

Judge Luis Delgado

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By: Misty T. Chaves and James P. Pagni

Newly robed Judge Luis Delgado is no stranger to the courtroom. Before his recent election onto the bench, Judge Delgado practiced in front of the county and civil benches of Palm Beach County, first as a State Attorney and then in the private sector, where he practiced in both the civil and criminal divisions. Throughout his career as an attorney, Judge Delgado has exhibited an ability to zealously advocate for his clients while cultivating professionalism amongst his fellow attorneys and maintaining respect for the judiciary.

Judge Luis Delgado was born in Lima, Peru. Around the age of five and in the midst of violent political turmoil, his Father, Luis, Sr. and his mother, Elsa, made a courageous decision to leave the comforts and luxuries of their home in Lima and relocate the family to West Palm Beach, Florida. When discussing the influence his parents have had on his life, Judge Delgado cannot help but become visibly emotional as he discussed the incalculable sacrifices his parent made to assure him and his siblings' safety. He harbors deep appreciation and profound gratitude for all of his parents' hard work in providing for their family in a new city, where, initially, neither parent spoke the language. He is beyond thankful for the strong principles that were instilled in him and he considers his parents as his "moral compass". He often finds himself pondering when faced with ethical dilemmas, "what would my parents do?"

Judge Delgado spent his formative years in West Palm Beach, graduated high school and made the decision to serve his Country by enlisting in the United States Marine Corps. Unfortunately, his enlistment was delayed due to a shoulder injury he sustained playing high school football. While waiting for the injury to heal, he matriculated to the University of Florida where he earned dual degrees – a Bachelors of Science in Journalism and a Bachelors of Art in Political Science, both bestowed in 2004. While studying at UF, he re-executed his contract with the United States Marine Corp first as a reservist, later completing three years of active duty.

Following graduation, Judge Delgado was accepted into the University of Florida College of Law and commenced classes in the Fall, 2004. However, his law career was interrupted by a call from his Country. After only completing a couple weeks of law school, Judge Delgado was summoned to active duty. He was deployed and spent a year overseas, serving his Country. In recognition of his courageous actions and his dedication to duty, Judge Delgado

was awarded a “combat distinguishing device” by the United States Armed Forces. A “combat distinguishing device” is a tremendous honor—it is a bronze capital “V”, denoting an award for heroism and valor in combat.

Upon returning from his tour of duty, Judge Delgado resumed his legal studies in the fall of 2005, earning his Juris Doctorate in 2008. He was Honorably Discharged from the United States Marine Corp. in 2007.

After law school, Judge Delgado returned to his home in Palm Beach County and, continuing his public service, took a position with the state attorney’s office as a prosecutor where he remained for the next four (4) years. In 2012, he tendered his resignation for personal, family reasons and took a position in the private sector with the well-respected firm of Lesser, Lesser, Landy and Smith.

While pursuing his law career, Judge Delgado dedicated time to serve as President of the Hispanic Bar Association and the Palm Beach County Bar, Young Lawyers Section. In addition, he sat on the Board of Governors Young Lawyers Division for the Florida Bar. Ultimately, Judge Delgado opened his own firm, Delgado Law, and practiced criminal defense until his life-changing decision to run for a judicial seat.

As Judge Delgado would agree, sometimes life has ways of steering you down certain paths. During his first years practicing in front of the bench, he acquired a respect and admiration for those sitting on the bench that would ultimately lead him to run for a judicial seat. He admired the judges in front of whom he was practicing as they were even-tempered, knowledgeable, and fair-handed while they issued rulings that affected a person’s life and liberty. As a firm believer that, in life, “you don’t get anything that you don’t ask for” when Judge Delgado heard of a seat soon to be vacated by a retiring judge, he immediately announced his intent to run for the judicial position. Judge Delgado was elected by the citizens of Palm Beach County to the Circuit Court on November 8, 2016.

Adriana Gonzalez considers herself not only a colleague of Judge Delgado’s (having served on the Hispanic Bar Association Board of Directions with him for many years) but also a friend. She describes Judge Delgado as a caring, hard-working, honest man with the utmost integrity. “He cares deeply for the community that he serves and always strives to do the right thing.” She continues, expressing what a positive role model he is and perhaps paying the highest of compliments: “if my two young sons grow up to be like Lou Delgado, I would be the proudest mother.”

Judge Delgado currently sits in Juvenile Division, “JS” at the South County Courthouse, handling Juvenile, Dependency and Uniform Family cases. He demands civility in his division, noting that “ideas” may be fair game for “attack”, but fellow members of the Bar and those persons who find themselves involved in the legal system, are not. He finds his most daunting challenges and his greatest rewards are often found within the Dependency cases.

The children entangled in Dependency cases typically did not ask to be part of the legal system and yet they often have the most to gain through the system. Judge Delgado recognizes the gravity of the decisions he is tasked with making; decisions that can change a child's life in an instance – and hopefully for the better.

If you have had the pleasure of practicing in front of Judge Delgado, you may have noticed the bookcase in his Courtroom. Judge Delgado believes in the transformational power of reading by children and to children. As an avid reader himself, he will often stop the ongoing proceedings and take an opportunity to address the child or children in his courtroom: “What is the last book you read?” “Do you read to your little brother or sister?” “If I let you take one of these books home, will you read it and tell me about it next time I see you?” The enormous responsibility to serve as a positive role model and to encourage the children who come before him is not lost on Judge Delgado. He is passionate for the job he performs and compassionate for the public he serves. He wears the robe with honor and humility, thankful that he has been given the privilege to arduously labor for the community he serves.

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