitation for the mother, or a transfer of custody to the father. The FCLU filed a formal complaint against Sattler for reckless negligence and a betrayal of her duty of care; calling on the CJC to bar her from presiding over any further custody cases, at least until a full investigation has taken place. The CJC took no action whatsoever. Her intelligence is also very questionable. In 2018, she was suckered by a fraudster pretending to be her real-estate lawyer into sending \$1mn to a Chinese bank account, prompting [a slew of tabloid stories](#) about her judgment. Sattler is also known for extensive delays in cases before her, and for screaming at litigants. Most custody matters have taken at least four years to be adjudicated. One positive sign is that, according to her principal law clerk Lydia Devine, she was moved out of the matrimonial court in early 2022.
13. **Jeffrey Sunshine** (Kings County Supreme Court): The most inaptly named judge in America, Sunshine is another judge who has presided over the tragic destruction of families. He has somehow risen to the powerful position of “supervising matrimonial judge”, a position he has consolidated by having his own wife, Nancy, appointed as the Kings County Supreme Court chief clerk. The biggest stain on his record is his role in [the murder of a three-year-old-child and the suicide of his father, Dmitriy Kanarikov](#). According to an attorney connected to the case: “*During a typical divorce proceeding, the mother used the usual domestic violence accusations to cut dad off from his son. Dad freaked out as he never heard of anything like this before. He appeared before Judge Sunshine, who is a rubber-stamping bureaucrat. He granted an order of protection to [the mother] - as usual - with no*



*proof of any actual violence of any kind. Outraged by the lies, Dmitriy obtained his son for an unsupervised visit and proceeded to go up to the top floor of a West 60th Street building. He flung his son off the top floor and then jumped after the son. The press followed Sunshine's orders. Dad was branded violent and deranged. [The mother] was branded the abused spouse. An important difference between Kanarikov and the typical American is that Americans behave like sheep. We are led around by rings in our noses and no matter how the court behaves, we go along with the scam no matter how absurd. But Russians are far harder than that, and the mother's attorney really screwed the pooch. I do not believe Sunshine received any kind of sanctions."* According to another now-retired family court judge: *"This Judge was the primary reason that I stopped practicing law, and that is a shame because I used to love being a lawyer and was quite good at it. He forgot where he came from--a Court street lawyer -- like the rest of us trying to make a living in an ever increasing impossible profession. Cases I had before him seemed to be more about him than the poor souls I represented who had real problems. His ego gets in the way of administering Justice. His Courtroom, like many others, is more like a cattle call than a revered Courtroom. Almost every client I ever had, even if they received a favorable ruling, always said the same thing: "Is that the way all judges act'?"* As supervising judge, Sunshine has shown no leadership, and offers no relief to litigants who have been denied due process. Above his desk is a sanctimonious quote from the Book of Esdras: *"Great is Truth and mighty above all things."* Its author, the scribe Ezra, must be turning in his grave. Sunshine shows scant regard for the Truth. In a recent case, he took punitive action against an attorney who had complained to him because a subordinate judge had not entered a decision on an application for a parent to see his child, after eight months of separation. Rather than treating such complaints seriously and confidentially, Sunshine immediately informs the judge about whom a complaint is made, often leading to retaliatory action. An Orthodox Jew, he is prone to fits of fury. He twitches and blinks as if he suffers from shellshock (or a guilty conscience), and his ashen moustache gyrates distractingly, especially when threatening pro se litigants of the "peril" they face in his courtroom. One 8-year-old child whom he interviewed in camera, as part of a Lincoln hearing, described him as the sloth DMV manager in *Zootopia*. He was elected to his current position in 2011, and his term expires in 2024.

14. **Terrence McElrath** (Kings County Family Court): A vicious bully, bigot and trampler of constitutional rights under the color of law, McElrath has a long pattern of misconduct. His worst period was a decade on Staten Island, when he trafficked hundreds of children into single-parent homes in order to amass Title IV-D funding. His hallmark is issuing bizarre orders, the most violent of which was jailing a parent when his child disappeared from foster care. He favors vague "temporary orders of visitation" (TOV), arguing that **inclarity** helps parties to resolve issues amongst themselves. In truth, he issues these TOVs because they are "appeal-proof": the 2<sup>nd</sup> Department Appellate Divisions immediately dismisses any applications to appeal TOVs. Exploiting this loophole, McElrath and many other family court judges just keep on issuing TOVs for years, turning them into a permanent status quo. This causes chaos to families, and incalculable harm to children. In one recent case, he issued a TOV which took away two kids from a mother simply because her divorce judgment omitted a custody order in her favor. The father petitioned in front of McElrath, won, and then excluded the kids from the mother until they became adults. This caused a mother to have to prove her sanity by hiring a therapist, whom McElrath then refused to allow to testify. In another case, he issued a continuation order on a previous TOV that was no longer in effect, thus creating an entirely new status quo, without any hearing. In another ongoing case, he handed over power to his friends at the Children's Law Center (CLC) to decide whether a child should even be allowed to receive a birthday card from her father.

When the case became too hot in social media, he passed it over to Judge Kusakabe, to ensure that any trial was further delayed. Meantime, the child was not permitted to receive any gifts or letters from her father. In breach of judicial canons, and constitutional case-law, McElrath holds ‘ex parte’ hearings that exclude the party he disfavors. This practice is a violation of judicial canon, section 100.3(B)(6) (“*A judge shall not initiate, permit, or consider ex parte communications, or consider other communications made to the judge outside the presence of the parties or their lawyers concerning a pending or impending proceeding.*”) McElrath’s ex parte hearings are usually done through his law secretary, Karen Cortes, who regularly meets with the CLC and the favored party – but not the losing party or their attorneys. In those rare conferences where all parties are present, Cortes tells the assembled group: “I am the Judge now”, issues arbitrary orders herself, and keeps no record of the conference proceedings. McElrath does not read motion papers from litigants whom he dislikes. He neglects to provide a hearing for years, in violation of the judicial canon to provide all parents with a prompt and comprehensive hearing. He has a vengeful spirit, punishing litigants who he believes to have written negative reviews on sites like [therobingroom.com](http://therobingroom.com) (which he refers to as “the ‘I hate my judge’ website”). In one case, he falsely accused a father of posting online his private address, and then issued an order depriving the father of any access to his child. Before the father’s attorney had a chance to object, McElrath suddenly adjourned proceedings for six months. He bullies litigants, regularly interrupting them with the mantra: “The way the rules work here, is when I talk, you listen!” McElrath has an inappropriate partnership with the CLC, allowing their attorneys to testify, in violation of the witness-advocate rule, and then blindly following their recommendations on custody. He also has a cronyistic relationship with Comprehensive Family Services, sending them hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of business in supervised visitation. McElrath has been a leading advocate for judicial pay raises, forcing the NY taxpayer to fund a hike in judges’ pay that, since April 1, 2012, has raised his salary nearly \$70,000 a year, to \$265,000.

15. **Judith D. Waksberg** (Kings County Family Court): Waksberg’s actions have caused havoc for numerous families. No more so than what she did to a five-year old boy, whom she separated from her father for three years from 2016-19. In that case, she modified a prior order, from the atypically reasonable Judge Michael Katz, that had allowed the little boy unsupervised access to the father. Waksberg changed that to supervised visitation, without any hearing on the motion, and effectively endorsing mother’s alienating behavior. She then took no action when the mother failed to make the boy available for visitation, and turned a blind eye when she moved out of New York to Florida. What Waksberg did do was order a torturous forensic evaluation, costing the parents \$15,000. She also forced the father to pay 75% of that. She then withheld the final report from the father and his attorney. And when the mother failed to bring the child to therapeutic visitation, she did nothing. In July 2018, the FCLU witnessed Waksberg completely ignore a contempt motion filed by the father after the mother had blocked all physical contact with the father and allowed him only 10 minutes of phone contact in eight months. Instead of ordering the mother to comply with the order and help rebuild her son’s relationship with her dad, Waksberg told the father to “work on [his] parenting skills”. A court observer was so appalled by this callousness that he called out that this was a “tragedy of justice.” Waksberg ordered one of her armed officers to remove the observer from the court. She then pressured the father to agree to a settlement agreement that would excuse all the mother’s violations and allow him “visitation” with the boy -- in FOUR YEARS time. Those settlement negotiations took five hours, further enriching the three attorneys -- Andrew Black (dad), Mahmoud Ramadan (mom’s attorney, who had not turned up to five scheduled hearings), and the corrupt Children’s Law Center’s Lauren McSwain (who failed egregiously to protect the child’s welfare). Those attorneys

churned billable time as they debated how many photos of the child the mother should send to the father -- eventually agreeing to five photos per month. Waksberg signed off on this order, but took no steps to address the mother's blatant contempt. Instead, she ordered a forensic evaluation with one of King's County family court's worst hacks, Sophie Michelakou, who has made hundreds of thousands of dollars from court appointments. With the chances of justice or any improvement to the boy's life zero, the father threw in the towel in April 2019, and agreed to a stipulation that handed legal and residential custody to the mother.

Terrified of publicity, Waksberg instructs her court officers to stop people coming into her courtroom, or just to throw them out. She also harasses journalists reporting on her actions. She is slovenly in her distribution of key items of evidence, such as forensic reports. Appointed by NYC Mayor Bill DiBlasio, Waksberg came to the family court bench in January 2017, having received no formal judicial training in family court matters. As one parent commented, she is "another incompetent minion from the DiBlasio gallery of misfits."

16. **Cheryl Joseph** (Suffolk County Supreme Court and Court of Claims): A misandrist bigot determined to de-father as many children as she can. Unelected, she was appointed to the Court of Claims by Governor Cuomo, and then assigned to adjudicate custody and child support cases on the Supreme Court. Joseph was the judge who persecuted Dr Carlos Rivera, removing his children from him, [and then having him jailed for his inability to pay the full amount of his child support](#). Demonstrators at a public protest in April 2019 held placards saying she was "*too lazy to read court papers*", "*doesn't like confident women*", "*hates men*", "*consistently violates Constitutional Rights*," "*Joseph turns men into ATMs*;" "*careless and overwhelmed. I truly hope Suffolk gets an overhaul soon. If I finished my work at the end of the day as meaningless as the way these judges make decisions just to clear their calendar I would LONG be fired.*" She denies targeted parents their right to the attorney of their choice, and sets court dates when targeted parents' attorneys are unavailable. She intimidates court-watchers by bringing in eight armed officers, and instructing them to confiscate note pads. . In one instance, Americans 4 Legal Reform President and FCLU board member Gary Jacobs alleged he was physically assaulted by a court officer, presumably at the direction of Joseph, whom he has publicly denounced as "*nasty and disrespectful*". Complaints to supervising judge Randall Hindrichs and the Commission on Judicial Conduct have disappeared. She does occasionally take a stance against mothers, including Karen Lee Banks who reported that "*Joseph treated me like a stupid housewife. Several attorneys told me she 'doesn't like you' because I was white, blue-eyed and privileged'. she just didn't want to be bothered with my case.*" Her background is as an attorney, and she is a [graduate of the corrupt Children's Law Center](#).
17. **Emily Olshansky** (Kings County Family Court): Just one ruling warrants her inclusion here – her outrageous termination of the parental rights of a father called Ping N. Olshansky did this on the grounds that Ping was not married to the child's mother (who had been found to be abusive) and that he had not paid child support to an organization called Catholic Guardian Services. Ping argued that he had never even been sent a bill for child support, and no evidence was shown to Olshansky. In 2018, without holding a full hearing, Olshansky ordered the child to be sent into that firm's care, and Ping to be denied all contact with his daughter. The case [attracted the attention of The New York Times](#), which wrote this: "*For the first five years of his daughter's life, Ping N., a restaurant manager in Manhattan, lived with his little girl and her mother. He tucked her into bed at night and enjoyed spoiling her with her favorite snacks, like fish balls, egg tarts and ramen noodles. But when child welfare officials found that Amanda's mother had inflicted excessive corporal punishment on her in*

2013, they removed the girl from the home. Even though court records show that Ping had never committed abuse and was not present when it took place, [Judge Olshansky] later decided that he would lose his daughter, too. Ping could not have custody or any say in her life anymore... His daughter, now 11, was adopted by a white family with whom she has bonded. She lost her ability to communicate with Ping in Mandarin; he does not speak English.” The same report cited an interview with Martin Guggenheim, a law professor at New York University: “This is just blatant discrimination based on stale gender stereotypes — that the only way to be a father is to have a wedding ceremony or else to be a kind of rote financial provider.” Olshansky has argued that she was not to blame for the harm done to Ping and his daughter, stating that her hands were tied by a long-standing statute [Domestic Relations Law § 111(1)(d)] which gave fewer rights to unmarried dads like Ping. However, she was certainly responsible for failing to hold a plenary hearing on the question of whether Ping had actually failed to pay child support. And she violated Ping’s constitutional rights, since her order went against a US Supreme Court ruling that bars decisions based on an assumption about unwed fathers “conform[ing] to the long-held view that unwed fathers care little about, indeed are strangers to, their children.” *Sessions v. Morales-Santana*, 137 S. Ct. 1678, 1693 (2017). In that case, the Court concluded that such a classification “no longer passes equal protection inspection” and explained that having differing “requirements for unwed mothers and fathers who have accepted parental responsibility is stunningly anachronistic.” Olshansky ignored this ruling – and common decency – when she tore the child away from her father and gave her to Catholic Guardian Services.

Olshansky attended Sarah Lawrence College for her Bachelor of Arts and Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University for her J.D. She worked for two matrimonial law firms as an associate and for the New York Supreme Court, Appellate Division's First Department as a law guardian director. In 2004, she was appointed to the family court.

18. **Clark Richardson** (New York County Family Court): A hand-squeezing apparatchik, Richardson never permits an inquiry into the truth behind a case. [According to one mother](#): “This filthy dog sent my 6 year old daughter to live in Georgia with a man that wasn't her natural father (denied me a paternity test) after mandating her to sex abuse counseling at the age of four for 12 weeks.” Fluent in legalese, Richardson can shape any outcome he wants using rules of evidence and procedure. He allows attorneys to lie openly in their colloquy and in their papers with no sanction whatsoever. Supervising various luminaries in Manhattan Family Court (like Support Magistrate Weir Reeves), anything is possible as long as it comports with political objectives like overcharging fathers for child support and removing children from innocent families. First appointed to the Family Court in 1995, he is a graduate of Yale University and Cornell Law School, a former borough chief in the Family Court Division of the New York City Law Department. Reappointed by Mayor Bill de Blasio on April 27, 2015, for a term that will expire in 2025. He has also served as an acting justice of the New York County Supreme Court since 2000.
19. **Elizabeth Barnett** (New York County Family Court): According to one family court attorney, she is “incredibly dense and inflexible. Any outcome is possible with this judge. In Barnett's courtroom, a parent can accuse the other parent of what the first parent is guilty of and get away with a child to the exclusion of the other parent. Barnett is a strict adherent of the power of the law guardian so any lawyer picked to represent the child runs her courtroom. One must be especially prepared and on one's toes to appear as a litigant before Barnett. Fake-outs lurk at every spoken word.” Appointed by Mayor De Blasio as a Family Court Judge in February 2015, she is a graduate of the College of Mount Saint Vincent and received her law degree from Gonzaga University School of Law. Prior to her appointment, Judge Barnett was an associate at law firms, a solo practitioner, and worked for the New

York State Unified Court System for 22 years in various capacities including Court Attorney, Deputy Counsel to the Chief Administrative Judge, Administrator of Education and Training, Court Attorney-Referee, and Chief Counsel for the New York City Family Court. Elizabeth Barnett is a judge of the Kings County Family Court in New York. Her current term expires in 2025.

