

GIA L. MORRIS-KERN

EXPERIENCE

ACTING JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT
JUDGE OF THE CRIMINAL COURT OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Queens County Supreme Court, Criminal Term
Queens and Bronx County Criminal Court

April 2017-present
September 2011- April 2017
February 2019 - present
August 2012 - February 2019

Designated Acting Supreme Court Justice in April 2017 by the Chief Administrative Judge and currently preside over the TAP-C Supreme Court Homicide trial part which handles murder indictments from Supreme Court arraignment through sentencing and post-conviction motion practice. Previously presided over the special victims' part, handling all the sex offenses, child abuse cases and elder abuse cases in Queens County. Prior assignments also included handling all the gunpoint robberies and probation violations. Specific responsibilities include:

- Since February 2019, preside over felony jury and non-jury trials, hearings and motion practice. Presided over more than 30 felony jury trials and numerous pre-trial evidentiary hearings.
- From April 2017 until January 2019, successfully managed the felony waiver part calendar including taking more than 400 felony pleas and sentences.
- Prior to being made an Acting Supreme Court Justice, presided over 5 misdemeanor jury trials and 8 misdemeanor non-jury trials.
- Conduct hearings on matters pertaining to evidentiary issues, the source of bail being proposed, post-conviction relief and Sex Offender Registration Act designations.
- Write and publish decisions on substantive, procedural and evidentiary issues.
- Preside over felony and misdemeanor arraignments including search warrant, cell-site, Pen Register and GPS tracking applications.
- During the COVID-19 global pandemic, volunteered to handle approximately 10 Supreme Court, Civil Term motions and approximately 30 custody and visitation matters in Queens Family Court.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION, East Elmhurst, New York
Assistant Commissioner for Investigations, Investigation Division

May 2011 - Sept 2011

Acted as Commanding Officer for the Investigation Division which was responsible for ensuring the integrity, professionalism and accountability of the Department of Correction and its employees. The investigation Division conducted internal investigations of uniformed and civilian staff, and was comprised of approximately 50 people, including civilian and uniformed investigators. Specific responsibilities included:

- Supervised investigations of matters involving excessive use of force, undue familiarity with inmates, improper outside employment, off-duty arrests, sexual assault allegations against both staff and other inmates, and other conduct unbecoming of a New York City Department of Correction employee.
- Reviewed Department policies to identify corruption hazards and recommend changes to ensure the integrity and professionalism of the Department.
- Reviewed and edited Personnel Determination Reports for probationary employees recommending termination or extension of probation.

NEW YORK STATE BANKING DEPARTMENT, New York, New York
Assistant Director, Criminal Investigations Bureau

March 2009 – May 2011

Supervised staff of investigators, attorneys and bank examiners in connection with criminal investigations of matters impacting financial institutions in New York State. Investigations included matters involving bank fraud, mortgage fraud, violations of the Bank Secrecy Act, and money laundering. Specific responsibilities included:

- Worked directly with federal and state law enforcement agencies on joint investigations including deed/mortgage frauds and money laundering cases. Acted as liaison between the Banking Department and federal and state prosecutors; designated special prosecutor in Delaware County.
- Drafted legislation to improve the laws of the State of New York.
- Assisted in internal affairs matters referred to the State Inspector General and handled disciplinary matters within the Department and worked with the Chief Operating Officer on drafting changes to policies.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATION, New York, New York
Inspector General, DOF/EDC/OPA/OATA Inspector General's Office
Counsel to the Inspector General, DOT/DDC/SBS Inspector General's Office

May 2006 – March 2009
March 2005 – May 2006

Supervised staff of auditors, investigators and attorneys in connection with investigations of City employees and entities conducting business with the City or committing crimes against the City. Investigations included matters involving fraud, corruption, abuse of authority, illegal use of governmental funds, conflicts of interest and gross mismanagement. Specific responsibilities included:

- Worked directly with federal and state law enforcement agencies on joint investigations including counterfeit check and deed/mortgage frauds
- Trained City employees regarding their responsibilities as public servants and ways to detect corruption in City government.
- Supervised and conducted interrogations of subjects and targets of investigations.
- Prepared policy and procedure recommendations on matters involving corruption hazards and effective management.
- Prepared press releases for distribution to media outlets with respect to arrests and convictions.
- Represented DOI as member of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York's Mortgage Fraud Task Force.
- Spearheaded a task force that was charged with reviewing debt collection practices and prepared a report on how to significantly enhance revenue for the City.

