

# world of women

## A judge looks at justice

By Nancy Showalter

This week I had the great pleasure of interviewing Judge Mercedes F. Diez, presently in District Court, Department #1 and a candidate of Circuit Court - Department of Domestic Relations in the Fourth Judicial District. Judge Diez is well known as a judge seeking justice through a sensitive understanding of the law and its application to those who come before her.

Her sensitive ability and understanding neither begin nor end in a court room. The following are excerpts from that interview.

Showalter: What can be done to get more blacks on juries?

Diez: That's a thing I have been very concerned about. I think we're doing remarkably well. In these last four months I haven't had a jury come down to my court room that didn't have one or two blacks on it, which is just phenomenal. I've been wanting to ask how this could have been done recently and not in the past, because as an attorney I never saw a black in this courthouse - maybe once in a blue moon. The only system we use now is the voter registration list, so this means, ipso facto, we discriminate against people who don't register to vote. The corollary of that is if a person doesn't have enough interest in government to elect his officials - why should he serve on a jury? The only way to get more blacks on any jury would be to just go and take a true census reading of names and addresses of everybody who lives in Multnomah County and throw their names into a hat. I think that's an incredibly difficult task.

A lot of people would say the fact that they don't want to



JUDGE MERCEDES DIEZ

register to vote is no reason to keep them off a jury, but I just don't buy that. We have to use some standard.

S: The juvenile courts have no black counselors. Is this because of a quota system? Does it hinder counseling in black families and what can be done about his situation?

D: I was not aware that there was not a single black counselor over at JDH at this time. In the past we have had quite a number, not at any given time quite a number, but over the years. I am positive there is no quota system. You are wanting to have a college degree in order to do this kind of work. The minute any black men and women get

the degree they have a choice of going to work at JDH if they wish or at several jobs in the big funded projects, and I can't belittle the fact that they obviously take the jobs that pay more money, because they need to make more money.

The communication between a black youngster or a poor white and a counselor is always much better given to somebody of their own race, unless they're a very rare white person, able to understand and listen to what that kid is saying.

S: Do you see any way to raise funds or lower qualifications so that more people will be interested?

D: Raising funds means to get taxpayers to agree to pay more in taxes. If we can't get money for schools we certainly won't for corrections. All concerned people who give a damn about justice are always voting yes on increasing taxes which we need.

The other alternative would be to lower standards. I have never been a person who cares about accredited degrees. I don't see why that should be a criteria. If a woman or

a man has a beautiful type of repertoire with young people, I see no reason why they can't be matrons in our jails. I don't see why a person has to have a B.A. or a B.S. to be a counselor out at the JDH so long as he or she works under the supervision of people already in the field and works well with the youngsters.

S: There are rumors of differential treatment of black youths by the juvenile court, especially those involving racial incidents or involving white kids. Do you think that is true?

D: Because I'm a judge in the District Court and have no jurisdiction outside, I cannot answer your question from a professional point of view. As a mother and as a black mother, I'm sure it's true. I know this because of my own background and my own upbringing and knowing how things can be weighted. It just depends on how you listen to what's being said, and you look at the way a person is saying it at the time. There's a very certain kind of way that shows bias. It all boils down to racism at all times. It's a fact. Many officials and people who are concerned with justice are not overtly racist in the courts, but they simply do not understand the difference in language, for instance.

S: How do you go about changing inequities or the way people understand language?

D: There is a peculiar and very specific job that is afforded the judiciary, that nobody else has and that's to see that justice is done. Attorneys have to be advocates of their clients position. The judge, always is the arbiter and he's impartial, but as I see it, a judge's duty goes a little bit further. If the attorney is not asking adequate questions of the jurors it is the judge's duty to elicit that information from the jurors.

S: Should political activity be allowed in high schools?

D: Yes. I don't see how we are going to have responsible 18-year-old young men and women knowing what to do with this vote if schools are adamant about it not being there as part of the curriculum. I see absolutely no reason why they can't meet in the school after the school day is over.