20. **Fiordaliza Rodriguez** (Bronx family court): Rodriguez benefits the family court machine by extending and protracting cases for years. Cases evolve endlessly under her watch, and results are almost always mother-favored. Rodriguez tends to view all parents as abusers and all children as needing help and protection of a court. The result is a population of children who hold their parents in disdain and who become oppositional and defiant as the years go on. She graduated from John Jay College of Criminal Justice and received her law degree from the CUNY School of Law. She previously worked for the New York City Administration for Children's Services, was a solo practitioner and worked as a Court Attorney-Referee in Family Court, Kings and New York County. Mayor diBlasio appointed her as a judge in February 2015, hailing her as the first Dominican on the bench. [According to an interview with the NY Times](#), *“Rodriguez says that she identifies as white, but that there is no question she is seen as different from the white majority in the United States.”* <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/imagepages/2012/01/14/us/JP-LATINOS.html> She lives in the Bronx with her husband Eliezer, another attorney, and their two children. Her term does not end until 2025.
21. **Ariel Chesler (New York/Bronx Supreme Court)** As the step-son of one of New York's most corrupt AFCs, Susan Bender, Chesler is well-connected to pursue the goals of the family court racket. He also inherited most of the case-load for the notorious Matthew Cooper when he was forced into retirement at the start of 2022. [According to “The Good Men Project”](#), for which he is a contributor, he is *“an attorney in New York. He lives with his wife and two daughters, and one cat. He is the son of feminist author and psychologist Phyllis Chesler. You can follow him on Twitter @arielchesler or on his tumblr Feminist Dad here: arielchesler.tumblr.com”*. A far-left activist, [he advocates for pro-choice causes](#). A lifelong Democrat, Chesler assumed office in New York in 2019, after running for election in November 2018, and usually works [out of the courts on Thomas Street in Manhattan](#).
22. **Mildred Negrón** (Queens County Family Court): Many litigants and attorneys say that Negrón is *“a body-language judge”*: she determines a person's “integrity” by their body language, and then reaches favorable decisions for that person. Negrón turns a courtroom into a black box. A stream of facts yields the opposite result in most cases. Known as 'Millie' to her comrades, Negrón crafts anything she wants, during colloquy and during hearings. Negrón graduated from CUNY City College and received her law degree from CUNY School of Law. She worked with The Legal Aid Society, Juvenile Rights Division for over 10 years, having served as Deputy and Assistant Attorney-in-Charge of the Queens and Manhattan Offices, respectively. She worked as an Attorney for the Child, [earning very poor reviews](#). As she entrenched herself in the family court racket, she became a court Attorney-Referee for 13 years in Kings County and Queens County family courts. She was then appointed by Mayor DiBlasio as an Interim Civil Court judge in March 2016. According to one attorney who knows her well: *“Negrón is the ultimate horror show on the bench, ranking with Esther Morgenstern and Matthew Cooper. People speak about how family court results are not predictable, and Negrón lives up to that expectation in every decision. A menace to society.* Another attorney interviewed said: *Negrón conditioned the visitation for a father on his paying \$100 “cash only” to a court appointed psychologist on the recommendation of another court appointed psychologist. This means that the child was*



*withheld while payments were secured from the father. Shows partiality to court appointed law guardians and panel attorneys. Her term is due to end in 2027.*

23. **Catherine DiDomenico** (Richmond County Supreme Court): DiDomenico's courtroom is a terrifying hall of smoke and mirrors. She helps her desired winner build a case based on hearsay and colloquy, and then holds a trial where her decision has already been made. DiDomenico will use anything as a weapon in her decision against a parent. For example, if a parent is bankrupt, then DiDomenico will use this against a parent in a custody decision (that mismanagement of money means the parent will mismanage the child). DiDomenico is a graduate of Fordham University and received her J.D. from Fordham Law School. She worked as an Administrative Law Judge, as an "Impartial Hearing Officer" with the New York City Board of Education, had her own practice, was an associate for a private firm and was a federal law clerk. She was also an associate for a private firm as well as legal counsel to Congressman Vito Fossella. She was appointed to the bench in January 2005 as an Interim Civil Court Judge. She was then appointed to the family court in January 2006, and reappointed February 2007 and again in February 2017. She is married with three children and resides in Staten Island. One attorney opined: *"Here is yet another Fordham graduate who started her judgeship by having to refer to her manuals, and is now able to screw litigants on the sly. Abrasive, condescending, non credible and manipulative, it is very hard to find a cogent decision anywhere among her decisions and orders. Typically, in deciphering her orders, the opposite is the truth from what DiDomenico decided."* Another attorney stated: *"The 'Jaded Jurist' should be removed. Period. Capricious, arbitrary, rulings are all you get in her court. She treats the court staff like kindergarteners. She does not even read submitted moving papers. One really poor Judge."* Another interviewee reported: *"Conniving, ruthless, vindictive, retaliatory all done with a big smile. Worst possible profession to be awarded to this master manipulator. Treats staff, litigants, attorneys and contemporaries with utter contempt and disregard. All while hiding behind her alter ego of Eucharistic minister. Shameful!"* A court-watcher reported: *"Her law clerk Ken Dale is a mockery. I sat in for two days hearing her rule on numerous divorce cases, and its appalling to think how this woman ever got appointed. No knowledge of the law. But then again, this is Staten Island. No difference from a crooked, backwoods, small-town Alabama courthouse."* Her current term ends 2027.
24. **Carol Goldstein** (New York County Family Court): According to one attorney, *"a dimmer wit does not exist in the New York City family court system. Unwilling to consider facts presented to her, Goldstein misinterprets most of what she hears from lawyers and litigants."* More importantly, she is unable to interpret orders entered in any litigant's case. For example, if a parent has custody and authority to decide, for example, a child's education, Goldstein will usurp that authority and dictate to the parent what education the child will get. Goldstein will then add her interpretation of what parenting time means, and will place parents into a Kafkaesque situation that leads to more litigation and more waste of resources placing both parents at perpetual risk of contempt. A sweet persona on the bench with disastrous long-term results makes Goldstein a serious menace to society. She graduated from Brandeis University and received her law degree from Brooklyn Law School. Appointed by Mayor De Blasio to family court in April 2015, Goldstein previously served with the Legal Aid Society for almost 20 years, primarily in the Juvenile Rights Division. For the past 18 years, Judge Goldstein has been a Court Attorney Referee in Family Court in several counties, most recently in Manhattan.
25. **Sarah Cooper** (Bronx county family court): She specializes in emotionally torturing innocent parents in her courtroom. This judge mastered maligning the law and shaping it to



suit her objectives from her time as a child protective apparatus employee. Cooper brings with her a passion for remanding children into the care of the state and holding parents at arm's length from their children. One seasoned attorney described her as *“a rubber-stamper for the government. Cooper has no place deciding the futures of our families.”* Appointed as a family court judge by Mayor Bloomberg in January 2012, her term hopefully expires in 2019. A graduate of the State University of New York at Binghamton and received her law degree from Cardozo School of Law. Prior to her appointment, she practiced in family court for 15 years, having worked for the New York City Administration for Children's Services and as a Court Attorney Referee.

26. **Anne-Marie Jolly** (Queens family court): Ain't nothing jolly about this Grinch. This is a sweetly smiling judge with an ax to grind against anyone she thinks is a “bad parent.” Appointed as a family court judge in September 2010, she is a graduate of Boston University and received her law degree from Albany Law School. Prior to her appointment, Judge Jolly worked for the Office of Court Administration in various capacities including Counsel and Chief of Staff to the Administrative Judge of NY City Family courts, Deputy Chief Magistrate to the NY State Family court, and Court Attorney Referee in Family court. Prior to that, she was with the Legal Aid Society's Juvenile Rights Division for eight years. As with any veteran of children's rights divisions, Jolly brings to the bench an eye for prolonging a case. Motions to dismiss frivolous petitions do not work in Jolly's court. Adjournments last for years and parents lose access to their children. Almost as interminably, her current term ends in 2021.
27. **Michael Milsap** (Bronx County Family court): Another judge in the inferno of Bronx's family court, he was appointed a Judge in February 2015. According to one family-court attorney: *“There are few words that can describe Milsap: offensive, arrogant, unpleasant, divisive and the synonyms can go on. This is a judge with the most haughty attitude among the city's judiciary. He cannot help but to looks down his nose at anyone who appears in his court. Milsap offers strange reasoning in his findings and decisions which indicates he is an objectives-driven judge. The end justifies the means – especially when that means more Title IV funds for trafficking children into foster care, or single-parent families. Rubber-stampers get appointed in this bizarre system of judicial selection in New York, and Milsap would be the first in line to be selected for a family court judgeship.”* Born in Laurel, Mississippi, Milsap is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire and received his law degree from Indiana University School of Law. Prior to his appointment, he worked for the Legal Services Organization of Indiana and the Prisoner's Legal Services of New York, as well as the New York City Human Resources Administration as an Assistant Supervisor in the Office of Legal Affairs. He was a Support Magistrate in Family Court for 21 years, and prosecuted child neglect cases in the Manhattan Family Court appearing for then Supervising Judge “Judge Judy” Sheindlin. His current term expires in 2025.
28. **Stephen Bogacz** (Queens County Family Court): Bogacz is best known for violating rules that courtrooms should be open to the public. He regularly seals his court without hearing arguments or stating reasons. [As the NY Daily News commented](#): *“Lady Justice wears a blindfold. Family Court Judge Stephen Bogacz seems to expect court-watchers to put them on... all judges must abide by the law and the First Amendment in running their courtrooms.”* A life-long family court hack, he was first appointed to the family court in March 1995 and was reappointed by Mayor Bloomberg in 2005 and 2015. Prior to his appointment, he took a salary from the family court division of the NYC Law Department for nearly twenty years including as First Deputy Chief. Judge Bogacz is a graduate of Fordham College, received his Masters from Fordham Graduate School, and his J.D. from

Fordham Law School. According to one family-court attorney: *“No judge better represents the political establishment that governs the family courts than Bogacz. Ever cautious about surviving another reappointment, Bogacz appears to thoroughly enjoy screwing a parent out of a child. Fordham Law School appears to teach its graduates well as to how to shape the law and to make convincing arguments that are opposite to the facts adduced at a hearing.”* Bogacz is also known for making parents wait hours for their cases to be heard, and permitting interminable adjournments, [as described here](#).

29. **Margaret Parisi-McGowan** (New York Supreme Court). Treating due process like a toilet, McGowan holds many of her “pre-trial conferences” in chambers or table-side, with no court reporter to make a record. She assigns counsel with no regard to financial ability and coerces settlements by taking away rights from her intended loser, usually the father. Attorneys report that, unless she fully complies with her choice of who is the targeted or protected parent, she threatens to go after their law license. In March 2020, [she was one of the first judges to contract coronavirus, and make public](#). She was elected to the NY Supreme Court in November, 2016, with just 14.3% of the vote. Before that, she sat on the Queens County Family Court from 2006 to 2016, and before that [she worked for 16 years as a union rep for doomed Pan Am airlines](#). [McGowan regularly grumbles about judges’ pay](#), but takes home \$220,000 in annual salary and benefits. Parents complain [about how volatile she is](#). In one custody case, the dad was on psychiatric disability but McGowan assigned a taxpayer-funded lawyer to represent the mother (and another one for the child). This is “the Assigned Counsel Trick”, whereby a free, court-assigned attorney can jerk around a family for years, and force a submission from the litigant who pays for his lawyer. The second free lawyer always assures a best-out-of-three vote. In the recent case, McGowan made table-side decisions off the record and the father’s attorney would write up a lengthy stipulation between adjournments. The free lawyer would reject the father’s version and create his own which the other attorney would reject. This went on for at least two years. On the final day of the case, the free lawyer wanted more changes he was otherwise not permitted by law to have (like college tuition and costs obligations). Also, dad was supposed to be protected by the American with Disabilities Act, but McGowan ruled off the record that the child would be at risk, and she gave the child to the mother. Visitation rarely happened because the mother felt empowered by the dad’s disability to ‘protect’ the child, and the child was motivated by the mother to assault the father and the paternal grandparents which he did. The procedural advantages to the mother were outrageous, even in the context of modern family court. McGowan allowed her to delay three years to produce her finances. She then obtained the marital home for herself, and alienated the child from the father. Her lawyer did not have to speak with the father’s attorney, instead speaking table-side to McGowan his desires. And in the majority of important issues, McGowan listened and acceded.
30. **Joseph H. Lorintz** (Nassau County Supreme Court): Henchman for Judge Zimmerman (above). Lorintz took over the Thomas Valva case in 2017 and continued to rule on it until 2019. Like Zimmerman, he received warnings that Michael Valva was abusing his seven-year-old boy, Thomas. He ignored them, and he deepened the alienation of Thomas from his mother. [In one hearing](#), the mother Justyna Zubko-Valva desperately asked Lorintz: “Is your honor waiting for my child to die under the care of Michael Valva and Angela Valva? Because that’s what it’s leading to. The plaintiff (Valva) is hitting the children, beating them up. Nothing is being done.” She then asked Lorintz that she be able to see the kids. He immediately denied the motion. “Why? On what basis? The children’s life is in danger, your honor,” the mother asked.

"Because I said so!" Lorintz replied.

"The children's life is in danger!" she repeated.

Unmoved, Lorintz said, "Call the authorities."

Noting that teachers at her school's school are reporting the neglect in some reports, the mother replied: "The children are coming soaked in urine. Anthony is sleeping in the garage, his hands and feet are bright red, your honor. He's not getting any food."

"Ms. Valva, move along," Lorintz said. "I can't remember everything you're saying because you're saying so much."

"You honor, the CPS is not doing the job because they are closing the reports the next day."

Lorintz replied: "I have no power to do any other investigation."

There is an [online petition](#) to have him removed from the bench with over 6,000 signatures.

31. **John M. Hunt** (Queens County Family Court). Hunt railroads kids as a juvenile delinquency judge. He is the go-to judge for family-court insiders to flip custody and impose ridiculous "temporary orders", followed by transfers to "referees". In one case, he isolated a father from his child, causing the child to abandon the mother. In another case, he caused the loss of a daughter by a mother by siding with assigned counsel. He leans on the support of his buddy, the supervising judge, Carol Stokinger, to ensure he is unaccountable for his actions. The pattern of his rulings denigrates the reputation of the court, and as such violates judicial cannon Section 100.2 (A) ("*A judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.*") A family court hack, Hunt was appointed as family court judge in 1996, reappointed in 2006, and again in 2016 by Mayor diBlasio. He previously served on the Bronx County family court. Hunt began his career as a staff attorney at the Legal Aid Society's Criminal Defense Division in 1973. Between 1980 and 1996, Judge Hunt served as supervising attorney in the same division. In 1977, he worked as an associate at the law firm of Gutman & Gutman, and later became an adjunct professor at the New York City Technical College.
32. **Stacey Romeo** (Monroe County Family Court): Racist and rude, Romeo has no qualms about removing children from safe homes. Usually this is done with the collusion of her favored Attorney for the Child, Sarah Fifield. When public outcry makes a case stressful for her, she transfers the case to Judge Joseph Nesser. In one case, Romeo removed a child and threw her into foster care on the basis of an allegation that a mother had applied oil to a eight-year-old child's body as part of a Hindu ritual. At a hastily arranged 1028 hearing, both parents tried to explain oil-bath cleansing rituals common around Diwali. Romeo cut them off: "*I am not going to listen about Hindu practices... I don't care what you do in your country.*" In this case, Romeo failed to offer an interpreter to the mother, whose primary language was Telugu (spoken by 93 million Indians). Romeo is also notorious for fraud upon the court, and tampering with evidence. Official transcripts bear little resemblance to what is stated in court. Romeo is terrified of publicity. She makes everyone hand in their cellphones before entering her courtroom, although often she simply bars the public from entering, in direct contravention of the Chief Judge's directive that all courts must be open to the public. There is an online petition to Romeo removed and sanctioned [here](#). It related to a case where Romeo recklessly allowed a father custody of child, even though he was a convicted sex offender. Protests outside the courtroom led to [adverse media coverage](#), which then persuaded Romeo to recuse herself from the case. Her publicly reported annual salary is \$194,400, [according to this site](#). With benefits, she is taking an estimated \$280,000 per year from the public purse. Romeo classifies herself as a Conservative and a Republican and has [her own Twitter account](#), which she uses to raise money. She was elected a family court judge in 2016, when she narrowly defeated Democratic party candidate Maritza Buitrago in

the Monroe County Family Court general election. Before becoming a family court judge, she claims to have had six years as a law clerk and referee. She is married to another attorney and ABA member, Michael Schmitt. Her term is due to end in 2026.

33. **Laura Drager** (New York Supreme Court) Retaliatory and merciless, Drager responds to complaints against her by having the complainant jailed, as she did with musician Ellen Oxman. An angry, dictatorial bully, she regularly screams at attorneys and litigants. [According to one attorney](#), *“I have never seen or come across a less competent judge.”* She often disregards the wishes of both parents to impose her own ideologically-driven parenting plan. She issues huge child support orders, to maximize Title IV-D matching funds for NY state: in the case of Schachter v Schacter, where she milked [press coverage from the NY Post](#) et al, her final order was for a whopping \$21,000 a month in child and spousal support. Drager is especially sympathetic to attorneys from big law firms like Blank Rome, which has reportedly offered her a high-paid position on her retirement. Drager received her undergraduate degree from the University of Rochester and her J.D. degree from the Columbia University School of Law. Drager began her career in 1973 as an associate with the law firm of Proskauer Rose LLP. In 1976, she left there to become an Assistant New York County District Attorney. She then joined the Kings County District Attorney's Office in 1982, where she served as the Deputy Chief and Chief of the Rackets Bureau (a very useful training for a family court judge) until her judicial appointment in 1987. Drager became a judge of the New York City Criminal Court in 1987. She was reappointed to this position in 2002 to an eight-year term. Since 1995, she has been serving as an acting justice of the Supreme Court. She also serves as a judge of the New York City Criminal Court and [her current term expires in 2021](#).
34. **Eric Prus** (Kings County Supreme Court). Arrogant and obnoxious to litigants, Prus regularly fails to enforce stipulations entered into by the litigants in his own court. An orthodox Jew, he has also made decisions that prioritize Hasidic customs over family law. [In the case of Weisberger vs Weisberger, the Appellate Division unanimously overturned Prus' homophobic decision](#) to take away a formerly-Hasidic lesbian mother's custody of her three children. In another case, Prus had the father arrested in the courtroom and entered an order of protection where he could not even see his two daughters. In another case, he refused all applications by the father even though he was the custodial parent. He then jailed the father for failing to follow an oral order and caused his savings to be placed into escrow for many years – ruining him in the process. His conduct is unbecoming of a judge: he recently yelled at a lawyer regarding a statement of net worth; screamed at a father about paying money; and bawled at a mother about visits. This conduct is in violation of judicial canon, Section 100.3 (B)(3) (*“A judge shall be patient, dignified and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity”*). To top it all off, he regularly falls asleep during hearings. Another attorney reported: *This judge allows gouging in the extreme. My client was given restraining orders, although there was no evidence it was required, and in fact they did not even know where the other party lived. It was just a series of meaningless motions designed to rack up money for the other attorney and destroy the well-earned stellar reputation of my client. There is no amount of fear this judge will not inflict, and for no reason whatsoever, as he pleases ruthless, greedy attorneys to curry their favor. He destroys families and people, but his entire courtroom is delighted, as they watch and are entertained by his antics. His court attorney is insensitive at best and more likely deliberately sadistic, as she makes conclusions based on assumptions and speculation, and never on verified facts. My advice is to settle without stepping inside this court of injustice and evil.”*



35. **J. Machele Sweeting** (New York County Family Court). In an unopposed ballot, Sweeting was elected in November, 2014, for a term that expires in 2025. In the matter of Scollar v Altman, she recklessly endangered the safety of an eleven-year-old girl by denying the application of the attorney for the child, Philip Schiff, to restore custody to the biological mother. Instead, Sweeting directed the child to return the child to the custody of Alison Scollar, who had just been convicted of grand larceny and fraud. When the media took interest in the case, she had the whole case transferred to another judge. She claims that “there will be no delays in my courtroom”, but the reality is very different: trials take years even to commence. Various court attorneys have affirmed that Sweeting always favors the mother regardless of the evidence in favor of the father. Like many of her judicial colleagues, she works on the principle that a father is guilty until proven innocent, while a mother is innocent even when proven guilty. This is a violation of two judicial canons: Section 100.3 (B)(4) (“A judge shall perform judicial duties without bias or prejudice against or in favor of any person”) and Section 100.3 (C) (1) (“A judge shall diligently discharge the judge’s administrative responsibilities without bias or prejudice”). Born in Harlem, Sweeting calls herself “a daughter of the projects.” She is an alumna of the Eugene Dupuch Law School and Rutgers University School of Law. She then worked in the District Attorney’s office and as a law clerk. [She boasts](#) that she is the only attorney admitted to practice law in New York, Washington DC, the 4th Circuit of Virginia and the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. Her court attorney, BB Liu, is a recruit from the Children’s Law Center – a cornerstone of NYC’s family-court mafia – and helps ensure that ‘mommy always wins’. The exception to this rule appears to be when a father knows one of her friends. As [Ms Ivory Gilyard reported in November 2018](#): “Sweeting is a corrupt judge and abusive of her position. She gave custody of our kids to a felon with drug and gun convictions. the father was deemed unfit and a danger to the children by the court psychologist and she still gave the father custody of the kids. The father’s mother worked for another judge that she knows and she is corrupt.”
36. **Daniel McCullough** (New York County): Fat and bloated is a trademark of the NY judiciary, as also exemplified by this leech of the public purse. [McCullough failed to show up to work for over three years](#) because his morbid obesity kept him in the hospital and rehab center. All the while he was collecting a \$193,000 salary. Although he was forced to retire in 2017, he will not have to repay the salary he received without working, and will still retire with a hefty pension. NY State can save hundreds of thousands of dollars by ordering him to repay the money he has improperly taken, and freezing his pension for breach of contract.
37. **Anthony McGinty** (Ulster County Family Court): Best known as the target of a 2021 federal lawsuit, filed against him by author and family child advocate Francesca Amato. She alleged that McGinty placed her son with a father, who has a 15-page criminal background and now lives in a “one bedroom cottage with 8 people.” The case generated rare interest by the mainstream media, [including the NY Post](#). Amato, who published “Punished 4 Protecting,” further alleges that other mothers and children who fled abuse face similar ordeals in McGinty’s family court. The Post spoke to four other female domestic violence victims who have not been allowed to regain full custody of their children, despite pleas to McGinty. Three, including Amato, are still desperately fighting to steer their children back home while two have decided to quietly settle out of court. The attorney who represented Amato was Joshua Douglass, [who delivers a devastating denouncement of McGinty in this speech](#).

