

Anita Alvarez

On December 1, 2008, Anita Alvarez made history when she raised her right hand and was sworn in as Cook County's first female and first Hispanic State's Attorney. She took the oath of office from Judge Joseph Urso, who was the judge in her first felony courtroom. Anita promised a standing-room-only crowd at Chicago's Cultural Center that her administration would "seek justice tempered with fairness and compassion."

It is in the courtroom that Alvarez has felt most at home during the 22 years she has served in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. A Chicago native, Anita was born and raised by working class parents in the Pilsen neighborhood. She attended Maria High School and received her undergraduate degree from Loyola University of Chicago. Anita earned her Law Degree from Chicago-Kent College of Law. At the time of her historic election on November 4, 2008, Anita held the rank of Chief Deputy State's Attorney, the third ranking post in the nation's second largest prosecutor's office.

Career Prosecutor

Anita began her career in the State's Attorney's Office in 1986 and steadily worked her way up through the ranks, handling hundreds of felony cases ranging from homicide, narcotics, armed robbery, criminal sexual assaults and domestic violence. She has argued before the Illinois Appellate Court and tried more than 50 felony jury trials. Prior to entering the race for Cook County State's Attorney, Anita served as Chief Deputy State's Attorney; Chief of Staff to the Cook County State's Attorney; Chief of the Special Prosecutions Bureau; Deputy Chief of the Narcotics Bureau, and Supervisor of the Public Integrity Unit. She also spent 3 ½ years in the Gang Crimes Unit where she prosecuted gang-related homicides.

Anita was promoted to the Supervisor of the Public Integrity Unit in 1996, where she was responsible for prosecuting city, county, and state employees who committed felonies and violated the public trust. She personally tried police officers on corruption charges. In 1999, she was promoted to Deputy Chief of the Narcotics Bureau where she supervised the prosecution of drug cases as well as long-term narcotics investigations in conjunction with Chicago and suburban police departments.

Anita became the Chief of the Special Prosecutions Bureau in 2001. The Bureau consists of the Arson Unit, Organized Crime/Cold Case Unit, Auto Theft Unit, Public Corruption and Financial Crimes Unit, Gang Crimes Unit, and the Professional Standards Unit.

Also in 2001, Anita tried the case of the People of the State of Illinois v. Patrick Sykes, which was commonly referred to in widespread media as the Girl X Case. Her successful prosecution of Sykes resulted in his conviction for the predatory criminal sexual assault of a 9-year-old-girl who was left paralyzed, blind, without speech and confined to a wheelchair after the brutal attack in the Cabrini Green housing project. Anita's tireless work and dedication ensured that, despite the victim's daunting physical challenges, she was able to come to court and fearlessly face her attacker. From the podium at her swearing-in ceremony, Anita acknowledged Shatoya Currie for her courage and perseverance in the face of monumental challenges.

In 2004, Anita successfully prosecuted two Chicago Police Officers in a home invasion and robbery scheme. Both officers, along with a third previously convicted, were sentenced to lengthy prison terms.

Professional Commitment and Community Involvement

Anita is active in various bar associations and organizations. Presently, she is the Second Vice President of the Chicago Bar Association and in 2009 she will become its President. She was also a founding member of the National Hispanic Prosecutors Association and served as its National President. Anita was chosen as a fellow in the 2004 class of Leadership Greater Chicago and served on their board from 2004 – 2006. Additionally, she serves on the Board of Trustees for Fenwick High School and is active in alumnae activities for her alma mater, Maria High School.

Anita has been honored by various groups and organizations throughout her career. In 2001 she was named Person of the Year by Chicago Lawyer Magazine. That same year, she was honored for her work in the Girl X case by the Council for Disability Rights for precedent setting advocacy. In 2002 she was the recipient of the Professional Achievement Award from Chicago-Kent College of Law. In 2005 Anita was named Person of the Year by the Latin American Police Association and also named States Attorney of the Year by the Illinois State Crime Commission. Anita is a frequent speaker and lecturer to many organizations and from 2002 to 2005 was an adjunct professor at John Marshall Law School.

After serving with distinction for more than 21 years, Anita entered the race for Cook County State's Attorney in August of 2007 in what would be the first open primary election for the office in more than 50 years. Anita scored a dramatic upset in Cook County politics when she defeated five opponents in a hotly contested Democratic primary. She soundly defeated her Republican challenger in the general election, garnering nearly 70 percent of the vote.

Anita is married to Dr. James Gomez and she and her husband are the proud parents of four children.