

# County names 1st woman as circuit judge

North's appointment  
comes week after first  
black chosen for bench

**'Why has it taken so long?'**

Appointee is praised  
for compassion, mind,  
willingness to listen

By BY DENNIS O'BRIEN  
SUN STAFF

A week after the first black in Anne Arundel County history became a Circuit Court judge, the first woman was sworn in to the same position — and she used the occasion to question why it has taken so long to make such appointments.

"Maybe there's a lesson here for everyone," Pamela Lee North, a former assistant public defender and Annapolis criminal defense lawyer told about 250 people at the Anne Arundel Circuit Courthouse during her investiture yesterday.

"Maybe we're not as enlightened in Anne Arundel County as we like to think we are."

Ms. North credited her parents for teaching her to despise prejudice and recounted the resistance Nelson Mandela faced when he began practicing law in South Africa 43 years ago.

Mr. Mandela often had to show South African judges his license to practice law before he was allowed to speak

in court, she said. White witnesses often refused to answer his questions and faced no sanctions from judges.

She stopped short of comparing Anne Arundel County to South Africa — but the analogy was obvious.

"Why has it taken us so long to appoint a female and a black judge in Anne Arundel County?" she asked.

Clayton Greene Jr., Anne Arundel's first black Circuit Court judge, was sworn in last Monday.

Lindsay [See Judge, 6B]



KENNETH K. LAM: SUN STAFF

**Trailblazer:** Annapolis resident Pamela North, 43, will earn \$91,700 annually as the only female judge on the Anne Arundel Circuit Court.

## North becomes county's first female appointed to Circuit Court bench

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Barranco, an Annapolis lawyer who was Ms. North's law clerk in 1990, pointed out the absence of women among the 30 photographs of retired and deceased judges that hang in the courthouse's hallways.

All are white males.

But, she added, yearbook-sized photographs of the county's 125 female lawyers hang in the first floor hallway alongside their male counterparts. Ms. North's appointment is a signal to those women, she said.

"I'm truly convinced that times really have changed with the appointment of the county's first woman judge."

Ms. Barranco and J. Michael Wachs, Ms. North's former law partner, praised the county's newest judge for her compassion, her intellect and her ability to listen to people from all walks of life.

"I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that Pam North will not only be a good judge, but a great judge," Mr. Wachs said.

Ms. North was sworn in to the \$91,700 position by Clerk of the Court Robert Duckworth, as her husband, J. Douglas Sanner, and her daughter, Nicole Sanner, watched.

After putting on judicial robes for the first time, Ms. North also talked about the criticism leveled at criminal defense lawyers, whom she called an under-appreciated lot who deserve praise for their conviction and perseverance.

"No one seems to appreciate the trial attorney until it is their son or their daughter who is charged with a crime, and then we become the most important people in the world," she said.

Ms. North, 43, is a resident of Annapolis and a 1982 graduate of the University of Baltimore Law School.

She was in private practice and worked part time in the Anne Arundel County public defender's office from 1983 to 1989. She worked full time as an assistant public defender from 1989 to 1991, when she left to open a practice with Mr. Wachs in Annapolis.