38. **Adetokunbo Fasanya** (New York County Family Court). ‘Ade’ earned his Bachelor of Laws from the Obafemi Awolowo University, in Ife, Nigeria, and was appointed as a NY judge in 2013, with no experience in New York family law. Mayor De Blasio then appointed him to the family court in 2015, without any public hearing or election. His case record shows that he always favors the mother no matter what evidence exists against her, or in favor of the dad. One attorney commented: *“This judge is a rookie. He makes snap judgments and then tries to make his desired outcome true. When dealing with this sort of activist judge, you must feed his ego and really play up the victim card to appeal to his egomaniacal nature.”* His term is due to continue to 2024.
39. **Sharon Bourne-Clarke** (Kings County Family Court & NYC Civil Court). She hands out a self-righteous ‘Bill of Rights for Children’ to litigants, but then denies parents their basic rights of due process. She imposes her version of evidentiary law, as long as her desired winner emerges. She shows limited knowledge of the rules of motion practice, which she applies in violation of judicial canon section 11.3(B) (*“A judge shall be faithful to the law and maintain professional competence in it”*). As one example of this pattern of violations, she allows her assigned counsel at the Children’s Law Center to take months to file opposition on the smallest of procedural matters.
- Her refusal to heed drug tests is worrying. As one family court attorney reported in May 2018: *“Mom died and the case was kicked back to Bourne Clarke. Dad waltzes in to get custody and I greet him at the courtroom door. I announced dad's drug use (benzodiazepene, THC, methadone, phenylcyclidine and heroin) and the prior judge ordered a drug test which dad failed with this five-drug cocktail. Bourne-Clarke said this test was a violation of the man's ‘reasonable expectation of privacy’, and forced the maternal grandparents to surrender the child to the dad. Then dad took out orders of protection to keep the extended family away from the six year old female child.”*
- Guyana-born Bourne Clarke claims to encourage African American fathers to carry out their paternal duties, but there is no evidence to support this. Her negligence in imposing interminable, illegal restrictions on children’s access to both parents is ever more apparent. In the matter of Edmund Welch vs Diana Taylor, she restricted the father to two hours a week parenting time with his son, even though the mother had an ACS report ‘indicated’ against her, and was later incarcerated for assaulting an ACS officer. Bourne Clarke’s order meant that the subject-child did not see his father at all for two holiday periods. She is a regular no-show to scheduled hearings, and fails to advise litigants of her absence – adding to the financial and emotional burdens on the children and parents for whom she is responsible. Her only redeeming act was a ruling to disqualify the Children’s Law Center from representing the child in the Welch v Taylor case, when the evidence of their bias, negligence and misconduct became overwhelming. She was elected to the court in November 2014 for a term which expires in 2024.
40. **Thomas Rademaker** (Nassau County Family Court): Yet another very rotten apple. A bully who enjoys terrorizing our families and locking up parents for arrears in child support. According [to a November 15, 2018 piece in the NY Post](#), Rademaker ordered Michael Alan Berg, a parent from Baldwin, New York, to pay more than \$10,000 a month in child support and alimony. When Berg was unable to pay, Rademaker forced him to sell his telecommunications business, and jailed him. Amongst the insults Rademaker rained down on Berg: *“You symbolize everything that’s wrong with the world today.. you are selfish... you are the last guy I’d want to be in a foxhole with. You’d fold like a cheap suit.”* After Berg filed a complaint, a mid-level appeals panel did remove Rademaker from the case for taking “an adversarial stance toward the father” and making “numerous improper remarks to him.” The panel also faulted Rademaker for making “the matter personal by comparing the



father's experience to the judge's own." But apart from relocating the case, neither the CJC nor UCS has taken any disciplinary action against this Long Island lout – and has refused to accept Berg's request to reduce the arrears due. Numerous parents have complained about him screaming at them. Rademaker was born in 1971 and is a member of the Conservative Party. He was elected on November 4, 2014, with just 25% of the vote, and on November 5, 2019, he was re-elected with just 14% of the vote. In November 2017, he tried to expand his power by winning a seat on the 10th Judicial District Supreme Court in New York; but he secured just 2.5% of the vote and was roundly defeated.

41. **Maria Arias** (Queens County Family Court): In all her cases, Arias sides with her appointees, particularly the corrupt, taxpayer-funded Children's Law Center. In numerous cases, Arias denies parents due process by imposing a parenting plan, without a hearing, and setting a trial at least 12 months in the future. She makes arbitrary rulings such as punishing parents for taking vacations with their children. One parent describes her thus: "Has a slightly high pitched, annoying whine of a voice that makes whatever she say sound like a scolding mother rather than an officer of the court." Appointed to this position by Mayor Michael Bloomberg in 2010.
42. **Tracey Bannister** (Erie County Supreme Court). Attorneys regularly complain of her off-the-wall legal decisions. She uses police officers to intimidate litigants she dislikes. [In one case](#), she based a ruling to deny a father access to his children on her disapproval of the dad's "Biblical Christian beliefs." She was elected to this position in 2009
43. **Maria Vazquez-Doles** (Orange County): Works alongside Robert Onofry (see below). Issues custody switches before a hearing is complete. Those Temporary Orders are often unclear, especially on holidays and vacations, causing even more bedlam between warring parents. She regularly compares her own experiences and opinions to that of litigants, and once even criticized a mother for not scheduling a C-section at a time more convenient to the court schedule. Indeed, she called that mother to appear in court just one day before her scheduled C-section. Educated at Brooklyn College and Touro Law School, she was elected on November 5, 2013 with just 10.8 percent of the vote for a term that expires in 2027. Previously the Justice for the Monroe Town Court. Her prior experience includes private practice, court attorney for the New York County supreme court, counsel and litigation manager for Owens Corning and a professor at Monroe College. Associations: New York State Bar Association, Orange County Bar Association, Puerto Rican Bar Association, Past President, Friends of the Monroe Free Library, Former Chair, Latino Democratic Committee of Orange County. She stated, on her 2013 campaign website: "*Knowing the law is not enough. Judicial temperament and demeanor assures that everyone will be treated with dignity and respect.*" For a taste of her, here is [her campaign video](#).
44. **Joan Piccirillo** (Bronx County Family Court): Appointed to the Family Court in July 2012. She received her undergraduate degree from Waynesburg University and her law degree from Touro College School of Law. Prior to her appointment, she was in private practice for over 20 years specializing in family law, and served as Principal Court Attorney in Family Court and Supreme Court. Appointed July 2012. Piccirillo picked up most of her policy-driven decision-making from Judge Fitzmaurice, a former nun. Piccirillo's decisions are strange and unpredictable. She leaves lawyers and litigants baffled as to what reasoning was used to arrive at decisions affecting children. Her term was due to be up in 2020, and it is currently unknown if she remains on the bench.
45. **Carol Sherman**: A veteran jurist who has been on the bench since 1998, she was the

supervising judge of Queens Court until she was transferred. She is the founder of the powerful Children's Law Center, which receives hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer funding to provide 'attorney-for-the-child services in Queens, Bronx, Staten Island, Kings and Erie county family courts. Sherman and executive director Karen Simmons ensure that almost every child is represented by CLC attorneys – a clear conflict of interest which requires immediate investigation by the Office of Court Administration and the Department of Justice. Sherman has also failed to investigate the hundreds of complaints made against attorneys and judges for whom she is responsible. As such, she has neglected the administrative responsibilities she has sworn to uphold, as part of New York's 22 NYCRR §100.3(C). Sherman was the subject of a scathing *New Yorker* feature in August 2017, entitled [\*When should a child be taken from his parents?\*](#), which heartbreakingly charted how Sherman permanently separated a child from both her parents. The piece also took the lid off Sherman's links to a foster-care industry, which is costing NY taxpayers tens of millions of dollars – or \$62,000 a year per child.

46. **Amanda White:** As supervising judge in Kings County Family Court, she has ignored or deflected thousands of complaints about the judges cited above, allowing mistreatment of New York families to run amok. She also perpetuates the Children's Law Center racket by instructing her judges to appoint CLC attorneys on every case, and giving the CLC offices within the court-house, and many other material privileges.
47. **Victoria Campbell** (Orange County Supreme): Along with Robert Onofry and Lori Currier Woods, she champions the Orange County Judicial Mafia. She takes [donations from the Onofry family](#); and then [the Onofry family fund her campaigns](#). She also ensures preferential treatment for her son, Kiel Van Horn, an attorney in Orange County family court.
48. **H. Patrick Leis, III** (Suffolk County): A father, Keith Tomczyk, in the matter of Tomczyk v. Tomczyk paid over \$217,000 in maintenance/support to wife to be included in paying for a mortgage and other household carrying charges. This is a pending divorce matter that has been pending for over 5 years. Judge Leis imprisoned him for debt three times based upon "willful" nonsupport. Willfulness would require he did not pay anything. It cannot be willful if he paid over \$217,000 in maintenance and support. Family members and friends paid over \$30,000 in release monies in total to get him out of jail on three occasions. This is against NY law: if obligor doesn't have ability to pay, cannot make family or friends pay obligation or else it is debtor's prison. Judge Leis held no ability to pay, imprisoned father on criminal contempt for debt, refused to grant him appointed attorney in criminal case, refused to allow father to present defense, evidence and witnesses of inability to pay, refused father right to trial by jury. Judge Leis held a 29-day domestic violence hearing (after father's attorney bailed out of the case because of lack of further funds) because he knew father would appeal, but made it cost prohibitive to purchase 29 days of transcripts. Father filed three Orders to Show Cause for Contempt and 3 Motions for Contempt against wife for parental rights interference and parental alienation. Judge Leis ignored all applications. Father hasn't seen children in years. Judge willfully refuses to incarcerate mother for lying to court about paying mortgage and carrying costs, since marital residence is no in foreclosure because she hasn't paid mortgage in over 40 months. Judge also willfully refuses to incarcerate mother and reverse custody to father for parental time interference and parental alienation.
49. **Conrad Singer** (Nassau County Family): Shows complete contempt for the Law. This can be best seen in his handling of allegations of domestic violence regarding Tracy and Robert

Schmidlin. During the court proceedings, Judge Conrad Singer ordered Ms. Schmidlin to disclose the address of the shelter where she was then living. Ms. Schmidlin's attorney, Nancy Mullen-Garcia advised Judge Singer that *"My client cannot disclose the address of the shelter."* Judge Singer stated that if Ms. Schmidlin failed to provide the address, Judge Conrad Singer would hold her in contempt. When Ms. Mullen-Garcia again refused to reveal her client's address, Singer ordered her to bring her supervising attorney, Lois Schwaeber, to court by 11:00 am that morning. When Ms. Schwaeber appeared at court, Singer threatened to hold Ms. Mullen-Garcia in contempt if she refused and persisted in refusing to disclose the location of the shelter where her client then resided. Supervising attorney Schwaeber also refused to provide the location of the client's shelter by stating: *"We are by statutory law, New York State statutory law, the federal statutory law, several of them, prohibited from revealing the address of our shelter."* Despite having been placed on notice that the attorney's refusal was grounded in the law [Family Court Act §154-b(2)(b)], Judge Singer persisted in unlawfully demanding the disclosure of Ms. Schmidlin's address. In fact, Judge Singer became incensed that anyone would have the audacity to challenge his imperial authority. As a result, Judge Singer showed an Il Duce attitude in ranting and raving at the attorneys. When Ms. Mullen-Garcia continued to refuse to reveal her client's address in open court, Judge Conrad Singer illegally held her in contempt and fined her \$1,000. A complaint was then filed to the NY State Commission on Judicial Conduct (see below). The only action it took was to issue a "complimentary admonition".

One attorney [describes him thus](#): *"This judge feels no obligation to follow any law whether binding on him or not, safe in the knowledge most people in Family Court will not appeal. He is an outright bully whose primary objective seems to be to ensure the attorneys and litigants before him know who is boss with no regard for how his rulings detrimentally impact children and families. Does having a sibling on the bench qualify one for judgeship or seem more like nepotism?"* (This is a reference to the fact that his sister is Judge Robin Kent.)

One litigant had these questions about him: *"I'm curious why Judge Conrad Singer is permitted to maintain a private law practice in Great Neck with another Family Court Judge Robin Kent while both are serving on the bench at the same time? Is this ethical? or even legal?"*

A parent had this report on him: *"Very biased with a huge ego with nothing to back it. Clearly no legal scholar, just grandiosity and pomposity that does damage. His well documented behavior in 2009 should have merited him removal from the bench, but he is politically connected through his sister."*

Prior to his judicial election, Singer worked as a village justice of the Great Neck Plaza Village Court and as a managing attorney of Singer & Kent, P.C. He was also reportedly the Chief of the Vigilant Fire Company from 2000-2004. Singer [was appointed to the bench in 2007, and re-elected in 2016 – with just 12.7% of the vote, in 2016](#). In 2017, [he was elected Presiding Member of the New York State Bar Association's Judicial Section](#), a highly corrupt organization.

50. **Elenor Reid (Bronx Family Court):** Known for her incompetence and regular denial of due of process, she received [a rare slap on her well-manicured wrist from the First Department Appellate Division](#) in April 2020. In a lengthy, signed opinion written by Justice Anil Singh, the Appellate Division made clear that a 2018 hearing on whether the children should be returned to the father should not have spooled out over six months because of attorney and court scheduling conflicts. "We find that Family Court should have granted the motion and held a prompt hearing in accordance with the parent's and the children's right to due process," wrote Singh on behalf of a unanimous panel that reversed the September 2018 motion decision of Judge Reid.

51. **Erik K. Pitchal** (Kings County). It was this De Blasio-appointed judge's decision to return a baby to her abusive parents that led to that [child's tragic death in October 2023](#). Futher reporting on the case [by the NY Times here](#).

## **GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN: JUDGES REMOVED OR RETIRED FROM THE BENCH**

1. **Janet DiFiore** (Court of Appeals) She was once the *capa di capi* of NY's family court Mob. As New York's Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, [until her resignation on July 11, 2022](#), she received many complaints about the school for scoundrels she ran. Yet she did nothing to ameliorate the NY Unified Court System.

DiFiore has a background as a racist District Attorney in Westchester. She covered up cops who, according to *The Gothamist*, "[took part in alarming acts of police misconduct, from framing and beating residents to collaborating with drug dealers, all as part of a culture of impunity within the department's narcotics unit.](#)" She also ensured that, when white cops murdered black Kenneth Chamberlain, no charges were filed against the cops. Chamberlain was an unarmed 68-year-old military veteran who accidentally activated his medic alert button. When Westchester cops forced their way into his home, without a warrant, a white [officer, Steven Hart, called him "nigger"](#), tasered him, then shot him first with a beanbag gun. Officer Anthony Carelli then shot Chamberlain twice in the chest with live ammunition, killing him. As DA, DiFiore defended her decision not to prosecute Carelli and his colleagues on the grounds that they "*acted appropriately*," [and that "there was no reasonable cause" to indict Carelli](#). DiFiore even neglected to take any disciplinary action against officer Hart for calling Chamberlain a "nigger".

DiFiore took over her position from Jonathan Lippmann in 2016 with the promise of an "Excellence Initiative". She promised "*operational and decisional excellence in everything that we do [and to] fairly and promptly adjudicate each of the millions of cases filed in the New York State courts every year.*" [According to her 2017 application for increased funding from the NY Legislature](#): "*The initial focus of the Excellence Initiative has been the elimination of delays, which in themselves far too often constitute a denial of justice.*" However, she has failed to provide any valid data to suggest she has made any progress here. She claims that "*backlogs have been reduced in the Family Court. For example, since the beginning of the Excellence Initiative, there has been a 54 percent reduction in the number of support-related cases over 180 days old in the New York City Family Court.*" However, she failed to provide any independently verified data to back this up, and doesn't even try to claim that the backlog in custody cases – and the systematic denial of due process -- has been addressed in any way.

