



2020 Civil and Surrogate's Court Judicial Candidate Questionnaire
Completed questionnaires will be public documents.

Personal and Employment History	
<p>How long have you lived in New York City? What neighborhoods have you lived in?</p>	<p>I have lived in New York City for seventeen years. I have lived in Park Slope, Brooklyn during that time. However, I worked as a tenant attorney in Bushwick for over seven years where I represented hundreds of tenants living in Bushwick and Williamsburg. As a result I am intimately familiar with the legal and policy issues that the residents of the 3rd Municipal District deal with on a daily basis. Civil Court Judges must be New York City residents but not residents of the district they run in because they do not have constituents like legislators do and should not give preference to residents of one neighborhood over another.</p>
<p>Please list all of your employers and your job titles for the past 10 years.</p>	<p>For the last eight and half years I have been the Principal Law Clerk for Justice Carl Landicino in New York State Supreme Court, Kings County. This position has given me the opportunity to develop a wide range of legal expertise. My first year we worked in the City Part where cases are assigned if the City of New York is the Defendant. This gave me experience with matters related to civil rights claims, allegations of police abuse, and negligence claims involving the City. In my second year I worked in the Mental Hygiene Part, which is the Court where issues related to mental health and civil commitment are addressed. In my third and fourth years we were assigned to a Matrimonial Part, where divorce proceedings are addressed. During this time I gained experience with custody issues and issues related to equitable distribution. For the last four years I have worked in an IAS part where we handled general civil matters. During the last eight years I have helped the Judge I work for</p>

	<p>to draft approximately over 500 decisions, including complex post trial decisions related to issues such as custody and commercial disputes.</p> <p>Prior to that, I worked at the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council (now Riseboro) for over seven years. I began as a staff attorney in the agency's small anti-eviction program representing tenants living in Bushwick and Williamsburg in Housing Court. After several years I became the programs Director, a position I held for more than three years. During this time I conducted non-jury trials, argued motions, and oversaw the work over several attorneys.</p>
<p>Please list all courts you have appeared in front of as an attorney, and if applicable, all courts you have presided over as a judge, or worked in as an employee.</p>	<p>As a practicing attorney I have appeared in Housing Court, Civil Court, Supreme Court and the Appellate Court. As a law clerk I have worked in several different parts of State Supreme Court as described above.</p>
<p>Please describe the types of clients you have represented in your practice.</p>	<p>During the seven years I worked as a tenant attorney, I represented low income tenants living predominantly in Bushwick and Williamsburg. These clients were very diverse both in age and ethnicity. I represented seniors living in rent controlled apartments, multi-generation NYCHA tenants, and rent stabilized tenants who had recently arrived in our country.</p>
<p>If you are running for reelection, please point us to one or two decisions you are most proud of. If not, please point us to one or two cases you litigated that you are most proud of.</p>	<p>As a law clerk I have helped to research and draft hundreds of decisions in collaboration with the Judge I work for. These decisions have ranged from matters involving resolutions of substantive motions, to decisions relating to child custody. I have attached a decision to this application.</p> <p>As an attorney, one of the cases I am most proud of was when I helped tenants living in a severely neglected building on Cooper Street in Bushwick bring a "7a" petition to have an administrator</p>

	<p>appointed. I an another attorney at our organization represented the tenants at trial and were successful. As a result the building was renovated and the landlord lost the ability harass the tenants. This matter took place in 2009, but the administrator is still in place.</p>
<p>Personal Values</p>	
<p>Please list any civic, professional, or community-based organizations with which you are a member, volunteer, or otherwise affiliated.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New Kings Democrats 2. Brooklyn Bar Association 3. Brooklyn Womans Bar Association 4. Columbian Lawyers Association Kings County 5. Kings County Democratic Party County Committee 6. Puerto Rican Bar Association 7. Democratic Socialists of America 8. American Civil Liberties Union 9. American Constitution Society
<p>Please tell us a story from your professional or personal life about an instance when you were wrong, and how you learned from it.</p>	<p>About ten years ago, as a supervising attorney, I lost my temper with a staff attorney. I was obviously wrong to do so. I had recently become a father, and I was unwilling at the time to recognize that I needed to change my work habits. I continued to maintain a heavy case load, the same day to day responsibilities as a supervising attorney and all of my volunteer commitments. It was not sustainable and it negatively affected my ability to supervise others and my own work. To this day, that experience is one of the more important experiences of my professional life. I began to better understand that I needed to ensure a balance between my professional life, my commitments as a volunteer and my personal life and that I needed to ensure that I treated others with respect.</p>
<p>Do you think the current makeup of the bench in New York City is representative of</p>	<p>I do not. However, I believe that there are several ways for me to promote diversity. As a judge I would look to serve as a mentor both to college and law</p>