## Poison information available

Immediate access to information on some 3,000 chemical compounds and some 1100 high-usage medical journals is now available to the Poison Control Center at the University of Oregon Medical School, according to Dr. Emily Tufts, director of the Center, which serves physicians throughout the state.

The service is available through Seattle's Children's Orthopedic Hospital and Medical Center which has been connected by telephone lines to the computer in the Division of Hazardous Substances and Poison Control of the Bureau of Product Safety in Washington, D.C. Via this hook-up, the Seattle hospital can receive information in two seconds on a television-like screen. Should the Oregon Center need information not readily available in its files a call is made

to the Seattle Poison Center which in turn requests the material from the central computer.

The Seattle Center is a prototype for a future nationwide retrieval system operated by community hospitals in cooperation with the Food and Drug Administration. It features access to the 3,000 compounds, including ingredients, suggested treatment and experience, and other vital information. The system also gives access to Medline in the National Library of Medicine. This computer has stored information on the high-usage medical journals.

The computerized Poison Center in Seattle is the nation's sixth and the only one west of Kansas City. Others are located in Boston, Detroit, Kansas City, New Orleans and Washington D.C.

## Albina poet



Writing poetry, sewing and cooking are some of the interests and activities of Jacqueline V. Scott, a resident of the Woodlawn area of Model Cities.

She is a graduate of Vocational Village high school. She also attended Jefferson High School. Currently, Jacqueline is employed by the Model Cities agency as a clerk typist for the Citizens' Participation Department, since June 1971. Jacqueline says about her poetry, "I write just when I feel it."

She has attended Portland Community College Cascade Center recently.

### MY BLACK MAN

Tall and Slender,  
Looking so Continental,  
Always Understanding  
and,  
Always so Gentle.

Happy, Gay, Smart,  
Thoughtful and Wise,  
Truly,  
This man no one could  
Ever despise.

Intelligent, Young,  
Considerate and Strong,  
With,  
All these things my  
Man can never go wrong.

By Jacqueline V. Scott

### BLACK IN THE GHETTO

Black and gentle,  
Black and rough,

Black and angry,  
Black and tough.

Black and happy,  
Black and gay,

Black and sad,  
My Black mind far away

Black and moody,  
Black and blue,

Black and lonely,  
And thinking of you.

Black and smart,  
Black and wise,

Black and grinning,  
With my big Black eyes.

Black and sly,  
Black and slick,

Black and cunning,  
Black and sick.

Black and strong,  
Black and alert,

Black and weak,  
Black and treated like dirt.

Black and cold,  
Black and poor,

Black and rich,  
Wanting more.

Black and jobless,  
Black and dumb,

Black and hungry,  
No one to depend on.

My Black skin I love,  
So Black it will stay,

But, from this Black Ghetto,  
I would like to steal away.

By Jacqueline V. Scott

## NOW fights child removal

The National Organization for Women -- NOW -- is trying to stop California's attempt to take away the third illegitimate child of unwed mothers.

The State Welfare Board recommended last month that an unmarried mother who has three or more children be considered "morally depraved" and be forced to give up those children for adoption. The proposals by the Reagan-appointed board are still being studied by the California Assembly's Department of Social Welfare and still must be voted on to become law.

The women's organization isn't waiting that long. At a press conference Tuesday, they said what they thought about it. As Marilyn Patel, legal counsel for NOW - said, "We're really opposed to the state legislating morality."

NOW and other women's liberation groups are also worried about the fact that if the state can take away the third child because you're "morally depraved," that means the state can take away all three children.

Most states now maintain that it is up to the state to prove that an unwed mother is unfit to take care of her children. California law still says that the unwed mother must prove her right to keep her child.

## Fuchsia growers meet

Anyone interested in growing fuchsias, please come to the Oregon Fuchsia Society Meeting, April 17, 1972 at 8:00 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Multnomah Central Library, 801 S.W. 10th Ave., Portland. The subject of the program will be: Spraying insects on fuchsias and other plants. Visitors are welcome.

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## ...and more electricity will be needed so our children have a place to fish in the 1980's.



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- For preserving and enhancing the environment ... clean electricity is the vital energy absolutely needed to rid our air, water and land of pollution.

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