In the Unified Court System's 2018 Annual Report, she claimed that "*under the Excellence Initiative, the New York Courts have dramatically improved their performance in resolution of criminal cases (both felony and misdemeanor), Family Court matters and civil disputes.*" She made this claim while asking for an extra half a billion dollars from us taxpayers. What she did not point out was that the courts needed to handle one third fewer cases. As Michael Friedman, former president of the Albany County Bar Association, [reported in April 2019](#): "*Since Chief Judge DiFiore announced the "excellence initiative" in 2016, there has been a 333,255 reduction in filings, nearly 10%. This is a trend that goes back over a decade. In 2008, when the judicial budget was \$1.5 billion, the court system handled over 1.5 million more cases than 2018. That was one and a half the number of cases than 2018.*" In truth, DiFiore's Excellence Initiative proved a complete sham, solely designed to feather the judiciary's nest.

DiFiore's departure was mired in scandal. [According to a report in Law360](#):



*"She was under investigation for interfering in a disciplinary hearing of Dennis Quirk, president of the New York State Court Officers Association and a frequent critic of the chief judge. Quirk faced potential punishment for writing a letter threatening to post paper copies of an old newspaper story about DiFiore's alleged affair on court buildings statewide. In August 2021, DiFiore wrote an ex parte letter to the hearing officer, Phyllis Orlikoff Flug, asking her to punish Quirk, according to a copy of the letter obtained by Law360. Judicial ethics canons generally prohibit judges from using their titles to influence an ongoing proceeding for personal gain. Quirk "exhibits no remorse," DiFiore wrote to Flug. "These patent realities require that you use every means at your disposal to address this incident and deter future misconduct by respondent."*

*"I implore you to use your authority wisely to uphold the values of our entire court system," DiFiore said.*

*Flug, a retired judge, told Law360 she forwarded the letter to the Commission on Judicial Conduct shortly after receiving it. Flug said she spoke directly with Robert Tembeckjian, chief counsel for the commission, who told her the commission would investigate.*

*The Commission does not comment on active investigations, but a person familiar with the inquiry confirmed that DiFiore was under investigation at the time she announced her resignation on Monday.*

*A spokesperson for the Commission declined to comment.*

*"She should know better as a judge," Quirk said.*

*DiFiore did not give a specific reason for her decision to resign Monday, saying only, "It is time for me to move on to the next chapter in my professional life."*

*In response to inquiries from Law360, state court spokesperson Lucian Chalfen said DiFiore's resignation was unrelated to the investigation.*

*Quirk's disciplinary hearing stemmed from his actions following a New York Post story noting that DiFiore had ordered an "independent review of the New York state court system's response to issues of institutional racism" after receiving a complaint about the union leader's alleged conduct toward Black court officers.*

*Quirk responded by sending an email to DiFiore in which he suggested he'd respond to the spread of "false rumors," according to documents in a related dispute in state court over whether DiFiore should testify in the disciplinary hearing.*

*"Lets [sic] see [how] you like the online articles about your relationship with a police officer with ties to organized crime while you were married posted all over every Court Building in NYS," he said, according to the court documents."*

DiFiore's legacy is dire. Her failure to reform the Commission on Judicial Conduct, which is populated by judges and attorneys with no inclination to provide judicial oversight, was especially egregious. The same is true for her failure to provide oversight for the Attorneys for the Child she blindly finances. A mother of three, she was given a copy of this report, but has failed to respond to it, let alone to launch an independent public inquiry into the damage being caused to children by the family courts.

Meantime, DiFiore sought to curtail New Yorkers' rights of appeal. [She pressed the Court of Appeals to slash the number of appeals it hears](#), telling them that cases must now be just of "public importance". Who cares about individual civil rights, right? This is the same thing that former NY Chief Judge Judith Kaye did during her career on NY's highest court. She also cut back on the number of cases to be heard, and limited our rights.

In November 2018, [DiFiore became embroiled in a public dispute](#) with her own court officers who protested against her administration by wearing T-shirts saying "Organized Crime Association" -- a play on DiFiore's Office of Court Administration (OCA). Only the Truth hurts -- and DiFiore was very hurt. She issued a statement, affirming: *"The public display by court personnel, on or off duty, of a message that invokes*



*and perpetuates vile and insidious ethnic stereotypes — whether, as here, directed at an Italian-American or at any other group of people who historically have been subjected to such discriminatory tactics — is simply malicious and offensive.”*

The New York State Supreme Court Officers Association replied: *“The T-shirts were a play on the OCA acronym and nothing more. We’re also struck by your reference of the ‘family’ of court employees. All of our members feel mistreated and abused by your policies and such mistreatment is no way to treat a family member.”*

Far more sensitive about her Italian roots than the troubles of NY families, Di Fiore did not let it go, stating: *“By stooping to such grossly offensive stereotypes in the guise of airing your members’ concerns, you have actually done them a terrible disservice, tarnishing the proud standing of all our uniformed court officers.”*

The union responded: *“We will not apologize for exercising our constitutional rights or for bringing to the public’s attention our concerns for public safety in the nation’s busiest judicial system.”*

DiFiore’s deputy and henchman was Chief Administrative Judge **Lawrence Marks**. He has been equally negligent in his duties to purge corruption in the court system. DiFiore and Marks have done nothing to integrate the lessons of the #metoo movement. This is best shown in their response to allegations against Judge Hoffman made by his law clerk Alexis Marquez, whose Federal law suits indict DiFiore and Marks for complicity and cover-up, stating:

*“For over two months, Plaintiff [Alexis Marquez] attempted to navigate a fragmented, bewildering, and Kafkaesque gauntlet of judges and lawyers who tried to prevent her from documenting her complaints, denied that she had made any complaints, told her that her complaints were insufficient, and refused to respond to her complaints. Throughout, Plaintiff was kept isolated in administrative limbo. Supervisors and administrators repeatedly cut contact with her. Officials refused to identify the decision-makers handling her complaints. She was repeatedly warned not to talk to anyone.*

*On November 22, 2017, Plaintiff submitted an 11-page complaint to Lauren DeSole, the court system’s Director of Human Resources, supporting claims for sex- and race-based harassment, discrimination, and retaliation by Hoffman. Plaintiff was immediately transferred and demoted. Thereafter, court system officials refused to respond to Plaintiff’s communications.*

*On approximately December 1, 2017, Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks promulgated a revision to the court system’s state-wide sexual harassment policy. The revision was not announced and, to date, has not been announced. The revision consisted almost entirely of deletions. In all, Marks deleted approximately half of the court system’s sexual harassment policy. All changes to the policy were related either to the substance of Plaintiff’s complaints or to the manner in which Plaintiff reported or pursued her complaints. On information and belief, the court system’s state-wide sexual harassment policy was revised directly in response to Plaintiff’s complaints.*

*On December 13, 2017, Plaintiff escalated her complaints directly to Marks. On December 15, 2017, Plaintiff was fired without any response or explanation. No court system official ever responded to any of Plaintiff’s numerous complaints, including her 11-page complaint submitted to the court system’s Director of Human Resources.”* (The full suit can be read [here](#) )

Both Marks and DiFiore were named in a federal lawsuit, brought by Judge Elizabeth Shollenberger (see below), who [has claimed they violated her rights under the Americans for Disabilities Act, and the New York State Human Rights Law.](#)

Born in 1955, DiFiore has done everything she can to acquire and hold on to power. In August 2007, DiFiore switched party affiliations, from Republican to Democratic. DiFiore must retire at the end of 2025, the year she will turn 70 years

old. DiFiore is married to Dennis E. Glazer, a retired lawyer. The couple met on the first day of law school, and married on August 15, 1981, at the Westchester Country Club in Rye. She is the mother of three children, now all adults. She lives in Bronxville, New York.

2. **Elizabeth Shollenberger** (White Plains): This morbidly obese jurist turned the NY judiciary into a laughing stock and fleeced the taxpayer out of hundreds of thousands of dollars. [As reported by the NY Post](#), “*Shollenberger’s 400-pound weight prevents her from being able to climb the three steps to her courtroom bench.*” She was first suspended for [defecating in a courtroom trash-can, and emitting “odors” that her colleagues found impossible to tolerate](#). Unable to control her eating she took “indefinite medical leave”, while taxpayers continued to pay her \$225,000-a-year salary. After a complaint to the Commission on Judicial Conduct by the FCLU, and other media coverage, Lawrence Marks, the chief administrative judge of the NY courts, ordered on May 2, 2017 that “*no additional judicial matters shall be assigned to Judge Shollenberger.*” She continued to receive her salary, and in July 2018, Marks reinstated her fully to the bench. When complaints continued about Shollenberger’s “odors,” Marks re-imposed the suspension in August 2018. However, she continued to receive her salary, and remains entitled to pension and other benefits. In October, 2018, Shollenberger [filed a federal lawsuit against Marks](#), claiming violation of her human rights. The FCLU reported Shollenberger’s misconduct CLC to the New York Assembly, at the 2018-19 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Public Protection, [in testimony viewable here, starting at 11:55:55](#). However, neither the NY Legislature nor the Judiciary has recovered the funds misappropriated by this judge. Ordering reimbursement of these half-a-million dollars would help NY State’s budgetary crisis.
3. **Matthew Cooper (New York County Supreme Court/Appellate Term)**: A tyrannical judge, Cooper was a major player in the NY court racket until his retirement in 2022: he was the Chair of the Board of Justices of the Supreme Court, First Judicial District, and was on the executive boards of the New York State and the New York City Associations of Supreme Court Justices. His background at the Teamsters set the tone for Cooper’s abusive, wasteful and scandalous judgeship. In March 2021, he caused [nationwide disgust](#), and was labeled a “mask Nazi”, when he separated a six-year-old girl from her mother, a respected doctor, Micheline Epstein, [to punish her for declining to wear a mask outside](#). That punishment included an act of extortion which has become customary in his Part 51: Cooper ordered Dr. Epstein that, if she wished to see her daughter again, she must contract Comprehensive Family Services (CFS), a private company to which he has strong ties, to conduct ‘supervised visitation’. CFS slaps huge bills on parents. In the matter of Zappin v Comfort, CFS’ total bill was more than \$150,000. In the matter of Braverman v Braverman, the CFS bill was \$180,000. In both of those cases, the child ended up alienated from the targeted parent. Dr Epstein, who was familiar with CFS’ reputation, asked Cooper that this ‘supervised visitation’ be done by a family member, or someone less frightening to the child. Cooper refused. Scared of how CFS would harm her child, Dr Epstein refused to engage them. Tragically, that led to the six-year old child not seeing her mother at all. But Cooper went further than just legally kidnapping the child. He sought to smear the mother – a respected medical doctor – as being mentally ill, and ordered one of his “expert” cronies – Dr. Elie Aoun -- to do an expensive “psychological evaluation” on her. Cooper made it clear that he was going after Dr. Epstein’s medical license. Cooper’s defense for his campaign against Dr Epstein was that he had seen footage, provided to him by the child’s school, of Dr

Epstein arguing with a nurse outside the child's school. Crossing the line from judge to both witness and prosecutor, Cooper stated that "*Dr. Epstein pushes the nurse. That is clearly visible on the tape.... At 8:21:40 Dr. Epstein departs. She continues, she has continued past the school but at 8:23 a.m Dr. Epstein returns and visibly spits on the nurse. It is absolutely clear.*" Despite this allegation of an assault, no charges were ever filed against Dr Epstein, and Cooper refused to provide the parties with the footage he claimed to have viewed. He even refused to send the parties' attorneys a copy of the Order which had provided him with this 'evidence'. More importantly, Cooper failed to provide any reason why he was using this incident to separate a child from her mother, when no neglect or abuse of the child was even alleged. Cooper also called Dr Epstein's then-attorney, Nancy Green, who subsequently informed her client that, due to pressure from Cooper, she could no longer represent her. Cooper thus ensured that Dr Epstein was deprived of competent counsel. During the next court appearance, on March 25, 2021, Cooper failed to properly warn Dr Epstein of the dangers of proceeding pro se, or to offer her counsel. As a further denial of due process, Cooper ordered Dr Epstein's microphone to be muted during that hearing, when she was appearing pro se. When he did finally allow her to speak, he constantly interrupted her. During one such interruption he complained that, because of Dr Epstein's actions, he had received "900 or so e-mails, many of them threatening, many of them saying the most horrible things about me and my family." ‘

Cooper then doubled-down on his attempts to brand himself as a pioneer of Covid-fighting jurists, when [he barred a Long Island father, David Bojayan, from seeing his three year old daughter](#), as punishment for his decision not to be vaccinated against Covid-19. Despite the facts that no statutes entitled him to do so, and that 80 million other Americans were not fully vaccinated at the time, Cooper took this draconian step to burnish his reputation with his Democrat friends. He helped ensure that [there was extensive media coverage around the case](#), and arranged for his October 2021 decision to be widely published.

According to his [official biography](#), Cooper "*is a graduate of Hobart College in Geneva, New York, where he received his B.A., cum laude, in 1974. Following two years as a VISTA volunteer with Bronx Legal Services, he attended Antioch School of Law in Washington, D.C., where he earned his J.D. in 1979.*"

Matthew Frederic Cooper's misconduct has been visible since 2001, when he campaigned to be a judge on the back of his Teamster connections in the Democratic Party: from 1988-2000, he was [chief legal counsel to the Teamster 237](#). "Don Cooper" was elected to the bench with no experience in matrimonial or custody cases. That 'election' to the court is shrouded in secrecy as his campaign documents are sealed and not publicly accessible.

One of the most troubling aspects of his misconduct is the quid pro quo he establishes with attorneys who have provided him money or services, and to whom he gives favorable judgments. This is best seen in the case of Lawrence Goodman, who had been Cooper's campaign manager for his election to the New York Supreme Court in 2008. On March 28, 2014, Goodman showed up in Cooper's court as an attorney for the father in a custody and divorce action -- *Amy W. v. Ben H.* -- where the father was seeking to modify a prior award of custody to the mother from a previous judge Evans. Cooper even admitted to this conflict of interest:

COOPER: I want to state on the record that I see Mr. Goodman has been

retained as appellate counsel. I have had the appointment of Mr. Goodman through politics when I ran for Supreme Court Judge. Mr. Goodman is involved in the political process. I've socialized with him ... I had lunch with him about two months ago just to discuss life in general and his future career path ... I am friendly with him but not a close personal friend. I just wanted that put on the record."

Mr. Goodman's "future career path" included entering an appearance as trial counsel on behalf of the father at a modification hearing. Mr. Goodman's notice of appearance was served five days before the start of trial. The mother immediately filed a motion to recuse Justice Cooper from the proceeding based on the apparent conflict of interest with Mr. Goodman and the appearance of impropriety. Justice Cooper refused to entertain the motion and ordered that the modification hearing proceed as calendared. Mr. Goodman proceeded as the father's trial counsel at the modification hearing. And, based on Mr. Goodman's notice of appearance filed and served on the eve of the hearing, the mother had virtually no appellate remedy. Cooper then proceeded to give Goodman what he had asked for: he increased the father's access with the children without first holding a hearing as required by law. Even more astonishing, in his decision rendered on the record on December 22, 2014, Justice Cooper overturned his predecessor, Justice Evans', original custody award in its entirety awarding full permanent legal and physical custody to the father. This was despite the fact that based on the record and Justice Cooper's decision the father failed to raise any "substantial change in circumstances" to warrant modification of Justice Evans' decision. As one attorney, who has asked to remain anonymous, has commented: *"Justice Cooper should have recused himself, or at the very least, entertained the motion to recuse. This is particularly so where there was a clear appearance of impropriety in that Justice Cooper fraternized with the father's trial counsel during the pendency of the case and was politically involved with the father's trial counsel during his election. Cooper's failure to do so raises serious questions as to the propriety of his presiding over the case with an apparent conflict of interest. More importantly, the appearance created by Justice Cooper in refusing to entertain a motion where there was a substantial evidence as to an appearance of impropriety directly undermines the integrity and public confidence in the judiciary. Once Mr. Goodman became involved, Justice Cooper should have recused himself and should not have touched the matter."*

Intoxicated by his power, Cooper has a huge problem with anger management. He screams in court. He even has post-it notes at his desk saying "Speak less" and "Stay quiet!", to remind himself to control himself. In a hearing in March 2021, Yahoo News reported that ["Judge Cooper had to apologize for cursing during the hearing when he thought his computer froze."](#)

An example of the vicious, tone he uses can be seen in an exchange with one parent, Nicholas Marcilio, on Valentine's Day, 2013:

JUDGE COOPER: You're the Plaintiff. You want to get divorced, right?

MR MARCILIO: Yes.

JUDGE COOPER: Good. Then move out!"

He then gave Mr Marcilio just two hours to remove all his belongings from his home where he had lived for five years, even though no full hearing into the case had been completed.

All Cooper's disrespectful and angry behavior is in violation of NY Judicial Cannon section 100.3: "*A judge shall perform the duties of judicial office impartially and diligently*".

Cooper takes sadistic pleasure in incarcerating parents. He even allowed himself to be filmed on YouTube, stating that "*I live for threatening litigants*" and [gloating about incarcerating fathers in the cases before him](#). Here are some examples of his public quotes: COOPER: There is nothing like threatening someone. Threats are one of the things I kinda live for in the job, to tell people, 'if you don't there is a good chance you're going to be -- I have a lot of different lines -- I don't use bring your tooth brush next time. That doesn't really work. My new line that seems to work very well is: 'Sir we are going to adjourn this case. But, I want you now I need you to provide the bridge officer with a list of the medications you take so that can be passed onto the Department of Corrections. I hope I'm not giving away a trade secret! [[Viewable here](#)]

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COOPER: There is nothing more gratifying for your client then seeing the person they hate most in life with those handcuffs on!.. My favorite question is: What kinda car do you drive? If it is a Range Rover, an Escalade or a high-end Lexus, that's prima facie case for imprisonment! [[Viewable here](#)]

And Cooper carries through with these threats. One example of a parent he imprisoned was professional golfer James Reino, whom, in March 2020, he ordered to be jailed for 13 months for alleged non-payment of child support, [as seen in this story](#).

In one instance, Judge Cooper spat on one parent who had criticized him. That was the allegation of Anthony Zappin, who affirmed that Cooper spat on him when, by chance, he passed him in a Manhattan street. Cooper denied the allegation, although Zappin has presented CCTV video evidence, and a spit-stained jersey to corroborate his account of the incident.

