

Carla Barnes graduated from Illinois State University in December 1993 with a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice Sciences. Passionate about furthering her education, she enrolled in the John Marshall Law School and graduated in 1998.

Carla completed her law school internship with Chicagoland politician, Edward Vrdolyak. After graduation, she was immediately hired at the Vrdolyak Law Firm. Upon leaving the firm, she was employed as a Cook County Assistant State's attorney. After several years, she decided that she wanted to return to her adopted home town in McLean County. She became a member of the McLean County State's Attorney's Office.

Although she enjoyed her time as a prosecutor, she felt that she could affect more change as a Public Defender. She was hired as an Assistant Public Defender in 2001, and has worked in the McLean County Public Defender's Office since that time.

The Public Defender's office provides legal representation to indigent citizens in the criminal courtrooms of McLean County. Carla constantly works to ensure that all citizens are given zealous representation from the attorneys in her office. She is determined to exceed expectations and ensure that the Constitutional rights of all citizens are protected.

In October 2014, Carla was appointed as the Chief McLean County Public Defender.

Carla was also a board member of the Juvenile Justice Council. She served as Treasurer for the Illinois Council of Chief Defenders. Carla was an active member of the McLean County Truancy Committee, the McLean County Veterans Court of the 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, as well as the McLean County Drug Court. She served a board member of the Great Plains Life Foundation. Carla was a member of the Illinois State University Foundation as well as the Children's Discovery Museum. Additionally, Governor Bruce Rauner appointed Carla to the Illinois Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

Justice Rita Garman appointment of Carla Barnes to fill the vacancy created by Judge Scott Drazewski in 2021 was history making. Carla is now the first African American judge in the 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit.