

What is your Name?

Nikki Roberts

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing our courts during this time of global pandemic and social unrest? How would you address this if elected?

The biggest challenge is the loss of citizen's faith in the legal/judicial process. Citizens must believe that our legal/judicial system will treat them equally, fairly, impartially and justly. I would bring transparency to the judicial process while providing citizens with equality, justice and the security to know that my rulings are unbiased.

How can Orleans Parish courts work to eliminate practices that may create or exacerbate trauma in youth?

The Courts can treat children as individuals and recognize that each youth must be treated according to their particularized need. Plans must be formulated based upon the unique needs of a child and his/her family. Children should not be left to wait at the court for extended periods of time for their case nor should they have to wait to have their day in court. The court should present a more child sensitive environment.

Will you refuse to punish youth who are prosecuted in court for misdemeanor school-based arrests? Why or why not?

I believe that school based offenses should be handled by the school and not criminalized by the school by involving the police. However, as a judge you have an obligation to uphold the law and not to allow your personal biases and opinions to color following the law and making fair and impartial rulings. Unfortunately if a child is arrested for a school based offense and is prosecuted a judge cannot allow their personal beliefs to intervene if the State proves their case beyond a reasonable doubt.

What will you do to reduce obvious racial and ethnic disparities in treatment by the court system in New Orleans?

As a black woman I am very aware of racial and ethnic disparity. I pledge to ensure that no child that enters my courtroom is subjected to such unequal treatment. I believe that training the adults that are responsible for interacting with children is a necessity. Inherent biases are real and everyone must acknowledge this fact and be aware of its affect on children who come into court.

As a judge, how will you ensure the Policing Alternative for Youth (PAY) ordinance is honored by the Orleans Parish Justice system?

This is not within a judge's discretion to do. Judges are not allowed to tell the police how to conduct an investigation nor are they allowed to determine who/when arrests are made.

Will you commit to pushing for restorative justice in lieu of prosecution in any case where both the survivor and accused party have provided their informed consent to such a process? (is this out of judges' discretion?)

This is out of a judge's discretion. A judge is not allowed to tell the prosecutor's office how to prosecute a case. Nor are judges allowed to discuss a case with either the accused or the victim until a ruling has been made on the ultimate issue of guilt. As the trier of fact in a case the judge must not be seen to favor any party over another. If the parties (defense and state) agree amongst themselves they can then involve the judge in the process of a restorative justice plan but it cannot be pushed by the judge.

What else can the city create and/or improve for dealing with juvenile crime?

We need to find more constructive things for children to do with their time within the community. Community resources are lacking in funding and organization. Children need to have creative options and mentors to foster that creativity.