Another of his strategies of intimidation is to threaten "sanctions" on a Targeted parent, if he does not withdraw an allegation against the Protected parent. He did this in the Marcilio v Hennessy case, when he told Mr Marcilio he would impose un-specified "sanctions" if he did not withdraw allegations that Ms Hennessy had assaulted him.

He constantly badgers and interrupts Targeted parents. For example, on May 8th 2013, this exchange took place:

MR MARCILIO: I would Like to object to something your Honor ---

JUDGE COOPER: I would like you to be quiet. Fine.

When the covid-19 pandemic turned court into remote encounters, Cooper started using a new technique to silent Targeted parents: he muted their microphones. This is what he did with Dr Epstein in a hearing on March 25, 2021.

Cooper routinely ignores the rules of evidence. In the case of Epstein v Epstein, for example, he based his order to separate the child from her mother on the basis of his viewing of video footage provided by an attorney at the child's school. Yet he was not allowed to view anything about the case, unless those materials have been brought into evidence. And Cooper himself admitted, on April 16, 2021, that "the video is not yet in evidence."



According to one court observer, “*Cooper acts like the love-child of Mr. Burns and Grand Moff Tarkin*”. Cooper often threatens parents that they will never see their child(ren) again unless they do exactly what he says. He threatens parents with incarceration if they do not submit to expensive drug tests, or pay his designated “experts”.

By forcing parents to contract these people, Cooper is applying the mafioso skills he learned from the Teamsters to run a racket, enriching crony professionals at the expense of struggling families. This is most clear in his orders appointing “attorneys for the child” (AFC) to represent the children. His favored AFCs are the aptly named Elizabeth ‘Libby’ Fee (\$475 an hour) and her equally well-named partner Tara Diamond (\$300 an hour). Other beneficiaries are Rosemary Riviuccio (\$400 an hour); and Harriet Newman Cohen (\$600 an hour). Ms Cohen is especially happy to have Cooper as her friend. In the case of *Zappin v Comfort*, for just a four month period from September to December 2015, she billed the parties an astounding \$501,296.26. The total included Ms. Cohen’s luxury car service to and from the courthouse, expensive sit-down lunches and dinners during trial and work that was unrelated to the Matrimonial Action. Even more astonishing was that fact that Ms. Cohen billed \$600 per hour for her law partner, Paul Kurland, to sit in the courtroom with her and her daughter, Martha Cohen Stine, to sit in the gallery during proceedings. Neither Mr. Kurland, nor Ms. Stine, ever received court permission to bill as the child’s fiduciary as required by law. With Cooper’s blessing, Ms. Cohen turned matrimonial court into a profiteering scheme.

Cooper also revels in ordering parents to undertake expensive “forensic examinations”, thus enriching his friendly “psychologists” such as Eric Teitel (\$400 per hour) Mark Rand (\$250 per hour), Seymour Moscovitz (\$300/hr), Elie Aoun (\$350/hr, with an initial \$6180 retainer) and Leah Younger (\$250 an hour). In the matter of *Epstein v Epstein*, Younger pulled out of the case after pocketing more than \$10,000 but before even issuing any report. Cooper refused to issue an order either reimbursing the parents, or for the notes and test results to be released, to allow the court to make at least an interim assessment.

Cooper corrupts the process of the forensic evaluation in various ways. First, he obliges parents to sign a statement that they are doing the evaluation of their own free will and, as such, they will accept the results and waive their right to challenge his appointed evaluator. This then allows Cooper to use the evaluator’s report to rubber-stamp his own will on the case. Even more disturbingly, he provides his own notes to forensic evaluators, skewing the process, and violating court rules. Dr Eric Teitel, assigned by Cooper at \$400 an hour, has affirmed he did this in the matter of *Mack vs Mack*.

Cooper also generates business from “supervised visitation” vendors. He enriches his friend Rick Spitzer, owner of the private firm Comprehensive Family Services (CFS), by contracting CFS -- at \$350 an hour -- to conduct “supervised visitation” of Targeted parents and their poor children. Cooper has boasted that he has sent “thousands of parents” to CFS, meaning that millions of dollars must have been earned by Spitzer’s company, thanks to Cooper.

Cooper also accepts into evidence from therapists without a license, when they are recommended by an Attorney for the Child he has appointed. He did this with the therapist, Marsha Greenberg, who was contracted by Cooper’s AFC Tara Diamond (\$300 an hour), when her license for conducting therapeutic activities with children was 15 years out of date.

Cooper loves publicity. He and his court clerk Tim Arbo use contacts with the Unified Court System to be assigned cases involving celebrities, like [Robert DeNiro](#), Richard Gere and Madonna/Guy Ritchie. Improperly, he then comments on cases even before he has issued a final judgment. He uses his press contacts at the *New York Post*, the *New York Daily News* and [Yahoo News](#) to humiliate and ruin litigants. He has set up a quid-pro-quo relationship with these tabloids, offering reporters like Priscilla DeGregory, Barbara Ross and Julia Marsh juicy stories in return for positive press coverage of him. He then uses media pressure to intimidate and shame litigants into outcomes he desires. The most egregious example of this was his publishing of a September 18, 2015 decision against Anthony Zappin, by sending it to the New York Law Journal; the New York Post and the Daily News tabloids. The Post's headline was "*Patent-lawyer a 'Fool' for Representing Himself in Divorce Battle: Judge.*" The Daily News' headline was: "*Manhattan Lawyer Fined \$10G for Bullying Judge and Attorney in His Divorce Case.*" Those publications set off a cascading series of articles, blogs, Facebook posts. As a direct result, Zappin was fired from his job the next day, and would end up losing his law license. But Cooper's publication of his Decision violated the statutory seal under DRL 235.

Cooper has been captured on video stating that he creates "printable sound-bites" to draw media attention to his cases, which, by law, are sealed matters. He has publicly called litigants "[deadbeat dads](#)," "[bed-pooing cokeheads](#)," "[the shyster of smoked meat](#)" and "fools."

However, whenever Cooper feels threatened by potentially critical media attention, he turns nasty, behaving criminally to silence his opponents. And woe betide a parent who should speak to the media in a critical way about him. That will lead to vicious retaliation from Cooper. In the case of Dr Epstein that meant not just taking her child away from her, it also meant going after her livelihood – her medical license. In the case of Anthony Zappin, it meant the loss of his son, his job, and his law license.

Cooper intimidates journalists by threatening to incarcerate them if they don't hand over their electronic devices. [As shown in this audio recording](#), he did this to FCLU Director Sebastian Doggart, who was reporting on a case in his courtroom. Cooper forced Doggart to take the stand, accused him of recording events, and demanded that he hand over his phone. When Doggart refused to hand it over, and invoked the Fifth Amendment when it came to Cooper's allegations, Cooper exploded with rage, ordered to court officer put handcuffs on him, and to take him to jail for the weekend (an order he later revoked). These actions violated the First Amendment of the Constitution, and New York's Shield Law, which protects journalists from harassments. He has also denied journalists the right to counsel, or to plead the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment, after he has hauled them up to the stand.

To protect himself, he falsifies the record with his court reporters, especially 'Senior Court Reporter' Reverend Jacqueline Glass. He did this in the hearing where he harassed Doggart. A comparison of an audio recording of that hearing with the "official transcript", prepared by Ms Glass, shows significant excisions. For example, the official transcript records a rebuke that Judge Cooper made to Mr Doggart: "*Stop gesticulating sir, you're distracting me.*" [Nov 6, 2015 Tr. at 23: 9-10] But it did not include Mr Doggart's response: "I was not gesticulating in any way." The same thing happened at a February 14, 2013 hearing when Judge Cooper removed an intemperate remark he made, that he did not want to "end up on the cover of the New York Post," if someone got hurt as a result of his orders.

On other occasions, Cooper and Arbo decline to provide transcripts at all. Usually he gives no reason for denying a request for a transcript. But the way he avoided providing a transcript for a December 12 2012 hearing in the matter of Marcilio v Hennessy was by claiming that “the transcription machinery failed.”

Cooper is an Associate Justice on the [Appellate Term](#), appointed by the Office of Court Administration. He uses his colleagues in the First Department Appellate Division – especially Rolando Acosta and the now-retired Judge Saxe – to ensure his rulings are never overturned. He hides behind his absolute immunity from prosecution in state courts, afforded to him by the egregious US Supreme Court decision of *Stump vs. Sparkman*.

He seems to believe he is exempt from rules forbidding judges to speak to just one party, which is known as “ex parte communication.” He regularly calls up one party’s attorney, sometimes to pressure them to withdraw their representation, as he did with Nancy Green in the Epstein v Epstein matter, and as he did with the media, attorneys and even witnesses in the Zappin case. This is in violation of judicial canons 3(B)(6) and (11); and 100.3 A(6) “A judge shall not initiate, permit, or consider ex parte communications, or consider other communications made to the judge outside the presence of the parties or their lawyers concerning a pending or impending proceeding.”

Cooper also believes himself to be exempt from rules forbidding him to sit on cases where there is a clear conflict of interest. For example, in the matter of Amy W. v. Ben H., (Index No. 309228/10) he refused to transfer the case when the attorney for the father was the same person who had run his 2008 campaign to be re-elected as a judge: Lawrence Goodman, Esq. Not only did Cooper dismiss the mother’s application for him to step away, Cooper then rendered Mr Goodman exactly the ruling he was seeking, overturning a prior custody award and giving full permanent legal and physical custody to the father.

New York taxpayers pay Cooper an annual base salary of \$215,000, on top of which [he receives \\$20,000 for his position on the Appellate Term](#), plus \$30,000 in non-salary benefits, health insurance, and pensions. That all brings up his overall compensation to \$270,000.

Cooper works hard to conceal other revenue streams. But he is involved in a for-profit Indian law school scheme, the “O.P. Jindal Global University” which he also uses for self-promotion, [as seen in this clip](#), and in this live-streamed [conference](#). O.P. Jindal has also paid all expenses for trips to India. As a quid pro quo, [Cooper has admitted](#) that he provides internships to three O.P Jindal students to his courtroom. Cooper has declined to answer requests for information on what remuneration he receives from this organization.

He has ensured that donations to his election campaign are not publicly declared, which is illegal. It is highly probable that many attorneys who appear in his courtroom – and benefit from his rulings – are major donors to his campaigns. He may also benefit from attorneys hiring his second wife, [Melissa Brophy](#), and her recruitment company Maximum Management. According to one attorney who knows Cooper well: “*The corruption works like this: An attorney wants to get in Cooper's good graces. They or someone associated with them reach out to Brophy and say they have an "opening" in their firm or company and need some candidates recruited. She gets to charge a fee for a sham executive search and Cooper issues a favorable order, or hires the attorney as an AFC, like Harriet Newman Cohen. These kickbacks are difficult to track, no doubt.*”

Cooper also has a cosy relationship with the New York Women's Bar Association (NYWBA). Cooper benefits from this by money paid to him by NY State as reimbursement for "expenses" in attending NYWBA events. He also receives "awards" like the [President's Award](#). Cooper tries to burnish his feminist credentials by serving on the NY Supreme Court's Gender Fairness Committee and often handing custody decisions in favor of mothers. Cooper has refused to explain what other benefits he receives from the NYWBA, or what he gives to them, but several attorneys have alleged that his side of the deal is to favor mothers, and the appointment of female AFCs.

Cooper also seems to benefit financially from his membership of various "standing committees". He is the [Chair of the Judicial Section of the NY New York County Lawyers Association](#). He is an active member of the notorious New York branch of the [Association of Family and Conciliation Courts](#). The benefits Cooper derives are summed up by this attorney's description: *"The state reimburses Cooper for "expenses" to go to these things. He effectively has a slush fund. Cooper also gets to glad-hand all the lawyers and add awards to his resume. At the same time, the attorneys curry favor. That's why you see some attorneys get treated way more favorably by Cooper, e.g. Harriet Newman Cohen, Judy White, etc., than others."*

In the courtroom, negligence is an accusation constantly aimed at Cooper. He failed to file correct paperwork in one case, which led to an armed individual get out of Rikers Island, [as seen in this article](#). To be fair, this mistake might have been made by Cooper's thuggish sidekick, court attorney **Timothy Arbo**, who has been working with [him for ten years](#).

Cooper is a master of the procedural dark arts. To avoid following rules set by the New York CPLR, he has his own set of Part 51 Rules, [viewable here](#). These include a stipulation that motions can only be brought by "Order to Show Cause". But even when a party files such a motion, Cooper refuses to sign that order, meaning that the motion never gets heard. Another of his tactics to avoid appellate review is to give a case a phony index number. In the case of Epstein v Epstein, for example, the index number his office gave to the case was dated 2018, even though the case did not commence until 2020. This helped to cause bureaucratic problems for anyone filing an appeal on his orders.

Curiously, Cooper has hung a picture of large cock behind his home-office desk:



Cooper was the subject of a suit in the Federal Court of the Southern District of New York. In January 2017, [Judge Katherine Failla completed a hearing on allegations](#) of Cooper's gross misconduct made against him by NY attorney Anthony Zappin, who was barred by Cooper from seeing his six-year-old son, and persecuted through the press. To defend himself, Cooper misused public funds by using NY Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's office to represent him – an indication of how deep and wide the corruption in the family court system is. In February 2018, after more than a year considering the evidence, Judge Failla issued a decision that asserted that Cooper's actions were not protected by judicial immunity. However, she also bowed to pressure from the state judiciary and [granted a motion by Cooper to dismiss the motion](#). Failla's decision stated that:

*New York law governs the substantive judicial immunity inquiry here, and a relic of that body of law appears to leave state judges briefly exposed for the very particular conduct at issue. Still, because Plaintiff's claims would necessarily require relitigation of material and decisive factual issues previously adjudicated in state court, this Court grants Defendant's motion and dismisses the First Amended Complaint with prejudice on collateral estoppel grounds.*

Zappin filed a motion to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit for reconsideration, but this was dismissed.

Zappin also filed a formal complaint to the New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct (CJC) against Cooper for engaging in extrajudicial communications with media outlets about pending cases. The CJC dismissed this complaint, but as shown later in this report, the CJC is a charade of accountability. It rarely investigates complaints, and has an execrable record of holding the feet of corrupt judges to the fire. Cooper retaliated against Zappin by having him thrown into Rikers Island jail for three days, for "filing a false report" against him, and then ensuring he was disbarred.

In the fall of 2017, and in the wake of intense public criticism, and calls by the FCLU for his removal, the NY Unified Court System removed Cooper from the NY Supreme Court bench and sent him to the Appellate Term. Some observers saw this as a significant demotion. One attorney stated: "*He has gone from handling high profile, multi-million dollar divorces and abusing his power by incarcerating innocent parents, to reviewing small claims cases out of city courts. The Appellate Term is where they put poorly performing judges like Justice Ling-Cohen to ride out the rest of their term. Cooper has four more years on the bench, so he won't be moving anywhere else and he won't be hurting future litigants in matrimonial court anymore.*" However, Cooper held on to a number of his existing cases and, in 2020, he began to again receive new cases. [He was up for re-election in 2022](#), but, very soon after the FCLU announced that it was producing a documentary about him, he announced his retirement. Before doing so, he sought to burnish his reputation by [arranging an interview with the New Yorker](#), in which he claimed to be spearheading a legal revolution in favor of pets, and to leaving a "*legacy [of] awakening New York law to the inner life of animals.*"

4. **Robert Onofry** (Orange County Supreme & Surrogate Courts): Running a charming upstate court-house like his vicious private fiefdom, Onofry shamelessly rewarded friends and



colleagues at the expense of due process until his forced retirement at the end of 2022. 2019 should have been his last year desecrating NY's judiciary, since he had passed the legal age of retirement; but this is a judge who lives above and beyond the Law.

In a four-year-long investigation by the FCLU, evidence was gathered to show Onofry was engaged in the following reckless and wanton misconduct: violation of the American Disabilities Act; and numerous violations of NY State judicial canons 100.2 (A), 100.3 (B)(3), and 100.3(B)(6). Other criminal misconduct under the penal code, and under federal criminal and civil USC statutes, include: endangerment of the welfare of a child; illegal, unlawful destructive actions; impropriety and the appearance of impropriety; unfit behavior in bullying of journalists, litigants, pro se litigants, witnesses and attorneys; improper relations with attorneys on a pending case; unlawful and punitive orders for non-payment of an attorney's fees, using the threat of parenting time; ex parte communications with his favored attorneys; and fraud by and upon the court. The FCLU's 2018-2019 investigation of Onofry centered on one case – Cecilia Brandel vs William Brandel – which we followed closely, gathering the entire case file, attending court hearings, and speaking to all parties. This study revealed how Onofry trafficked lucrative 'attorney-for-the-child' business to colleagues like Kelli O'Brien, for whom he acted as a debt collector.

Onofry favored certain forensic evaluators like Debra Klinger Rosenfeld, whom he appointed to conduct \$20,000-and-up "reports". He joked around with, and ruled in favor of, family-friend attorneys like Kiel Van Horn, the son of another family court judge, Victoria Campbell. Judges Onofry and Campbell were both city court judges in Port Jervis. As well as being friends with Judge Onofry, Judge Campbell received campaign financing from the Onofry family, and Campbell returned the favor to Onofry. Judge Campbell served as the Town of Deerpark's attorney for the ethics committee while Onofry's law firm was representing that same town—all while the current DA for Orange County served as Councilman there. A very cosy set-up indeed, and one which is the very definition of a conflict of interests: *"An appearance of impropriety occurs when reasonable minds, with knowledge of all the relevant circumstances disclosed by a reasonable inquiry, would conclude that the judge's honesty, integrity, impartiality, temperament, or fitness to serve as a judge is impaired."*

On the bench, Onofry's rulings routinely violated state and constitutional law. Custody and divorce trials dragged on for years. The Brandel v Brandel case came to the court in January 2015. Onofry shut down a grossly inadequate trial on July 9, 2018, but then delayed a further year, until May 1, 2019, before issuing a final judgment – some 4.5 years after the case first reached Onofry's desk.

Onofry tried to deny pro se litigants access to key evidence like the forensic report, until those litigants threatened Appellate Division action, at which point he sometimes relented.

