

FINDING HER NICHE:

LaKeisha Jefferson focuses on family law and community service

By Dean M. Shapiro



PHOTO BY BERNIE SAUL

When law students begin their curriculum in jurisprudence, they often know from the start in which field of law they want to specialize. Others may reach that decision while they're enrolled in law school. And still others may find out only after they've graduated and tried their hand in several different legal fields.

LaKeisha Jefferson fits into the third category.

An attorney at law in New Orleans since the early 2000s and a solo practitioner for the past 17 years, LaKeisha found her niche in family and domestic law after working in a variety of other legal specialties. As a former assistant city attorney under three mayors, as well as a prosecutor and criminal defense lawyer, she explained, "Everything I've done has somehow intersected and found its way back to family law. I did a little defense work right after Hurricane Katrina and it was enough to convince me that it was not for me."

But life is not all about business and the professional services LaKeisha offers her clients. She is also very active in her community; devoted to her family and the charitable work she does for her church, the local schools and the legal associations to which

she belongs.

Concentrating primarily on issues relating to domestic violence, child custody, divorces, child support and property division, LaKeisha represents both mothers and fathers, depending on which one chooses to retain her services. However, regardless of whichever client she is representing, she emphasized that her primary interest is in the welfare and well-being of the children when child support and custody issues are at stake.

"If I had to state the area that I feel most strongly about, it would definitely be child custody," she said. "I see how much the conflicts between most parents affect the children ultimately. I always try to encourage the parties, if at all possible, to reach some kind of happy medium. You know you're not going to get every single thing you want in a negotiation. But, at least if you come up with something that you can live with and that the other person can live with, then your children are the better for it."

Growing up in a two-parent household in Pontchartrain Park and New Orleans East with two brothers and two sisters gave LaKeisha a taste of what a stable home environment was like. Most of her early education was spent at the private school operated



Edward Ingram & LaKeisha Jefferson Ingram



Tracie Thomas, LaKeisha Jefferson and Angela French

by the former Word of Faith Church on the I-10 Service Road in New Orleans East. After graduating there, she went on to Spelman College in Atlanta where she received her B.A. in English and writing. She earned her Juris Doctorate degree from Southern University Law Center in Baton Rouge in 2002.

Following graduation LaKeisha served as a legislative intern for the New Orleans Sewerage & Water Board and moved on to become a law clerk for Judge Sonja M. Spears. She later joined Spears' law firm specializing in insurance and criminal defense and, in 2005, just prior to Hurricane Katrina, she went into solo practice in her present field of specialization.

Over the years LaKeisha has given her time and skills to charitable causes sponsored by benevolent organizations operating under the auspices of the legal profession. She has participated in mentoring programs for young legal aspirants, served as co-chair of the Louisiana Breast Cancer Legal Advocacy Program sponsored by the American Bar Association and is a past president of the Delta Theta Pi Legal Fraternity.

Outside of the courtroom and the privacy of her office, LaKeisha enjoys spending time with her husband, Edward Ingram, and her parents, Matthew Jefferson and Brenda McGowan Jefferson, who will celebrate their 44th anniversary in October. She is also very supportive of her stepson, Girraud Mingo who, in his early 20s, recently graduated from a college in Texas with a degree in information technology.

Family gatherings are also very important to her. Every year around the holidays, LaKeisha's brothers and sisters who are scattered across the South, come to New Orleans for a holiday celebration, usually at her parents' house, where they sit down to a catered dinner.

At her church, The Upper Room Bible Church in New Orleans East, LaKeisha leads the praise and worship team. "When I'm not at work I'm usually rehearsing at church with the singers or the band. That's something I really enjoy doing," she said. She also volunteers for community work with the church, including the food distribution program they've been operating for the past six years.

In addition, LaKeisha also does volunteer work with local high school students who show an inclination to pursue careers in law. "We teach them trial skills and they have a competition every year," she said. "The students compete against each other and the coaches are competing against each other as lawyers."

Socially, LaKeisha and a group of some of her closest friends enjoyed getting together and meeting for dinners once a month and engaging in other activities they like to do prior to the COVID-19

outbreak. She looks forward to resuming them when the crisis has passed.

Overall, as a successful professional and an actively involved member of her community, LaKeisha is happy and content with her life. "I feel just fine when I wake up in the morning," she noted proudly. 🌸



LaKeisha Jefferson and Rhonda Goode-Douglas



LaKeisha Jefferson (Photo by Bernie Saul)



LaKeisha Jefferson, Victoria Hines Jones and Yashica Phelps-Bradford