

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Ivan Lemelle

PERSON

LeMelle, Ivan, 1950-

**Alternative Names:** The Honorable Ivan Lemelle;

**Life Dates:** June 29, 1950-

**Place of Birth:** Opelousas, Louisiana, USA

**Work:** New Orleans, LA

**Occupations:** Federal District Court Judge

## Biographical Note

U.S. District Court Judge Ivan L.R. Lemelle was born on June 29, 1950, in Opelousas, Louisiana. In 1971, Lemelle graduated cum laude from Xavier University with a B.S. degree. Lemelle received many scholarships in order to attend Loyola University College of Law in New Orleans, where he graduated in 1974 with a J.D. degree. After graduation, he served for three years as an Assistant District Attorney in New Orleans, where he was promoted to supervisory positions within that office, including co-chief of

narcotic prosecutions.

In 1977, Lemelle worked as a private practitioner with the law firm of Douglas, Nabonne & Wilkerson, the largest African American law firm in Louisiana at that time. He also served part-time as Assistant City Attorney for the City of New Orleans. From 1980 to October 2, 1984, Lemelle was the Assistant Attorney General for the Louisiana Department of Justice. From October 3, 1984 to 1998, he was a U.S. Magistrate Judge for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana. His appointment to that office made him the first African American United States Magistrate Judge in Louisiana federal courts and the sixth African American U. S. Magistrate Judge in the Nation. In 1998, President Bill Clinton appointed Lemelle to the position of United States District Judge for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana in New Orleans, where he currently serves as the only African American District Judge for that Court.

In addition to service in leadership positions with numerous civic, fraternal and professional organizations, Judge Lemelle has also served on the Federal Judicial Center's Advisory Committee for the Guide to Judicial Management of Cases in Alternate Dispute Resolution, President of the Loyola College of Law-Thomas More Inn of Court, Visiting Committee Board for Loyola College of Law, Amistad Research Center's Executive Board, Federal Bar Association New Orleans Chapter Board of Directors, District Judges Association for the U. S. Fifth Circuit Executive Committee, and the Board of Reconcile New Orleans, Inc.-a nonprofit committed to addressing the system of generational poverty, violence and neglect in the New Orleans area.

Judge Ivan Lemelle was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on June 8, 2010.

## Related Entries

**North Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**St. Augustine Seminary** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Xavier University of Louisiana** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.S.**

**Opelousas Catholic School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**High School Diploma**

**Loyola University New Orleans College of Law**  
[STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**J.D.**

**New Orleans Legal Assistance Corp.** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1972 to 1972]

**Law Clerk**

**United States Department of Defense** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1973 to 1973]

**Legal Intern**

**Xavier University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1974 to 1976]

**Business Law Instructor**

**Loyola University City College Div.** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1977 to 1978]

**Adjunct Professor**

**Xavier University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1988 to 1990]

**Business Law Instructor**

**Loyola University College of Law** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2000 to 2004]

**Adjunct Professor of Law**

**United States District Court, Eastern District of Louisiana** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1998 to ?]

**U.S. District Judge**

**United States District Court, Eastern District of Louisiana** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1984 to 1998]

**U.S. Magistrate Judge**

**District Attorney's Office** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1974 to 1977]

**Assistant D.A.**

**Law Firm of Douglas, Nabonne, & Wilkerson**  
[EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1976 to 1984]

**Private Practice Attorney**

**City Attorney Office** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1979 to 1981]

**Assistant City Attorney**

**Louisiana Department of Justice** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1981 to 1984]

**Assistant Attorney General**

**Federal Bar Association** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Board of Directors**

**District Judges' Association** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

## **Secretary, Treasurer**

**RNO, Inc.** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

## **Board Member**

**U.S. District Court (EDLA)** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Chair, Mag Judge Committee; Chair, EEO committee**

**Loyola University College of Law** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

## **Visiting Committee Bd.**

, Oral history video at the historical society of his court (Videos in AHY conference center); also some at Amistad Research Center at Tulane University.