As possibly his most egregious act of due-process violation, he refused to allow William Brandel to call the plaintiff-mother as his witness. He also refused Mr Brandel's application to call five other witnesses to the stand, and cut off his own defense testimony before he had completed it. When Mr Brandel objected, Onofry told him: *"You can leave this court room on your own, or in handcuffs."*

Onofry violated the American Disabilities Act when he refused to provide basic accommodations to Mr Brandel, a disabled former postal worker, including refusing his request to have an assistant sitting next to him to help with his papers. He went even further, ridiculing his disability, as shown in this excerpt from the official transcript:

JUDGE ONOFRY: Now, Mr Brandel is it your position that because of a disability which you have not identified yet, that you are capable of having primary custody

of your daughter, but you are incapable of organizing papers; is that what I am to understand?

When a litigant called him out for abuses, Onofry retaliated by taking the child away from the “impudent parent”. This is what happened in the Brandel case, when, in April 2018, Onofry suddenly removed a six-year-old girl from the care of her father, after an oral application by O’Brien and Kiel Van Horn (Judge Campbell’s son). The court had made no finding of abuse or neglect, and Mr Brandel had had no chance to testify. In this case, Judge Onofry tore a six year old girl from her school and home, forcing her to go live somewhere in Pennsylvania, at a location which neither the AFC (O’ Brien) nor the forensic evaluator (Klinger Rosenfeld) had ever visited. When the father begged Onofry to show mercy on the child, he declined, saying: “*The girl is six. She will get over it.*”

Onofry’s conduct constituted gross negligence when, after he had shut down the trial, evidence emerged from the child’s psychiatrist that the mother had locked the child in an unheated garage, engaging in what even that psychiatrist defined as child abuse. Onofry not only took no action, he blocked the move of the case to Pennsylvania, even though the mother and child were living there, apparently out of spite to Mr Brandel.

Other judicial misconduct included Onofry ordering a trial without any petition to modify having been filed; allowing the protected parent’s paramour, Gregory Joslyn, to sit in on proceedings, even after the targeted parent’s attorney said that he would be recalling him as a witness; and failure to disclose a prior relationship with Mr Brandel, whom he had adjudicated against, years before, in a guardianship case involving his father.

Onofry also held illegal, ex parte hearings (eg 5/23/2018), where Brandel was excluded and then subjected to punitive orders.

Brandel has also reported that the court has destroyed and tampered with evidence, removing from the court file sub-poenaed documents including police reports -- to prevent him having access. Onofry failed to investigate these allegations.

Brandel appealed Onofry’s Final Order, and, on September 29, 2021 the Second Department Appellate Division upheld his appeal, sending the case back to Onofry to hold a new trial, and “*ORDERED that the judgment of divorce is modified, on the law and the facts, by deleting the provision thereof awarding the plaintiff primary physical custody of the parties’ child, with certain parental access to the defendant; as so modified, the judgment of divorce is affirmed insofar as appealed from, without costs or disbursements, the orders dated February 14, 2019, and May 1, 2019, are modified accordingly, and the matter is remitted to the Supreme Court, Orange County, for further proceedings in accordance herewith, and for the entry of an appropriate amended judgment of divorce thereafter.*”

Onofry just ignored this instruction, and never scheduled a new trial.

Vain and self-important, Onofry constantly referred to the court as “*MY courtroom*” and boasted of “*my fabulous record with the Second Department Appellate Division.*”

Onofry harassed journalists, in violation of the New York Shield law, and even barred them from access to his courtroom, in violation of rules set up by former New York Chief Judge Janet DiFiore. In April 2018, he badgered and rebuked an FCLU observer: “*If you shake your head again, I will have you removed.*” A few minutes later, he carried out this threat, and ordered his armed officers to remove the observer from the courtroom.

Onofry was elected to the bench in 2009, [after a self-funded campaign](#). He stood for a second term in November 2018. He was unchallenged, and was re-elected. However, NY Law states that a judge may not serve beyond 70 years old. [Onofry turned 70 on February 19, 2019](#), so [a new election was due to have been to be held in November 2019](#). However, Onofry is a judge in the power-hungry mold of Vladimir Putin, and in June 2019, [he persuaded the NY State Senate to re-appoint him](#), and to “[recertificate](#)” him. However, time

and negative reports finally caught up to him in 2022, and he was forced to step down from the bench on December 31, 2022.

5. **Michael Hanuszcak** (Onondaga Family Court): This creepy jurist was charged in 2019 by the New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct with “*uninvited, unwelcome kissing and otherwise inappropriate behavior toward two female court staff*,” and found guilty in September. This prompted Hanuszcak’s resignation and agreement to never seek or hold judicial office again, authorities said. A female employee who was assigned to the judge’s court from 2014 to 2017 lodged a complaint in March 2019. Hanuszcak, born in 1956, had repeatedly asked the married woman to join him for dinner, an invitation she declined, and chatted with her about his dating life, according to the ethics complaint. The woman was setting up conference equipment in 2016 when the judge, “while watching her and laughing, asked whether she ‘knew how to do a three-way,’” the papers state. A month later, the woman was transferred to another court. Before she left, Hanuszcak asked her to come to his chambers, and she showed up with a female friend, who worked in the court’s treatment part. He told the friend to wait outside then put his hands on the woman’s shoulders, kissed her on the cheek and stated, “No one knows me like you do, not even my wife...you anticipate my every need,” according to the papers. On her way out the door, he handed her a potted orchid and “kissed her again, near her mouth, without her consent,” the filing alleges. The judge had also behaved inappropriately with the woman’s friend with whom he had worked since 2011. He expressed interest in dating her for years but cautioned that “any relationship would need to be discreet”. In 2016, after the woman told Hanuszcak that her father was ill with cancer, he entered her office, presented her with an orchid and kissed her on the cheek. “Obviously, a judge should not initiate unwelcome kissing of court staff or propose ‘discreet’ dating to a subordinate,” said the CJC. “Had he not resigned, my office would have recommended Judge Hanuszcak’s removal for such disreputable behavior.” Notwithstanding his misconduct, [and the public scandal this caused](#), the judge is still entitled to a fat pension, financed by the public purse.

The scandal followed a longstanding campaign by the FCLU to have him removed. His tenure was characterized by his issuance of child support orders that parents were unable to pay. This abuse was briefly corrected on November 9, 2018, when the 4<sup>th</sup> Department Appellate Division reversed his decision, in the case of Tymothy Parmenter vs Julie Nash. The dad had moved from Virginia to NY to be closer to his child, but had been forced to take a lower paying job. Hanuszcak refused to amend his child support bills, basically punishing the dad for prioritizing his child. The Appellate Division chastised Hanuszcak stating: “*It is well settled that a loss of employment may constitute a change in circumstances justifying a downward modification of [child support] obligations where [such loss] occurred through no fault of the [party seeking modification] and the [party] has diligently sought re-employment*” (Jelfo v Jelfo, 81 AD3d 1255, 1257 [4th Dept 2011]). In another case, he sent officers without a warrant or order to remove a child, [as shown in this video](#). Hanuszcak held his position since 2001, following his “election”. He was re-elected in 2010 and his current term was to have ended in 2020. He has also served as an Acting Justice of the Onondaga County Supreme Court since 2004. Born on 9/17/1956, he began his career in 1985 as an associate attorney with Rinaldi & Rinaldi P.C. He then worked as a private practice attorney from 1990 to 1995 and as an Onondaga County Legislator (8th District) from 1991 to 1995. He was the New York Assistant Attorney General in-Charge from 1995 to 1998 and worked as Special Counsel to the Chairman of the New York State Workers' Compensation Board from 1999 to 2000. In 2001, he joined the family court bench. He was also appointed an acting Supreme Court Justice in 2004. He will not be missed.

6. **Matthew Rosenbaum** (Monroe County): A rare case of a judge removed from the bench by the otherwise corrupt Commission on Judicial Conduct. In January 2020, after 15 years as judge in western New York, Rosenbaum agreed in a stipulation with the CJC to never again seek or accept a judicial position in the state's judiciary. That 2-page stipulation notes only that Rosenbaum "made improper and at times abusive personal demands of court staff, directly or indirectly conveying that continued employment required submitting to such demands, and creating a hostile workplace environment." Though details of the decision were carefully guarded, commission administrator Robert Tembeckjian noted in a statement Wednesday: "The matter against Judge Rosenbaum was of such magnitude that, notwithstanding his resignation, it was important to make sure he would never return to the bench." The initial investigation began in November 2019 by the state's Office of Court Administration after Rosenbaum was re-elected to his judgeship. Rosenbaum was later relieved from hearing any cases, and he voluntarily vacated his seat on Dec. 31, 2019. The 11-member Commission on Judicial Conduct, which began looking into the matter in late December, voted unanimously in favor of the stipulation. One of the commissioners, a town justice from Monroe County named John Falk, recused himself. It is not clear whether he did so because he knew Rosenbaum personally. The details of what exactly Rosenbaum allegedly did — or indeed, whether the complaints allegedly involved criminal behavior — are still under wraps due the terms of the stipulation itself. Rosenbaum agreed only to allow the commission to release the brief stipulation itself. Such stipulations typically come after lengthy investigations by the commission, and several of the commission's 89 stipulations remain essentially sealed. In Rosenbaum's case, however, the investigation was done far quicker than usual. State law specifies that the commission has 120 days after a judge's resignation to conclude all proceedings, far less time than the independent agency typically takes for such matters. By agreeing to resign, Rosenbaum avoided having to go through a potentially arduous investigation — and nullified the possibility the underlying investigative report would become public. "This was very early in the process," Tembeckjian said in an interview, noting that typically the commission would call witnesses and examine documents except in cases where there was irrefutable proof of wrongdoing. "Whatever the calculation was on his side, I can't speak to," Tembeckjian said, adding later in the interview that "one of the tradeoffs in entering into such a stipulation is that it closes off our ability to maintain a record." The commission can only censure and remove judges and has no power to issue civil penalties or file criminal charges, so the stipulation is the maximum penalty Rosenbaum could have received anyway. "It certainly leads to a certainty of results and accomplishes all that we could have if we played the matter out," Tembeckjian noted. If Rosenbaum decides later to defy the stipulation, the Commission on Judicial Conduct could publicly censure him and then forcibly remove him from office, essentially the same punishment he currently faces. Meanwhile, Rosenbaum will continue to draw a pension. Under state law, judges continue to receive pension benefits regardless of whether they resign or are removed from the bench, Tembeckjian said. Rosenbaum's attorney, Robert Julian, did not return calls or emails seeking comment. Julian, a retired justice with the New York State Supreme Court, has represented other state justices who had faced discipline. Administrative Justice Craig Doran has since reassigned Rosenbaum's case load to three other justices in the 7th District.
7. **Gloria Sosa Lintner**: Retired from the bench in 2016 further to irrefutable evidence of her unfitness to hold a gavel. The public outrage at her misconduct is an inspiration for other citizens seeking to expose and oust corrupt and unfit judges. Sosa Lintner was appointed to the New York Family Court bench in 1988. For nearly 30 years, she handed down numerous rulings which adversely affected children and their parents. Perhaps [her most notorious ruling was in \*Matter of Scollar v Altman\*](#), where Sosa Lintner tried to win a place in legal

history, by redefining parenting. Asserting that “biology is irrelevant”, she transferred custody of a young child from the biological mother to that woman’s female partner, even though the latter faced many personal challenges of psychopathology and criminal behavior. This particular transfer was one of many such flips ordered by Sosa Lintner. She treated litigants and the public with dictatorial contempt, often barring the public from entering her courtroom. Sosa Lintner is the subject of a detailed investigation by [the Foundation for the Child Victims of the Family Courts, which has found](#) that she “*demonstrated a pattern of finding in favor of the client whom she evaluated to be the parent with the highest/most stable income.... We found that, for Sosa Lintner, “having the most stable income” meant that that parent would hire whatever “connected” attorney, psychologist, parent coordinator who uniformly could wage a virtual war against the parent who asserted concerns and claims against the parent, who had a secret to hide, related to the family interaction and or specifically the dealings with the child, (children). Investigation into the custody transfers ordered by Sosa Lintner, sans objective fact, made clear a pattern of life threatening circumstances to the subject children, ignored in favor of the Ipse Dixit/Discretion standard which prevails in Family Court and is not subject to Appeal.*” Although she no longer terrorizes our families, she still receives a whopping pension, at the expense of New York taxpayers.

8. **Patricia Henry** (Kings County Integrated Domestic Violence): Denial of due process and legal kidnappings were the hallmark of this disastrous jurist. Her conduct mirrored that of IDV neighbor, Esther Morgenstern. In the wake of intense criticism, she either resigned or was removed from the bench in 2016. She is missed by nobody.
9. **Gerald “Gerry” Garson** (Kings County Supreme Court): A rare case of a corrupt judge who was exposed and removed from the bench. Garson was convicted in 2007 of accepting bribes to manipulate the outcomes of divorce proceedings. He was imprisoned from June 2007 until December 2009. In the bribery scheme, a “fixer” told people divorcing in Brooklyn that for a price he could steer their case to a sympathetic judge. After the fixer received a payment, he would refer the person to a lawyer contact of his, who had given Garson drinks, meals, cigars, and cash—accepting (and receiving) preferential treatment in return. The fixer and the lawyer would then bribe court employees to override the court’s computer system, which was programmed to ensure that cases were assigned to judges randomly. Instead, they would have the case assigned to Garson. Garson, in turn, would then privately coach the lawyer. He would tell him questions the lawyer should ask of witnesses in the case before “Gerry” Garson, and arguments that the lawyer should make to Garson in court. Garson would then rule in favor of the lawyer. Garson was indicted in 2003, on the basis of video surveillance of his judicial chambers, and recordings made on a body wire worn by his “favored” lawyer. At his four-week trial in 2007, he was found guilty on one count of accepting bribes, and on two lesser charges of receiving rewards for official misconduct. However, the court system did nothing to address the impact on NY families. There was no wholesale re-examination of Justice Garson’s cases. Of the 100 or so people who complained to court officials after the news broke, [only three had their cases reopened by Jacqueline Silberman](#), NY’s administrative judge for matrimonial matters. Garson died in 2016.
10. **Peter Skelos**: Brother of disgraced former Majority Leader of the New York State Senate Dean Skelos. Peter Skelos played a Godfather-like role in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Department Appellate Division until his brother’s arrest on federal corruption charges on May 4, 2015, including “conspiracy, extortion, and solicitation of bribes”. FBI investigators caught Skelos on wiretaps boasting of his power. His son, Adam Skelos, was also charged in the case. Dean



Skelos vacated his post as Senate Majority Leader on May 11, 2015, a week after being charged. His brother Dean was later convicted by a jury for seven counts of honest-services fraud, extortion and money laundering, although that is now being re-tried. Dean Skelos' arrest led to his brother Peter's resignation from the judiciary on July 31, 2015. He took a lucrative job with [Forchelli, Deegan, Terrana, where he directs the "Appellate practice group"](#).

11. **Victor Alfieri** (Rockland County). Elected to the court in 2006, he has routinely jailed parents for not paying the other side's legal bills, even when they were indigent. This was what he did with [Daniel Bruen](#). Alfieri also routinely threatened parents who requested a jury trial, telling them he would punish them with harsher sentences if a jury found against the parent seeking the jury trial – a pattern of intimidation and revenge that permeates the NY family court machine. Mercifully, Alfieri was stood down from the bench at the end of 2016.

## DISHONORABLE MENTIONS: JUDICIAL OVERSIGHT BODIES

**The Commission on Judicial Conduct (CJC):** *Quis custodiet custodies?* The CJC is supposed to be the body that provides independent oversight on New York's judges – [and received \\$7,189,000 from the 2022 state budget to do so](#) (increased to an annual \$8.2mn in March 2023). Yet the CJC has proven to be a sham organization which should be shut down and replaced. The CJC is a fraudulent front dedicated to protecting the interests of judges, rather than protecting the public from judicial fraud, waste and abuse. The foxes are guarding the henhouse. The CJC fails to investigate facially meritorious allegations, and send the same copied-and-pasted dismissal letters from clerk Jean Savanyu, stating: "*Upon careful consideration, the Commission concluded that there was insufficient indication of judicial misconduct to justify judicial discipline.*" The CJC's routine failure to investigate valid complaints is a violation of statute (Judiciary Law 44.1).

The CJC needs to be shut down and replaced by a truly independent body providing judicial oversight. This need is made even more urgent since New York citizens have no other avenue to assert our constitutional rights. We cannot sue judges in state courts because they have judicial immunity. We cannot seek relief in the Federal courts because of the 'family relations exception', afforded to state courts under the Younger precedent. And we cannot even gather evidence of misconduct, since cameras are prohibited in courts, and records are kept under seal.

Three officers of the CJC are mainly responsible for the CJC's failure to fulfill its statutory role: **Robert Tembeckjian**, the CJC's "Administrator and Counsel"; **Angela M. Mazzarelli**, who serves on both the 1<sup>st</sup> Department Appellate Division and the CJC; and **Rolando T. Acosta**, who also serves on the 1<sup>st</sup> Department Appellate Division and, [until June 30, 2017, was an officer of the CJC](#).

Robert Tembeckjian has been at the CJC for over 40 years -- was deputy administrator/deputy counsel for decades -- and became administrator/counsel in 2004. [Based on posted figures](#), his 2021 salary was \$202,000, having risen over the preceding eight years, as follows: \$195,321 (2020); \$193,954 (2019); \$190,009 (2018); \$186,381 (2017); \$176, 971 (2016); \$175, 436 (2015); \$162,053 (2014); \$159,009 (2013); \$149,649 (2012). The posted figures for prior years are, as follows: \$153,175 (2011); \$153,952 (2010); \$153,962 (2009); and \$154,403 (2008).

Tembeckjian is married to Barbara Ross, a former prominent New York court reporter for *The Daily News*. In 2007, Mr. Tembeckjian and Ms. Ross jointly sued Uno's Pizza for loss of consortium after Ms. Ross claimed she fell on trash outside the restaurant. See *Barbara Ross and Robert Tembeckjian v. Betty G. Reader Revocable Trust et al.*, Index No. 17038/2017 (Sup. Ct. Bronx Cnty.). Ms. Ross is the subject of a number of lawsuits, related to abuse of judicial power. Mr. Tembeckjian has attempted to intervene to obstruct justice, hamper and frustrate these lawsuits

involving his wife. One of these cases being considered by U.S. Southern District Judge Katharine Failla [Zappin v Cooper, No. 16 Civ. 5985 (KPF)] and specifically relates to judges under the CJC's watch (e.g., Justice Matthew Cooper) improperly using Ms Ross and other reporters to deliberately leak sealed information to the media to broadcast stories dear to those judges hearts. Given the need for the CJC to both be independent and to appear to be independent, there is no reason why Mr Tembeckjian can continue to act as 'Administrator' and a leading investigator of the CJC while being implicated and implicitly condoning judicial misconduct.

