

# Black History Month

## A Florida Focus

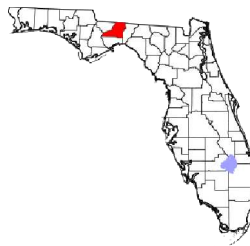
### A CIVICS IN REAL LIFE SERIES: CIVICS CONNECTION SPOTLIGHT

#### Spotlight #16: Justice Peggy A. Quince

Since Florida's [statehood](#) on March 3, 1845, [93 justices](#) have had the honor and privilege of serving on the [Florida Supreme Court](#). It would take 140 years for the first female justice to serve, [Justice Rosemary Barkett](#). It would take 163 years for the first Black female justice to be appointed. This honor went to [Justice Peggy A. Quince](#). Justice Quince was born in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1948 and she grew up during a time of segregated schools. After receiving a degree in zoology from Howard University and a Juris Doctorate from the Catholic University of America, Justice Quince began her legal career. She first worked in Washington, D.C., serving as counsel with the Rental Accommodations Office as they implemented new [rent control laws](#). She also spent time in private practice in Virginia before moving to Florida in 1978. In 1980, Justice Quince began a thirteen-year career with the Florida Attorney General's Office, Criminal Division. During her tenure as assistant attorney general, Quince argued numerous cases at all [levels of the Florida state court system](#), specializing in death penalty cases. In 1993, Justice Quince became the first Black female to be appointed to one of Florida's district courts of appeal. She was retained to that position by voters in 1996. Justice Quince's appointment to the Florida Supreme Court in 1998 was historic in multiple ways. Quince is the only Florida supreme court justice to technically be appointed by more than one governor. She was chosen by the governor at the time, [Lawton Chiles](#); however, her term started January 5, 1999, which was the day the new governor, [Jeb Bush](#), was slated to take office. They announced her appointment as a joint selection, but three days later, Governor Chiles died from a heart attack. Interim Governor [Buddy MacKay](#) had to formally sign off on her appointment then as well. Justice Quince served on the Florida Supreme Court until 2019, serving as Chief Justice from 2008-2010. One of the most famous cases to come before Justice Quince during her time on the Florida Supreme Court was [Bush v. Gore](#) in 2000. Interviewed after her retirement, Justice Quince recalled that being a part of that case reminded her of the importance of counting every vote and why the [rule of law](#) is essential to the American system. To this day, Justice Quince is still serving that American system as she is one of three retired judges on a panel that independently reviews prisoners' claims of innocence.

### CONNECTION QUESTIONS

- How many justices serve on the Florida Supreme Court?
- What are the qualifications to serve on the Florida Supreme Court?  
How long do justices serve?
- What does Justice Quince mean when she says that the election of 2000 and the subsequent *Bush v. Gore* case serve as reminders that the rule of law is an important foundational principle?



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