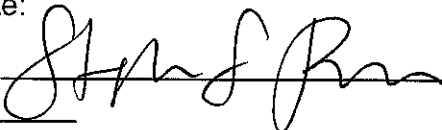
<p>the City's residents? If so, in what ways? If not, what, if anything, could and would you do as a judge to make the bench more representative?</p>	<p>school students from diverse backgrounds who would intern with me. More importantly, I look forward to mentoring law clerks that are representative of this City's great diversity.</p>
<p>What qualities do you think voters should be looking for in a judge?</p>	<p>I believe voters should look to choose someone for this position who is experienced both professionally and outside of their legal career. Civil Court is a position that calls for a complex set of skills. Not merely an intellectual background in the subject matter, but also perspective on life and how individuals can sometimes find themselves in a court of law. Civil Court Judges can be assigned to Family Court, Criminal Court or Courts where debts are sought to be paid. Many times compassion is as important as intellectual acumen.</p>
<p>Please name one judge, current or past, from any jurisdiction, who you admire, and explain why.</p>	<p>Aside from the judge I currently work for, I have always admired the work of Court of Appeals Judge Jenny Rivera. Judge Rivera has spent her career focused on public service. Prior to being appointed to the Court of Appeals, Judge Rivera worked for the Legal Aid Society's Homeless Family Rights Project and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund. These are two areas that are obviously important to me.</p>
<p>Your Campaign</p>	
<p>Please list any websites or social media pages for your campaign.</p>	<p>Website: https://burzioforbrooklyn.com/ Instagram: @burzioforbrooklyn Facebook: Stephen Burzio for Civil Court Judge</p>
<p>Please list all members of your campaign staff and their roles. Were any of your staff members or consultants chosen or recommended by officials or staff of the Kings County Democratic Committee? Please indicate</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. John Bartos- Treasurer 2. Luisa Rodriguez- social media assistant 3. Elliot Guilbe- design and communications 4. Rachel Fuentes- communications 5. Marcos Masri- consultant/field operations (50th AD) 6. Taharka Robinson- consultant/field operations (56th AD) <p>None of my staff or consultants were chosen or</p>

<p>that information for each staff member.</p>	<p>recommended by the Kings County Democratic Committee. With the exception of my treasurer, I hired them because they have experience working in the district I am running in.</p>
<p>Please list any elected officials, political clubs, or any other notable individuals or organizations who have endorsed your campaign.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rep. Nydia Velazquez 2. Assemblywoman Maritza Davila 3. Councilmember Corey Johnson 4. Councilmember Stephen Levin 5. District Leader Nick Rizzo 6. Lambda Independent Democrats 7. Brooklyn Young Democrats
<p>Who or what are the major sources of fundraising for your campaign? Are there any types of donors you won't accept donations from, and if so, what types?</p>	<p>I have been mostly self funded. Judicial candidates cannot solicit funds and are not supposed to know what individuals or organizations donate to their campaign. I would not want to accept funds from any individual or organization who would undermine my belief in the idea of justice as fairness. I would also not want to accept campaign fund from organizations that would present even the appearance of a conflict of interest with my position as a Civil Court Judge.</p>
<p>Your Judicial Philosophy</p>	
<p>Why do you want to be a judge?</p>	<p>I believe that the combination of my professional, volunteer and personal experience makes me qualified to be a Civil Court Judge. I was born in Puerto Rico and moved to New York when I was seven years old, where I was raised by a single mother. I worked my way through college and law school and have committed my career to public service. My legal career has been diverse, I began working in Williamsburg and Bushwick, Brooklyn advocating for tenants and the also for homeowners facing foreclosure for more than seven years. During that time, I also committed myself to volunteering extensively in non-legal endeavors, such as when I was a member of my local community board for more than four years. For the last eight years, I have developed experience with State Supreme Court level civil practice. While much of my time is spent helping to raise my two</p>

	<p>daughters, I still volunteer a great deal of time in Bushwick and Williamsburg, especially during the holidays assisting with food distribution and other charitable causes. This experience, taken together, provides me with the necessary experience and insight to be an effective and competent Civil Court Judge.</p>
<p>What qualities or experiences have you taken or will you take into account when hiring your judicial employees?</p>	<p>Civil Court is often known as "the People's Court" so I believe that I need to hire staff that is able to and potentially has experience working with a diverse population.</p>
<p>What qualities or experiences have you taken or will you take into account when appointing fiduciaries?</p>	<p>Guardians and fiduciaries are often entrusted with great responsibilities over a person's well being and property. I will ensure that any fiduciary I appoint be independent and trust worthy.</p>
<p>How, if at all, can the courts address issues of institutionalized racism? How, if at all, could and would you address these issues as a judge?</p>	<p>I believe that the first step in addressing a problem must begin with acknowledging that problem. Institutional racism is part of the history of the United States. Unfortunately, the Courts have and in some ways continue to be part of this problem. Obviously, this is a complex and broad problem often best left to the legislature to address but I think Judges are best served as it relates to this issue by taking a critical perspective not merely to the systemic problems at issue but to their own actions as well.</p>
<p>The Judicial Selection Process</p>	
<p>Do you think that the current system of electing Civil and Surrogate's Court judges is transparent and accountable to the voting public? If so, how? If not, how can the system be improved?</p>	<p>I think that the open primary system is probably the best option. However, I believe that there is not nearly enough civic or voter education regarding these positions. Part of the problem in my opinion stems from thicket of responsibilities these positions entail. Civil Court Judges, once elected, can be assigned to Family Court, Criminal Court, or Civil Court. Also, judicial races often do not receive nearly as much media attention as legislative races do, for various reasons.</p>

<p>Would you be willing to publicize the completed questionnaires you submitted to the New York City Bar Association and the Kings County Democratic Committee? If not, why not? If so, please submit these completed questionnaires along with your responses to this questionnaire.</p>	<p>Yes. Those questionnaires have been attached.</p>
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I have reviewed this questionnaire and agree that the responses set forth in this document are accurate:

Candidate Signature:  _____
Date: 6/11/2020

You must sign this questionnaire! When complete, please e-mail your signed and scanned questionnaire to politics@newkingsdemocrats.com