Tembeckjian has [published sanctimoniously about his wish that judicial complaints were open to the public, claiming his hands are tied by the Legislature to provide the transparency he wishes.](#) This is a case of crocodile tears. He has only kept his job because there has been no media scrutiny on him, and that is because all the complaints are sealed. And if he really wanted accountability, he could have investigated the tens of thousands of complaints that have come across his desk. The FCLU knows of NO complaint that he has received from a non-attorney citizen which Tembeckjian has investigated, and found sufficient evidence to impose sanctions.

Mr. Tembeckjian broke the law by providing *ex parte* information to the judges about whom the CJC receives complaints. For example, Tembeckjian sent an ex parte letter, dated January 4, 2017, to Supreme Court Justice Matthew Cooper, imparting confidential information about an investigation into Justice Cooper, prompted by a complaint to the CJC by Anthony Zappin. Justice Cooper sought to use the January 4, 2017 letter from Tembeckjian as evidence in his favor in litigation before Federal Court Justice Failla. This can be seen in the papers submitted on January 19, 2017 to Justice Failla by Justice Cooper's counsel, Assistant Attorney General Michael A. Berg. Given that Tembeckjian had made himself a party to this matter, with clear bias in favor of Justice Cooper, Tembeckjian acted with a clear, personal vested interest which makes his position at the CJC untenable. Tembeckjian is in violation of [Attorney Rule of Professional Responsibility 1.7](#), which states: "A lawyer shall not represent a client if a reasonable lawyer would conclude ...that there is a significant risk that the lawyer's professional judgment on behalf of the client will be adversely affected by the lawyer's own financial, business, property or other interests."

According to a source at the CJC: "It's the pattern and practice within the CJC that our investigators first ask those judges by quiet telephone calls: 'How would you like me to get rid of these complaints'. They then seek the judge's permission and approval for 'getting rid' of those complaints." This is indeed how things work at the CJC, under Tembeckjian's 'administration.'

Let us move on to the misconduct of Justice Acosta. In the court papers filed by Mr Zappin to US District Judge Failla on June 14, 2017, Zappin, who was then a licensed NY attorney, affirms:

*Justice Rolando Acosta is a member of the Judicial Commission and reviews all complaints as required by law. This means that Justice Acosta was necessarily wearing two hats with respect to Zappin v. Comfort – he was deciding my complaint against Justice Cooper filed in the Judicial Commission at the same time he was presiding on the panel in the Appellate Division ruling on the propriety of the Sanctions Decision. This, in and of itself, is a conflict of interest, as a decision in one case would no doubt affect the outcome in the other regardless of the merits. However, the conflict of interest is exacerbated by the fact that the allegations in the Judicial Commission complaint against Justice Cooper and Mr. Tembeckjian's wife, if true, could fundamentally compromise the Judicial Commission itself. Put simply, Justice Acosta had no business sitting on any panel involving Zappin v. Comfort in the Appellate Division while simultaneously ruling on, reviewing and/or investigating my Judicial Commission complaint against Justice Cooper that implicated Mr. Tembeckjian's wife.*

According to the CJC's 2017 annual report, "[Rolando Acosta] presently serves as an Associate Justice of the Appellate Division, First Department, having been appointed in January

2008.” It is therefore true that Rolando Acosta is both a judge on the bench of the 1<sup>st</sup> Department Appellate division AND, until June 30 2017, served as an acting member of the CJC.

The same is true for Angela M. Mazzarelli, who took over Mr Acosta’s position on the CJC on July 1, 2017, and is also still working as a judge on the bench of the 1<sup>st</sup> Department Appellate Division. This is a blatant conflict of interest. How can Justices Acosta and Mazzarelli investigate and review complaints against judicial officers while presiding on appeals that involve the very same issues, parties and questions of judicial misconduct? Is this not willfully prejudicial to the parties, unfair and a conflict of interest?

Given that the CJC’s constitutionally bound obligation is to act as an independent overseer of New York’s unfit judges, the FCLU considers that Mr Acosta and Ms Mazzarelli’s wearing of both hats constitutes a conflict of interest, which leads to rigged outcomes to investigations. On July 24, 2017, the FCLU filed an official complaint about this to the CJC, which declined even to investigate this facially meritorious complaint.

The CJC's annual reports explicitly instruct:

*“All judges are required by the Rules of Judicial Conduct to avoid conflicts of interest and to disqualify themselves or disclose on the record circumstances in which their impartiality might reasonably be questioned.”*

In addition, the Code of Ethics for Members of the New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct, Rule 2 states:

*"No member of the Commission should have any interest, financial or otherwise, direct or indirect, or engage in any business or transaction or professional activity or incur any obligation of any nature, which is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of his/her duties in the public interest."*

Rule 3 states:

*"Standards. . . A member of the Commission should endeavor to pursue a course of conduct which will not raise suspicion among the public that s/he is likely to be engaged in acts that are in violation of his/her trust."*

Given these very clear guidelines, various questions arise:

i) Why was it permissible for Mr. Acosta to investigate/review Mr. Zappin's CJC complaint against Justice Cooper while at the same time that he was sitting on a panel as presiding justices in an appeal from *Zappin v. Comfort* that involved questions of Justice Cooper's misconduct on the bench?

ii) Why was Justice Mazzarelli allowed to review complaints by Mr Zappin when she was sitting on the Appellate Division panel reviewing his appeal in the *Zappin v Comfort* case?

iii) Was it proper for Justices Acosta and Mazzarelli to not disclose this conflict to either the CJC or the Appellate Division? Given both judges’ apparent failure to disclose this conflict, should Justice Mazzarelli resign from the CJC?

[According to the CJC’s own press release](#), Justice Mazzarelli was appointed to the CJC by former Chief Judge Janet DiFiore on March 31, 2017. The FCLU asked what relationship the two women had prior to Mazzarelli landing the job, but the CJC has not responded.

The CJC's annual reports do not state who appointed Mr Tembeckjian to the CJC. Nor will the CJC respond to questions on this matter.

The FCLU has written to the CJC asking whether Mr Tembeckjian, Mr Acosta, Ms Mazzarelli or any other members of the CJC have received any financial payments, gifts, meals, golf-course/private member club access, or other non-monetary benefits from New York judges about whom the CJC has received any complaint in the last ten years. The CJC declined to respond.

Our research team has investigated, reviewed and analyzed the CJC's recent reports, including [this one](#). It claims that the CJC received 1,944 complaints about the conduct of NY judges over the course of 2016, of which the CJC made "preliminary enquiries" into 420 cases, and actually investigated only 177 cases. Thus, the CJC investigated only 9% of the complaints which it received. The FCLU asked the CJC to explain why it investigated so few complaints, and on what basis the CJC dismissed facially meritorious complaints without investigation. The CJC did not respond.

The FCLU also asked the CJC to provide specific instances in where it investigated any judges who engaged in destruction, deleting, altering and recreating evidence and the filing of false instruments. It declined to respond.

The CJC's neglect has been covered in the media, [such as this study by The Guardian and contently.org](#).

On the basis of numerous interviews conducted by our office, there is widespread public concern that the CJC only serves fellow members of the American Bar Association and/or of the New York Bar Association.

Based on our research, the CJC has never publicly disciplined either a Family Court or Matrimonial Judge for conduct related to a family law or matrimonial matter.

The CJC is bringing the entire judiciary into disrepute. The independent watchdog, the Center for Judicial Accountability, recently stated that "*the Commission is a corrupt facade, tossing out the most serious and fully-documented of facially meritorious complaints that are the Commission's duty to investigate.*"

According to a leading NY attorney with thirty years experience, when interviewed about whether the CJC operated with effectiveness and integrity:

*"We're dealing with a vertical integration. No Supreme or Family Court judge will ever be found engaged in misconduct by the CJC because these judges bring in all the federal money for child-centered litigation in New York. The CJC will not bite the hand that tills all that soil."*

All the investigators on the CJC are lawyers. That includes uber-rich family court attorney Raoul Felder, who, served as a CJC board member between 2004 and 2008. Given the immense power of the American Bar Association, and of the New York Bar Association, how can the CJC be considered to be "independent" or offer real oversight if none, or very few, of its investigators are drawn from outside the ABA or NY Bar Association?

The FCLU has asked the CJC to consider recommending to the Chief Judge, the Governor and the Legislature that they appoint non-lawyer investigators for the CJC, such as journalists, accountants, paralegals, or academics. The CJC has not responded to this suggestion.

Justice David Saxe, a former colleague of Justice Acosta in the 1<sup>st</sup> Department Appellate Division, [told the NY Post](#): "*Our state court system in New York is absolutely insane. It has enabled political people to control the courts, and they don't want to give it up — so it's very hard to get legitimate change that would be beneficial to the public.*" This is a damning indictment of the CJC's record in overseeing a just, impartial and independent court system, free from political interference.

**Helene Weinstein:** All the judges cited above receive their whopping salaries thanks to a budget provided to them by the New York Legislature. Their biggest champion is veteran Assemblywoman



Helene Weinstein. [Born in 1952, she is a Brooklyn Democrat who has been on the Assembly for nearly forty years.](#) She has become one of the most powerful operators in New York. She [chairs the Ways and Means Committee](#), which distributes all the Legislature's dollars. For 23 years up to December 2017, she chaired the Standing Committee on the Judiciary, which presides over virtually all legislation affecting the state's judicial system, Family and Domestic Relations Law. [According to the New York Jewish Times, "Helene of Canarsie \[is\] the most powerful woman in New York."](#)

An ardent advocate for both the National Organization of Women and the New York Bar Association, Weinstein's political and financial goals are to maximize Title IV-D funding from the federal government; increase incarceration of fathers for child-support matters; expand the use of restraining orders to traffic children into single-parent homes; enrich her 'attorney-for-the-child' friends by allocating them huge budget hikes; to humiliate and destroy the Fathers' Rights movement; to engender mass terror about domestic and sexual violence; and to pursue #metoo policies to an extreme way that eliminates all due process.

Weinstein came to office when her father, [Murray Weinstein, left her his 41<sup>st</sup> district seat in 1980.](#) Like her father, [who founded the ultra-conservative synagogue, the Temple Shaare Emeth,](#) Weinstein is an Orthodox Jew. The core of her electoral support, and her campaign funding, comes from Lubavitcher Hasidim, in Remsen Village, a home for Hassidic Jews. She is driven more by religious fervor and family loyalty than legal ethics. She moonlights on her publicly funded job by [acting as counsel to her family's personal-injury law firm, Weinstein, Chase, Messinger & Peters, P.C.](#)

Weinstein has built up a tight web of politicians and family-court professionals, all interested in protecting, promoting and enriching each other. She has personal and/or professional relationships with numerous women cited in this report, including Carol Sherman, Esther Morgenstern, Rachel Adams, Hilarie Chacker, Dawn Post, Martha Schneiderman and Karen Simmons.

Like all these women, Weinstein has no children of her own, and has no first-hand experience of parenting. Yet she wields immense power over New York's families and children.

Weinstein is a zealous opponent of shared parenting legislation – which has sought to establish a presumption of equality in custody cases. Her bigoted belief is that, in contested custody cases, mothers should be awarded custody, and fathers resigned to being child-support-paying visitors and ATMs. She is an advocate for a [new Senate bill, S1611](#), which seeks to increase mass incarceration of fathers. If made law, it will impose mandatory jail sentences of a minimum 30 Days for "violations of family court Orders Of Protection." And, taking a leaf out of Orwell's 1984, would force "offenders" to wear "GPS tagging" ankle-cuffs.

Weinstein holds huge influence with the Standing Committee on Children and Families. Year after year, she has blocked much-needed shared-parenting legislation reaching the Senate floor for a vote. She is closely associated with corrupt members of that committee, including another Brooklyn Assemblywoman, **Pamela Harris**, [who was indicted in January 2018](#) for four counts of making false statements, two counts of wire fraud, two counts of bankruptcy fraud, and a single count each of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, witness tampering and conspiracy to obstruct justice.

The New York taxpayer pays Weinstein \$153,500 a year. That's made up of a base legislator salary of \$79,500, plus \$34,000 as chair of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, plus around \$40,000 in pensions, healthcare and other benefits.

Weinstein's 2016 election campaign was largely financed by donors whom she has helped to enrich through her work as a public official, [including big donations from the "Association Of Surrogates & Supreme Court Reporters Within The City Of New York" \(\\$6,000\)](#), ["The New York State Trial Lawyers Association" \(\\$4,400\)](#) and the [New York State Academy of Trial Lawyers \(\\$2000\)](#), as well as [donations from private law firms like Greenberg Traurig \(\\$1000\).](#)

She is a member of what is widely known as ["the corruption caucus".](#) [She even stood by by the Assembly's disgraced former speaker, Sheldon Silver,](#) whose corruption re-trial is scheduled to



begin in April 2018.

Like the head of Gymnastics USA in the Larry Nassar case, Weinstein negligently refuses to consider evidence of judicial corruption, and the harm it is causing millions of New York children. The FCLU has offered to show her evidence of kickbacks between judges and the CJC, which she has refused to hear. [As affirmed by the independent Center for Judicial Accountability](#): “*Helene Weinstein is fully knowledgeable of the foregoing corruption, but REFUSED to discharge ANY oversight throughout her 23-year tenure as chair - including by holding ANY hearings to take testimony from the public.*”

On January 30, 2018, at a ‘Public Protection Joint Budget hearing’, which Weinstein was chairing, she sought to block FCLU’s New York Chapter president Sebastian Daggart from testifying. Although she failed to do so, she then cut off Mr. Daggart half way through his testimony, just as he was informing the committee of Weinstein’s relationship to the beneficiaries of the budget, and demanding that she provide oversight on the judiciary. [See footage here at 11:55:55](#). Weinstein then blocked a written report on judicial fraud from being distributed to other members of the Assembly, and refused to respond to written questions about the conflict of interests she was involved in, as Chair. She also failed to respond to information provided to her office about corruption of judges she was planning to finance.

On February 5, 2018, the Center for Judicial Accountability presented written evidence of fraud by Weinstein, [readable here](#), and then followed it up with oral testimony to the Assembly, [viewable here from 8:34:44](#). The CJA revealed how Weinstein is cheating taxpayers with an uncertified budget, which includes huge hikes for judges -- up to \$247,000 a year in salary and benefits. “*This budget bill is replete with fraud and larceny of taxpayer money,*” the CJA told the Assembly in her televised testimony. “*These are penal law violations.*” Weinstein then cut off Ms Sassower’s microphone just as she was documenting Weinstein’s constitutional violations and taxpayer larceny.

Weinstein won re-election, for the 19<sup>th</sup> time, in November 2018. [A public group formed to remove her from office](#). The FCLU encourages all efforts to end her disgraceful reign. Time’s up on every abusive Weinstein!

**Office of Attorneys for the Children:** This program, run for decades by Harriet Weinberger, contracts AFCs to family courts, at great expense to the taxpayer. Yet no oversight exists over these AFCs, or how they are appointed. The absurd lack of supervision is demonstrated in this photo, which shows that Attorney for Children program shares an office with the Attorney Grievance committee:



Yet the Grievance Committee is the organization charged with handling complaints against

Attorneys for Children. This is a clear conflict of interests.

**NY Governors Kathy Hochul and Andrew Cuomo:** Hochul and Cuomo have taken no steps to investigate corruption in the judiciary. Indeed, Cuomo was responsible for shutting down the Moreland Commission, once it became clear from numerous witnesses how rotten the NY judiciary was. He has also been an apologist for the Title IV-D program that underlies the family court racket. He has occasionally paid lip service to some of the issues that this report is highlighting. In his budget address, on January 16, 2018, he criticized the judiciary for asking for a bigger increase in funding than any other government entity, stating: *"The backlog of cases is tremendous, especially in downstate New York. We have a chronic problem of people in Rikers Island who have been there for years and haven't had a day in court. The judiciary wants a 2.5% increase. The people of the state have the right to know that the courts are open and functioning from 9 to 5. You have many courthouses where literally at 1 o'clock the place shuts down. So I would support the increase of 2.5%. But the judges have to certify that the courtrooms are actually operating from 9 to 5."* ([viewable here from 35:15](#)). However, he never followed through with this condition.

## HONORABLE MENTIONS

**Michael Pulizotto:** The winner of our annual competition for 2017's most courageous warrior against New York family court corruption. Michael Pulizotto is the former chief clerk of Staten Island courts who was fired after he recorded conversations with judges and other court personnel. Ignoring huge pressure to allow the court racket to continue, Pulizotto has now revealed how Staten Island District Attorney Michael McMahon took part in a scam in which he would manipulate grand jury applications so that cases would be sent to a judge who served as a "rubber stamp" for Supreme Court Justice Judith McMahon, the DA's wife.

Pulizotto brought a suit against the borough's former administrative judge, state court officials and others in Manhattan federal court alleging they bullied and harassed him while running the Staten Island Courthouse as a "fiefdom for their own personal and political gain."

The \$2.9 million suit alleges that Justice McMahon; Ronald P. Younkins, the executive director of the state Office of Court Administration (OCA); the New York State Court Officers Association, and several others relied on "direct and indirect coercion, intimidation and threats" to achieve their objectives while trampling on his and other individuals' Constitutional rights.

Specifically, the defendants hushed up a discrimination complaint made by an African-American female court officer and adopted a "hear no evil, see no evil approach" to "official corruption and misconduct in the courthouse," which included Justice McMahon overstepping her authority on multiple occasions to aid her spouse, District Attorney Michael McMahon.

In gathering evidence, Pulizotto bravely recorded conversations that he had with Acting Staten Island Supreme Court Justice Stephen Rooney, and others. More information is [here](#). We encourage all those employed within the court industry to use similar methods to investigate and expose fraud, waste and abuse.

