

Betty Staton '79

After a career that included almost 20 years on the bench, Judge Betty Staton '79 retired from the New York State Family Court to return to the Bedford Stuyvesant Community Legal Services Corporation, where she began her legal career. She is currently president of Bedford Stuyvesant Community Legal Services (BSCLS), Brooklyn Branch Legal Services, and South Brooklyn Legal Services, the three Brooklyn legal services organizations that are in the process of being consolidated into the legal services organization serving all of Brooklyn.

After graduating from NYU School of Law in 1979, Staton worked at BSCLS for eight years, and for several years was the deputy director and director of Community Outreach and Education. In that capacity, she developed curriculum in various legal areas and trained laypeople to advocate for and represent clients at administrative hearings. She conducted outreach seminars at schools, senior citizen centers, and youth centers.

In March 1987, she left BSCLS to become a founding partner in the law firm of Boyd, Staton & Cave, the first African-American female law firm in New York. Staton worked there until 1991, when former Mayor David Dinkins appointed her to a ten-year term on the New York State Family Court, assigned to Kings County. In 2001, she was re-appointed to a ten-year term by former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and served until her mandatory retirement. After retirement, she served as interim executive director of BSCLS for several months but returned to the family court in 2007 as a judicial hearing officer until her resignation in July 2011. She then returned to BSCLS as its project director until August 2012, when she assumed her current position.

Her professional memberships include the National Bar Association, National Judicial Council, New York Judicial Friends, the American Bar Association, the New York County Lawyers, and the New York State Bar Association.

In 1978, Staton was one of a group of students who organized the NYU School of Law Black and Latino Alumni Association, which later became the Black, Latino, Asian Pacific American Alumni Association (BLAPA).

Staton has served as an adjunct lecturer at several colleges: City College of New York, Medgar Evers College, College of New Rochelle, and New York City College of Technology, where she taught business law for more than 15 years. She has received numerous awards for her community service, most recently from the Coalition for the Improvement of Bedford Stuyvesant, Senator Velmanette Montgomery of the Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus, Councilmember Annette Robinson, and New York County Lawyers. Staton is a member of several community organizations, including the Black Child Development Institute, the Vanguard Improvement Association, and Bedford Stuyvesant Community Connections. She is a member of Emmanuel Baptist Church, where she helped organize the legal ministry. She is also the servant leader of the Hospitality Ministry and Prime Time Ministry.

Prior to her legal career, her employment included clerical work with the New York State Department of Employment and the United States Department of Statistics, registrar and administrative assistant at a private school, and family counselor at a family daycare center. She was also one of the founders of the St. Paul's Christian School in Brooklyn, an elementary school serving grades per-K through ninth grade.

She loves to travel and her bucket list includes visiting all 50 states and all seven continents. One of her most memorable trips was attending the 1963 March on Washington. Staton is the mother of two sons, grandmother of four children, and great-grandmother of three. She loves to dance.