Hon. Amalya L. Kearse, ’62

Judge Amalya L. Kearse’s distinguished and pioneering career has led from successful private practice with a Wall Street law firm to the bench of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

Upon graduation from law school, Judge Kearse began her professional career as an associate with Hughes Hubbard & Reed. At Hughes, she engaged in general corporate litigation in matters involving antitrust, banking, real estate, securities, copyright, contract, commercial, trust, administrative, criminal, and constitutional law issues. In 1969, she became a partner with the firm—the first African American and the first woman to achieve this status.

With her appointment to the federal judiciary on June 21, 1979, Judge Kearse became the first woman and the second African American, after Thurgood Marshall, to serve on the Second Circuit bench. Judge Kearse took senior status on June 11, 2002. Throughout her judicial career, she has established a reputation as an exceptionally scholarly writer and a hard-working jurist.

Judge Kearse has been affiliated with numerous professional organizations, including the American Bar Association, the American College of Trial Lawyers, and the Executive Committee of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

In addition to her success on the bench, Judge Kearse is also a world-class bridge player. In 1986 she was a co-winner of the World Women Pairs Championship, which earned her the title of World Bridge Federation World Life Master. She is also a seven-time U.S. national champion of the game.

Judge Kearse has authored numerous legal publications as well as several books and articles on bridge. She is a member of the Charles Goren Editorial Board.

Judge Kearse holds honorary doctorates from New York University and the University of Hartford. She is the recipient of the Learned Hand Medal, the Commission Award from the New York City Commission on the Status of Women, and the Golden Plate Award from the American Academy of Achievement.