**Dr. Stephen Baskerville:** The deeply informed and eloquent author of two books vital for understanding how the family court racket operates: *"Taken into Custody: The War against Fathers, Marriage and the Family"* (2007) and his latest, *"The New Politics of Sex: The Sexual Revolution, Civil Liberties & The Growth of Governmental Power"* (2017). Dr. Baskerville lifts the lid on how family courts and government policies are harming children. [In this video presentation](#), he succinctly summarizes how the "underworld" of American courts have become the "perpetrators of injustice", and how they are aided by extreme-feminist groups and the media. Dr. Baskerville is Professor of Government at Patrick Henry College, and Research Fellow at the Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Society, and the Independent Institute.

**The Center for Judicial Accountability:** A non-profit, non-partisan organization which has worked courageously to expose judicial corruption. [The CJA has brought a Citizen-Taxpayer Action against New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and Attorney-General Eric Schneiderman](#). The suit documents a litany of misconduct, willful fraud and waste by the New York judiciary. Its director Elena Sassower has testified on numerous occasions to the New York legislature, which has stonewalled all her calls for answers.

**UNDER INVESTIGATION:** Reports on the most fraudulent, wasteful and abusive organizations within the New York Family Court racket, including:

\* **Attorney General Letitia James:** The most powerful individual in the New York legal world has consistently abused her power. Most significantly, she jumps in to protect judges against credible allegations of misconduct. She did this with Judge Hoffman, when his own court attorney accused him of sexual harassment, spending \$2.5mn in taxpayer monies to defend him. And she did this with Judge McGinty, when he presented powerful evidence that McGinty was enabling criminal fathers by giving them custody.

\* **The New York Bar Association:** The organization propping up the winner-takes-all custody system in New York, and blocking shared parenting legislation – all to feather the nests of its contributing attorneys.

\* **The New York Women’s Bar Association:** The donors to this organization are all beneficiaries of the family court racket: matrimonial law firms, and attorneys like Susan Bender and Harriet Cohen. Its President, Virginia LoPreto, is a favorite of Judge Kaplan, who regularly appoints her as AFC on her case.

\* **The Attorney Grievance Committees:** These bodies are charged with, and well-financed to investigate facially meritorious complaints of misconduct by NY attorneys. Why does it only pursue cases brought by disgruntled judges or powerful attorneys, and rarely investigations evidence presented by private citizens? Why does it never even touch a complaint against an attorney for the child?

\* **The Office of Court Administration:** The OCA is known by its own employees as the Organized Crime Association. Why is this body non-responsive to reports of misconduct and abuse? What is being covered up by executive director Ronald YOUNKINS and chief of operations Barry Clarke? Waste, fraud and abuse are rife in the OCA, most clearly in the office of the Director of Communications, who is supposed to act as a spokesperson for the whole NY Court system. The current director is **Lucian Chalfen**, who is known for his complete failure to respond to any requests for comment. His predecessor was **David Bookstaver**, who was exposed and disgraced in 2017 by a [New York Post article](#), which exposed him for failing to do his job: *“Bookstaver accidentally butt-dialed a Post reporter — yukking it up about how “I barely show up to work” while pocketing a \$166,000-plus salary and boosting his taxpayer-funded pension. After speaking by cellphone with the reporter about a planned exposé on his cushy schedule, Bookstaver butt-dialed back, and unwittingly left a four-minute voicemail while chatting with at least two other people. On the voicemail, Bookstaver admitted lying to The Post about how he spent his weekdays and confirmed the accounts of court system sources who said he’s been working as little as two days a week. ‘Look, the bottom line is, I’ll suffer through a terribly embarrassing story and then go get my f—king pension and retire.’ I spoke to [the reporter] on the record for awhile. I said, ‘I’m in a much less visible position; that doesn’t mean I’m not doing anything,’ ” Bookstaver said. “But, frankly, look, the bottom line: The story’s true. I’m not doing anything. I barely show up to work and I’ve been caught.”* Although Bookstaver was fired, he still held on to his six-figure annual pension. Mr. Bookstaver began his employment by the courts in 1996. When Janet DiFiore replaced Judge Lippman as chief judge in January 2016, she named Chalfen, her spokesman when she was the Westchester County district attorney, as her communications director. Mr. Bookstaver stayed on, but his job shifted to more of an advisory role.

\* **Administration for Children’s Services:** How is this broken, chronically incompetent and corrupt organization still being financed by the public? How has it been allowed to create what [\*The New York Times\* has called “the new Jane Crow”](#), removing children from their homes without due cause, and placing them into foster care and enriching the State government through Title IV-E federal funding? How are its attorneys allowed to go unpunished for [taking illegal photographs inside the court-room and then ridiculing mothers for the choice of their bras](#)? The ACS’ own reports admit that [its staff are poorly trained](#), a reason why [children regularly perish when under ACS care](#).

\* **Child Protective Services:** Similarly culpable for its negligence, the crisis in CPS is well documented [in this speech by attorney Joshua Douglass](#). The shocking failures of this organization were exposed when they failed to investigate warnings that 7-year-old Thomas Valva was in danger of being frozen to death in his father’s garage. The child’s mother, Justyna Zubko-Valva [wrote in court papers](#) that she filed her first child neglect complaint in Suffolk County via the state hotline on Nov. 7, 2017, alleging her husband and Pollina abused her kids physically and emotionally, starved them and tried to alienate them from her. She claims the complaint was closed two days later with no investigation. On Jan. 16, 2019, a school official filed a complaint with Child Protective Services against Pollina and Michael Valva, with five different caseworkers involved in the investigation. “Thomas, age 7, presented a right, swollen black eye today that he didn’t have within the past two days,” the caller said. “There is a history of physical abuse in the home involving Thomas so his black eye is suspicious due to conflicting explanations and conflicting time frames.” Both Thomas and Anthony Valva were listed as “maltreated,” the records show. The paperwork indicates the allegations included inadequate guardianship, emotional neglect, inadequate food clothing and shelter, and inflicting lacerations, bruises and welts on Thomas. Yet the CPS caseworkers concluded the case did “not rise to the level of immediate or impending danger of serious harm. No controlling interventions are necessary at this time.” On May 13, 2019, another caller reported Michael Valva for flinging a book bag at Thomas, leaving a bump and a welt on the boy’s forehead. The veteran cop claimed Anthony threw the back pack at Thomas, but refused to let the two boys be interviewed at school, where they might have felt freer to speak, or to allow the other children in the home to be interviewed. CPS closed this new case, claiming it “unfounded.” But on January 17, 2020, the full extent of this error of judgment became clear, when Thomas Valva was found frozen to death in his father’s garage. A petition that [“Child Protective Services should be held accountable for not protecting Thomas Valva”](#) has got over 80,000 signatures. The CPS alternates between completely ignoring complaints about abuse, to trafficking children into foster care and benefiting private firms. Although the CPS is organizationally rotten, individuals are responsible and did not do their job. We are saddened to name the individual CPS employees, and certainly do not encourage any personal reprisals against them. But if an airline pilot fell asleep at the wheel, crashed a plane, and killed his passengers, would you expect there to be a media blackout on the pilot’s name? An innocent boy is dead and all responsible need to be held accountable. And that includes at least three CPS staff who were allegedly asleep at the wheel. First **June Johnson** was the Supervisor of Nassau Team 91 in 2017. We have seen no evidence that she presented a “founded” report about Michael Valva, or took any action to investigate abuse allegations in depth. Second, **Lydia Sobosto**: She was the Suffolk County CPS Caseworker in charge of the Valva case. It was Lydia Sobosto who was responsible for looking into the reports that Tommy was being made to sleep in a freezing garage. According to reports, she went to the house, where no one answered the door, and then never bothered to go back. Why did she not go back to the house? And the third CPS employee responsible for Tommy’s welfare was Sobosto’s supervisor **Jeanne Montague**: Why did she not make Sobosto go back? The child’s mother, Justyna Zubko-Valva said: “Maybe 8 or 9 days before Thomas’s death I begged CPS not to close Thomas’ case. Her excuse was she has another emergency case, she has to go. It seemed she thought that my allegations were ridiculous.”



\* **Children’s Law Center:** The main beneficiary of the judiciary’s ‘attorney-for-the-child program’ which received a whopping \$124 million in 2018/2019. Why are NY taxpayers paying \$250,000-a-year salaries to directors Karen Simmons, Hilarie Chacker and (until her departure for A Better Childhood in 2018) Dawn Post? The CLC is a charity, nominally set up to help “indigent children! Why is there no oversight whatsoever on its operation? Why has the Unified Court System renewed its exclusive contract to provide AFC services, year after year, without putting it out to tender? How has CLC founder Carol Sherman been allowed to become the top judge of Queens County court while still farming thousands of cases to the very organization that has enriched her? Why has the New York Legislature – and Judiciary Committee chair Helene Weinstein, in particular – not demanded oversight on this massive expenditure? And why has the NY Legislature not investigated facially meritorious complaints about CLC fraud and waste? If you or anyone you know gets assigned an AFC from the CLC, be especially afraid if that person is Cynthia Lee, Jennifer Oh, Helen Singh, Carolyn Kalos, Patty Hurtado, Rhonda Albright or Lauren McSwain. Each one of them deal in malice, lying, and fabricated evidence, and are intent on destroying the child’s relationship with at least one “targeted” parent. The FCLU reported CLC misconduct to the New York Assembly, at the 2018-19 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Public Protection, [in testimony viewable here, starting at 11:55:55](#).

\* **Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC):** *‘Racket (n): an illegal enterprise carried on for profit, such as extortion, fraud, kidnapping, prostitution, drug peddling etc.’* Racket is exactly the right word for the [AFCC](#). It gathers family court judges with the Guardians Ad Litem (GALs)/Attorneys for the Child (AFCs) whom they contract (at huge expense to the families); with court-appointed psychologists and ‘forensic examiners’ (who also extort families out of huge amounts of cash); and with the attorneys who finance the judges’ electoral campaigns in exchange for favorable rulings. In New York, here is a sketch of how this unholy alliance works: Judges who are AFCC members include Douglas Hoffman (Supervising Judge of all NY City’s family courts) and Jeffrey Sunshine (Supervising Judge for Matrimonial Matters in Supreme Court, Kings County). They regularly hire other AFCC members like forensic examiners William Kaplan and Sherill Sigalow; GALs/AFCs like Susan Bender (Bender Rosenthal Isaacs & Richter LLP) and dozens of AFCs from the state-financed Children’s Law Center (whose President is AFCC member Karen Simmons). Both the judges and the AFCs help to secure favorable custody rulings for powerful matrimonial attorneys like Elliot Wiener (Phillips Nizer LLP), Judith White (Lee Anav Chung White & Kim LLP), and Pamela Sloan (Aronson Mayesky & Sloan LLP). If there any complaints about the conduct of the AFCs/GALs, the person who will hear (and invariably dismiss) those grievances is Harriet Weinberger, the head of the Office of Attorneys for Children who – you guessed it – is also a paid-up AFCC member. #GoodbyeAFCC

\* **A Better Childhood:** A child-trafficking racket, based in Manhattan, masquerading as a non-profit. Run by Marcia Lowry and former CLC director Dawn Post, it is ostensibly an organization that files class-action lawsuits to protect children in foster care. How do they “protect” the foster care children? By advocating for the “termination” of parental rights. This group is built on the principle that “parents are the enemy”. One mother who had to deal with Dawn Post said: “I’ve never personally encountered a more disturbed person.”

\* **Safe Horizon:** This tax-exempt ‘charity’ provides “supervised visitation” services to parents being alienated by the family courts. It maintains an inappropriate relationship with friendly judges like Morgenstern, and with agencies like the CLC. It is a scam on the taxpayer that was exposed in [this 2009 independent report](#), which reached this conclusion:

*“How many [donors] realize that Safe Horizon rakes in nearly \$56 million*



*every year? Do recession-hammered donors appreciate the agency suckles \$18 million annually from the federal teat? And how many understand that its shelter was bankrolled by a federal grant funded by the Violence Against Women Act that prohibits giving any legal assistance to a person falsely accused of partner abuse?... Federal tax returns for Safe Horizon reveal skyscraper salaries that would put many bail-out bank executives to shame... Safe Horizons gives a brand new twist to the famous old expression, 'Doing well by doing good'."*

Why has Janet diFiore and the OCA not acted on this evidence? Why are taxpayers still paying Safe Horizon's directors' salaries and benefits in excess of \$200,000 a year?

**\* Comprehensive Family Services:** This tax-exempt, private firm provides "supervised visitation" services at extortionate rates. In the matter of Zappin v Comfort, CFS' total bill was more than \$150,000. In the matter of Braverman v Braverman, the CFS bill was \$180,000. In both of those cases, the child ended up alienated from the targeted parent. Meantime, CFS enriches itself on the basis of \$300-per-hour "supervised visits" that feel like prison visits. [According to its own website:](#) *"Comprehensive Family Services was founded by its Executive Director Richard Spitzer, LCSW, ACSW. Mr. Spitzer began his forensic social work career at The Legal Aid Society's Juvenile Rights Practice in 1993. In 1998, Mr. Spitzer left Legal Aid to open his private practice, which ultimately became Comprehensive Family Services, Inc. in 2000. Mr. Spitzer is a well-respected and recognized expert in the field of forensic social work."* But why is it paying its directors six-figure sums? Attorney Colleen Kerwick has written this eloquent piece on the harm CFS causes: *Supervised visitation is designed to suck money from a parent desperate to engage in pay per view access to their own child. It then forces the parent to be completely demoralized in front of their own child, forever changing that parent-child dynamic. The parent can't tell the child why they can only see them in that setting as it would be involving the child in an adult dispute, but the child will forever remember seeing their parent in that setting. It is essentially making a parent a witness against themselves. How can a child ever be disciplined by that parent again? How can the child ever use that parent as their moral compass again? They have been visually taught that their parent is so bad that they can't be around them, their own child, without someone watching them. After seeing so many parents go through supervised visitation, get glowing reports and end up alienated, I just can't recommend it for [any child]. At least if they have malpractice insurance she can sue them if they do serve to alienate her. How many parents do you know who went through SV and ended up alienated? I know plenty. If I were one of them I'd want to know their malpractice insurance, no matter how many nice reports they wrote for me. Moreover, CFS literally said they were going to set their fee depending on how much money the parties have. After the judge court orders (hello duress) a parent into a contract with a third party, the contracting party they are court ordered to see actually looks at their finances to see how much they can force them to pay? That's insane!!!*

**\* Sanctuary for Families:** This tax-exempt firm, financed by NY taxpayers, pays \$250,000-a-year to sketchy attorneys to provide 'free' representation to parents seeking to alienate children from the other parent, maximizing Title IV-D funding for NY State. The parents it represents are all women, representing gender discrimination illegal under NY Law. In cases such that of Gail Guerre, they represent women who have allegedly battered their spouses. SFF receives around \$25mn a year in taxpayer dollars, and a further \$40mn worth of pro bono services. It has its own plush Wall Street office. One of its directors is Barbara Kryszko, who has been described by two FCLU members as "a man-hating zealot." Its board is full of Proskauer and Goldman Sachs employees, and some retired judges, all seeking to burnish their humanitarian reputations in this archetypical wolf-in-sheep's-clothing.

\* **Forensic Evaluators:** ‘Custody Evaluations’ are at the heart of most cases involving kids, and they make up a big share of parents’ family court bills. Most notorious evaluators are: Eric Teitel (\$400 per hour) Mark Rand (\$250 per hour), Seymour Moscovitz (\$300/hr), Elie Aoun (\$450/hr, with an initial \$6180 retainer), Sara Weiss (\$600 per hour), Aaron Metricken (\$600/hr), Alan Ravitz (\$550/hr), Leah Younger (\$250/hr), Sophie Michelakou (\$400/hr), Nicole Berman (\$350/hr) et al. A 2021 Blue Ribbon Commission presented the NY Governor with a [scathing report of the system](#), and urged the abolition of all custody evaluations.

\* **Catholic Guardian Services:** The [CGS](#) is a major beneficiary of cases where a judge orders a “termination of parental rights”, and sends a child into foster care. Its relationship with the NY family court system has echoes of the [Kids for Cash](#) scandal and movie, involving collusion between a family court judge and foster care agencies. In the case of Ping N, CGS secured a young girl by claiming that her father was unfit because he was unwed and had not paid child support. Even when the father showed he had never received a demand for cash support, Judge Emily Olshansky gave CGS custody over the child. The CGS’s executive director, Craig Longley refuses to answer any question about his firm’s activities.

\* **St Dominic’s Family Services:** A similar organization to CGS, not just because it veils itself in a virtuous Christian name, but because it also prospers through the legal kidnapping of NY Children. In mid-2019, it tried to terminate the parental rights of David Dunbar, a 43-year-old overnight grocery store manager from the South Bronx, on the grounds that “*the father failed to communicate regularly with officials about his plans for his daughter.*” Dunbar narrowly managed to keep his daughter, by showing that he took parenting classes and passed drug tests. Diane Aquino, the chief operating officer of St. Dominic’s, justified her firm’s actions on the grounds that the very fact that a child had spent time in foster care “[indicates a father who is only intermittently planning.](#)”

Please submit all your evidence of fraud, waste and abuse – and any corrections or additions to the above survey -- to [info@fclu.org](mailto:info@fclu.org)

Notes on this Survey: Prior to publication, this survey was sent to NY’s Chief Judge, and to Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks, who are responsible for the conduct of the above judges. We asked that they make any corrections or comments that they or their offices felt appropriate. They did not respond.

We also sent a copy of this survey to New York Assembly-member Helene Weinstein, inviting her to comment. She did not respond.

Meanwhile, some of the names of litigants, parents, children and sources from within the family courts, have not been cited in this survey, to protect them from retaliatory action from officers of the court system.

Thank you to all those who contributed to this survey, and to those who can help in the future to expose fraud, waste and abuse in our court system – and to protect our families and children.

The Families Civil Liberties Union is a non-profit, non-partisan group representing families across the USA. The FCLU’s mission is to protect parents and children from fraudulent family courts; to make the public aware of misconduct, waste and abuse in the judiciary; and to bring about radical reform through public-awareness campaigns, family-friendly legislation and the investigation by appropriate federal and state authorities. [More info here.](#)