ALLYN & FORTUNA LLP, New York, New York
Associate

May 2001 – March 2005

Represented clients before federal and state courts in both commercial and criminal matters. Practice areas included contract litigation, white-collar criminal defense, commercial real estate litigation and administrative law. Significant matters included:

- Briefed and argued two appeals involving a commercial real estate lease dispute in the Appellate Division, First Department, on behalf of a large retail pharmacy chain.
- Represented large jewelry manufacturer in a federal copyright infringement and licensing dispute in the U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York.
- Represented securities broker in a federal criminal investigation into a market-manipulation scheme.
- Lead counsel for major retail store involved in real property dispute in Kings County Supreme Court.

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY, KINGS COUNTY, Brooklyn, New York
Assistant District Attorney

September 1997 – April 2001

Prosecuted felony, misdemeanor and "designated felony" juvenile offenses in the Supreme Court, Criminal Court and Family Court of the State of New York. Relevant experience included:

- Lead counsel on numerous hearings and felony jury and non-jury trials. Acted as "second seat" on two homicide jury trials.
- Supervised junior assistant district attorneys at hearings and trials.
- Assisted police investigations by drafting subpoenas and search warrants, interviewing eyewitnesses, evaluating police-arranged identification procedures and taking videotaped confessions of suspects.
- Presented hundreds of cases to grand juries resulting in indictments.

LAW OFFICES OF MAURICE H. SERCARZ, New York, New York
Associate

September 1995 – September 1997

Represented clients accused of federal crimes in areas that included perjury, money laundering, racketeering and narcotics trafficking. Relevant experience included:

- Researched and drafted pre-trial and post-trial motions, sentencing memoranda and appellate briefs.
- Interviewed and prepared clients and witnesses for proffer sessions, hearings and trials.
- Assisted in the representation of FBI agent in connection with the “*Ruby Ridge*” investigation.
- Assisted in the representation of a New York City correction officer accused of using excessive force and violating an inmate’s civil rights in federal and state court.

EDUCATION

BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW, New York, New York
Juris Doctor, June 1995

Honors: *Oralist and Editor*, Moot Court Honor Society
Jacob Burns Medal Recipient for participation on Cardozo’s National Moot Court team

ITHACA COLLEGE, Ithaca, New York
Bachelor of Science in Corporate Communication, May 1992
(Minors in Politics, Public Relations and Advertising)

Honors/Activities: Dean’s List
Ithaca College London Center program for freshman, London, England

BAR ADMISSIONS

State of New York, U.S. District Court for the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York, 1996
State of New Jersey, U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey, 1995

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Immediate Past Chairperson, Queens County Brandeis Association
Member, Criminal Court Judges Association, 2011 - present
Member, Association of the Bar of the City of New York, 2002 - present

- Served on the Criminal Advocacy Committee, 2010 to 2024
- Organized and co-chaired 3 continuing legal education courses: “What Every Criminal and Corporate Lawyer Needs to Know About Monitors” (October 2011); “Representing Clients Before State & City Agencies: Tips & Techniques For Effective Criminal Advocacy” (November 2008); “Trying a Criminal Case - Trial Techniques that Will Save Your Client” (December 2004)
- Pro Bono Society 2002, 9/11 Fund

Instructor, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law’s Intensive Trial Advocacy Program, 2002 - present

MANAGEMENT TRAINING COURSES

Competitively selected to participate in the New York City Leadership Institute
New York City Department of Investigation’s Management Training Course
New York City Training Center’s Effective Management Course