



2021 Civil and Surrogate’s Court Judicial Candidate Questionnaire
Completed questionnaires will be public documents.

Questions? Get in touch: politics@newkingsdemocrats.com

Name/Title: LOLA WATERMAN, ESQ.

Current position: PRINCIPAL LAW CLERK TO THE HON. LISA OTTLEY, KINGS COUNTY SUPREME

Tenure in current position: FOUR (4) YEARS

<p>Please describe the types of clients you have represented in your practice.</p>	<p>Before entering public service, I was in private practice for close to a decade. I represented tenants and landlords in Housing Court (I also served as a Guardian ad litem advocating for tenants with disabilities); families in Surrogate’s Court with administering the estates of their loved ones; seniors and their families with estate and Medicaid planning; immigrants in Federal (Immigration) Court; and persons alleged to be incapacitated in Article 81 Guardianships (Supreme Court). In addition, I have represented clients in Criminal, Family, General Civil, Foreclosure and other courts.</p> <p>I have been appointed in Civil, Supreme, and Surrogate Courts as court evaluator, guardian ad litem, counsel to the alleged incapacitated person, referee, guardian, and trustee.</p>
<p>Please describe the types of clients you have represented in your current practice, and throughout your career?</p>	<p>I currently serve as a Principal Law Clerk to the Hon. Lisa Ottley who presides in the Kings County Supreme Court. Presently, my judge oversees adult guardianship matters; presides in a motion part; and occasionally presides in the Criminal and Election Law Parts.</p> <p>As law clerk, I work closely with my judge in deciding cases, writing orders and decisions, and assisting with the smooth operation of the courtroom. I also work closely with attorneys and self-represented litigants in settlement conferences, researching the law, and resolving disputes.</p> <p>I interact regularly with seniors and their families, persons with mental health issues, New York State agencies, social workers, geriatric care managers, banks, the District Attorney’s Office, court-</p>

	<p>appointed attorneys, real estate brokers, appraisers, nursing homes, landlords, tenants, medical professionals, judges and their staff, and other court personnel.</p> <p>As a Small Claims Court Arbitrator in the Kings County Civil Court, I have the honor of presiding over cases where most of the litigants are self-represented and from different walks of life (the Civil Court is known as the People’s Court). In some instances, parties may be represented by counsel. As an arbitrator, I hear and decide cases, and resolve disputes brought by New Yorkers in matters where the claims do not exceed \$10,000.</p>
<p>If elected, what do you plan to point to as your top two accomplishments that will benefit constituents?</p>	<p>(1) Improving access to justice: Since graduating from law school, I have made it a personal mission to expand access to justice. To that end, I have organized judicial seminars wherein judges provide insight to the community on court processes; bi-annual legal clinics wherein community members are provided with free legal consultation; senior resource fairs wherein seniors and their families come to one location to get information, including but not limited to, legal, home care, medical, public benefits, and real estate; Know Your Rights workshops; and a myriad of other programs, often in collaboration with bar associations, churches, senior residences and community organizations.</p> <p>I will continue to work to expand access to justice in any capacity I am permitted to as judge.</p> <p>(2) Improving diversity within the court system: A diverse bench is critical. This also extends to having diverse court personnel at every level of the court system. I believe diversity within the courts will help foster public trust and confidence in the judicial system.</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>The Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission was established within the court system in 1991 to develop and implement educational programs designed to address racial and ethnic bias in the legal profession, among other initiatives. It is still going strong.</p>

	<p>Other measures that could and should be taken within the courts include increasing diversity within the judicial nominating and screening panels process; implementing mandatory bias trainings and professional development programs for all court staff; addressing jurors' bias; improving interpretation services; and including more judges of color in the decision making process with the Office of Court Administration.</p> <p>As a judge, racism will not be tolerated in my courtroom. As someone who has been the subject of racism within the courts as a law clerk, as well as outside the courts, I subscribe to a zero tolerance policy. I will address any instances of overt or covert racism immediately, or refer it to the appropriate channels.</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>Judges we elect into our courts make critical decisions that affect our daily lives. It is important that voters are fully informed about the candidates in these races. Unfortunately, what we find in the judicial races is that voters are not well educated about the process. Basic education is necessary. Most voters I have spoken with do not know the difference between the two courts. Educating voters on the jurisdictional reach/limits of both courts, as well as the judicial election process, is imperative.</p> <p>I do not have the backing of the Kings County Democratic Party. Instead, I have chosen to run a grassroots campaign and have been intentional about educating voters on the judicial election process and doing what I can with bringing more transparency and accountability to the election process.</p> <p>Judicial candidates are unable to participate in the NYC Campaign Finance Board's Matching Funds Program. The current system can be improved by making public funds available to judicial candidates. Funding would ensure that more qualified candidates can decide to run for judicial office, regardless of their access to wealth. It also helps with engaging voters. Public funding of judicial elections and preserving judicial impartiality are not mutually exclusive.</p> <p>The current system of electing judges is not where it needs to be in terms of transparency or accountability, but with collective effort, I am</p>

	optimistic it will get there.
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 yes, please submit these completed questionnaires along with your responses to this questionnaire.	The submitted questionnaires are intended to be confidential in nature.

I have reviewed this questionnaire and agree that the responses set forth in this document are accurate:

Candidate Signature: _____ *Lola Waterman* _____ Date: June 2021 _____

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