



An Interview with Judge Abby Cynamon

Attorney at Law Magazine sat down with Judge Abby Cynamon, a Circuit Court Judge in the Civil Division of the 11th Judicial Circuit. She has spent more than a decade on the bench.

AALM: How did you transition from attorney to judge? What advice do you have for attorneys considering the switch?

Cynamon: After graduating from Barnard College with a bachelor's degree and University of Miami School of Law with a Juris Doctor and an LL.M. in taxation, I was an assistant general counsel for the 11th Judicial Circuit, researching the law to help judges render rulings and decisions that followed the law. Rather than advocating for one side, I approached each case neutrally, with the goal of finding and following the law. As a judge, I use this same approach. My advice to attorneys who are considering transitioning to the bench is: remember the difference between advocating and being committed to properly following and applying the law.

AALM: Describe your courtroom style.

Cynamon: I strive to be prepared for each hearing, relying on attorneys to submit written materials that I read in advance. I often ask attorneys questions during their presentations. To be fair to both sides, I hear only matters noticed for hearing. Everyone has

the chance to be heard and to make their record. I strive to rule quickly.

AALM: What's your advice for attorneys trying cases before you?

Cynamon: Be punctual, prepared and courteous to opposing counsel. Obtain hearings and rulings on all pretrial motions. Confer with opposing counsel before trial on jury instructions, statement of the case and deposition designations, so that you can utilize the jurors' time efficiently.

AALM: What do you love about your job?

Cynamon: I have served in the civil, family and juvenile divisions. I have loved serving in each and look forward to continuing to serve. No matter whether it is a decision on who wins a civil case, which parent has more time with a child, or whether a juvenile ends up in a commitment program, I never forget that I am there to serve the public and that my decisions directly impact the lives of people who live and work in our community.

AALM: What's the biggest difference between practicing law and being a judge?

Cynamon: Lawyers advocate for their client's legal position. Judges must approach each case neutrally

and be committed to properly following and applying the law. Lawyers want their client to be treated fairly. Judges are committed to ensuring that both sides have a fair hearing, a chance to make their arguments and to make their record.

AALM: What future changes are you looking forward to?

Cynamon: I am looking forward to working in the new Miami-Dade County Courthouse when it opens!

AALM: Who is your legal hero and how do you try to emulate them in your day-to-day life?

Cynamon: My hero is a family court judge who served in Manhattan in the 1970s. I don't remember her name, but I remember her effect on my life. When we met, I was nine years old, my parents were going through a vitriolic divorce and I was brought to court. After listening to the lawyers argue, the judge took time to speak to the person whose life would be most impacted by her decision: me. I emulate her every day by considering the impact my decisions will have on the parties before me.

AALM: Tell us something about yourself.

Cynamon: I spent my teens in foster care. Receiving a full scholarship to Barnard College changed my life, enabling me to overcome early challenges and have a fulfilling and successful life and career!