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OPD'S NZINGA HILL RECEIVES NATIONAL NLADA AWARD RECOGNITION

New Orleans, LA – The Orleans Public Defenders (OPD) are pleased to announce our own Nzinga Hill is the recipient of the 2013 National Legal Aid and Defender Association's (NLADA) Reginald Heber Smith Award. Given since the early 1960s, Hill is one of just two honorees nationwide to receive the "Reggie" award recognizing the dedication and outstanding achievements of civil or indigent defense attorneys. Hill and the other 2013 NLADA national awards winners will be recognized at the Annual Conference November 8 in Los Angeles.

Hill is the supervising attorney of OPD's Child in Need of Care (CINC) unit, advocating tirelessly in Orleans Parish Juvenile Court to reunite families. Her representation is unparalleled and her dedication to improve representation for parents in CINC cases is determined.

"I have watched Nzinga fight to reunite families and increase the services to both children and families. Her advocacy has brought systemic change to the court process and programs. Her expertise is highly regarded throughout the juvenile justice system, whether in the courtroom or a part of a working group pushing for change," said attorney Romona Jordan of the Louisiana Mental Health Advocacy Service.

Until budget crises forced the downsizing of the CINC division, Hill and another attorney focused on several non-case specific tasks pushing to improve services for their clients, spur systemic change and educate the client community. Hill now single-handedly pushes for reform, continues educating the client community on changing policies, serves on many committees and working groups, all while still fighting for all appointed CINC clients in court.

She serves on the New Orleans Model Court, now Project One, Committee; a program of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, New Orleans is one of just five in the country. Through this group, Hill has had a direct impact on how other stakeholders, especially the Department of Children and Family Services, work with her clients and their families.

OPD's practice is an emerging holistic, community-oriented one that works in all courts and reaches beyond the courtroom. Our clients are citizens of New Orleans who come from rich and diverse communities that deserve an advocate during the difficult and confusing court process, especially in Juvenile Court. OPD fights each day for a fair and balanced, open and honest criminal justice system, not just for indigent defendants, but all involved.

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