

Meet SJDC's two new judges

Though they have different backgrounds, the Second Judicial District Court's two new judges are approaching this next stage of their legal careers with the same goal in mind: to administer justice with a sense of compassion and fairness.

On July 2, 2020, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham appointed Lucy Boyadjian Solimon and Clara Marissa Moran to fill two newly created seats on this court's bench. Chief Judge Stan Whitaker administered their oaths of office—officially making them judges—on July 27, 2020. They both are presiding over cases in the Criminal Division.

Both new judges graduated from the University Of Mexico School Of Law, but their paths to law school—and ultimately to the Second Judicial District Court—are quite different.



Judges Lucy Solimon, left, and Clara Moran on their first official day at the Second Judicial District Court.

From Lebanon to Albuquerque

Judge Solimon was born in Lebanon, and immigrated to the United States with her parents, who are Armenian, when she was six years old. She grew up in California's San Fernando Valley and earned a bachelor's degree in Economics from Occidental College, where she met her husband, Justin Solimon, a Native of Laguna Pueblo. She then earned a second bachelor's degree in Spanish from UNM.

Since graduating from UNM law school in 2007, Judge Solimon has worked as both a defense attorney and prosecutor, and has State, Federal, and Administrative court experience.

She started her career in the New Mexico Public Defender's Office helping indigent clients. She spent some time in private practice, including running her own practice, serving diverse clients

throughout New Mexico. She later served the Pueblo of Laguna as a Special Assistant US Attorney prosecuting violent crimes committed against women and children on American Indian reservations throughout the various Pueblos and Nations in New Mexico. At the time of her appointment to the bench, Judge Solimon was the Enforcement Bureau Chief and Special Assistant Attorney General for the State of New Mexico where she oversaw investigations and prosecutions with respect to violations of the Workers' Compensation Act and Regulations.

Judge Solimon's unique experience as a defense attorney and prosecutor, working with diverse defendants and victims, has given her the ability to understand the nuance and outlook experienced on both sides and elicits her appreciation for balance and fairness. "This experience will allow me to listen to competing interests with an open mind, to be fair and impartial," Judge Solimon said. As a presiding Judge, she will continue to ensure that our criminal justice system is fair and reliable, keeping in mind the safety of our community and ensuring constitutional rights to due process of law.

"I am the first in my family to go to college and law school," she said. "At times, I thought I would end up doing non-profit work focused on non-violence and education. I really think early intervention can help some people."

Judge Solimon's dedication to public service is grounded in her own life experience and she is confident that her personal and professional experiences are an asset in her position as Judge. She is proud to call New Mexico her home and to serve the community.



Judge Lucy Solimon

A native New Mexican

Judge Moran is a New Mexico native. She was born in Albuquerque and moved to Las Cruces with her family in second grade. She left New Mexico to attend college in Maryland, and returned to get her law degree at UNM.



Judge Clara Moran

She spent her entire career as a prosecutor, most recently serving as Chief Deputy Attorney General overseeing the Criminal Affairs Division of the New Mexico Attorney General's Office. Though she prosecuted a number of high-profile cases, she is ready for the very different role of a judge.

"I am honored and humbled by the whole experience," Judge Moran said of her appointment. "This is a way to continue my public service. I want to bring compassion to job, and I hope to work with district attorneys and public defenders in a way that inspires them to remain in public service."

Judge Moran also said 15 years as a prosecutor has shown her that judges make decisions that impact peoples' lives. "I want to be able to distinguish between when someone can benefit from rehabilitation versus when someone is dangerous and needs to be incarcerated," she said.

Judge Moran said her life experiences, which include being raised by a school counselor and a physician, fuel her drive for public service. "I am really thrilled to give back to the community that I have lived in and invested in," she said.

Both on the job and off, Judge Moran will have the support of her close-knit family, including her husband, Richard Moran, and her parents who moved to Albuquerque from Las Cruces to be near their 10 and 11-year-old granddaughters.

She also said whenever she takes the bench, she will heed the advice of a veteran Second Judicial District Court Judge, the Hon. Clay Campbell, who once told her, "Never forget that it is about people."