

**SHAVARNE DAHLQUIST**

Age: **36**
 Practice Area(s): **Trust & Estate Services**
 Undergraduate Degree/Major: **Psychology; Criminology**
 Year Passed the Bar: **2006**
 Age When Admitted to the Bar: **25**

**Why did you choose to become an attorney?**

I wanted to do something rewarding with my life where I could actually make a difference and help people. A lot of non-attorneys automatically think of litigation when they think of an attorney, but that was never my passion. Transactional work truly fits my personality.

What do you find rewarding about working in the legal profession?

I've felt very accomplished in the field I've chosen, both in private practice and in the corporate world. In private practice, it was rewarding to put a family's mind at ease as I prepared their estate planning documents. Now that I'm in the corporate world, I can tangibly see the impact I have on our clients and my colleagues. It's a great feeling!

Was there anything interesting or unusual about your journey to becoming an attorney?

Both of my parents are from Jamaica; my mother's side is black and my father's side is Indian (from India). I'm the first generation born in this country. Part of the reason my family immigrated was to ensure their children had the best opportunities. I love seeing how proud my parents are of this journey, and in particular, my occupation.

Ethnic Background/Race (Black & Indian) Parenting Status (Working mother who took 8-9 weeks off for maternity leave with each of my two children)

**TIMOTHY C. MARTIN**

Age: **50**
 Practice Area(s): **Animal law, Business Law, LGBT Advocacy, Real Property, Estate Planning/Probate**
 Undergraduate Degree/Major: **Journalism/Public Relations**
 Year Passed the Bar: **2011**
 Age When Admitted to the Bar: **45**

**Why did you choose to become an attorney?**

Prior to law school, I was a paralegal manager for a timeshare management and development company. After several years of what I considered to be just helping contribute to the bottom line of a seemingly greedy corporation, I decided that I wanted to make a real difference. My supervising attorney convinced me that law school and being an attorney was my next step.

What do you find rewarding about working in the legal profession?

Since I became an attorney, I have been a solo practitioner so I can (theoretically) set my own schedule and choose what type of law I practice. I am committed to providing reduced fee and pro bono service, and have provided more than 100 such hours annually for the past four years. I am often overwhelmed by the feeling I get from providing such service to people who would otherwise not be able to obtain legal representation.

Was there anything interesting or unusual about your journey to becoming an attorney?

I had just turned 42 years old when I began law school. Almost everyone else in my class was about 20 years younger than me! I was embarking on yet another career change, having been previously employed in public relations, administrative/management, and paralegal positions since graduating from college. Three years later, I was admitted to The Florida Bar at age 45, with little hope of any early retirement.

Ethnic Background/Race (Irish, German, and Cherokee Indian) Sexual Orientation (Gay) Economic Disadvantage/Challenges (Growing up in rural Ohio in a large family – I have six older brothers and sisters – my family was poor. I knew that I had to leave that area if I hoped to be more successful. I was the first person in my family to attend college, and have continued my education with several degrees. I paid off undergraduate loans many years ago, but I went into debt for my law school tuition.)

**JUDGE MYRIAM IRIZARRY**

Age: **62**
 Practice Area(s): **Pinellas County Judge – Misdemeanor Division**
 Undergraduate Degree/Major: **Political Science**
 Year Passed the Bar: **1981**
 Age When Admitted to the Bar: **27**

**Why did you choose to become an attorney?**

I chose to become an attorney because of my commitment to public service work. I wanted to give back to the community. I started my career with legal aid and later with the Public Defender's office in New Jersey. I also taught at Rutgers University as an adjunct instructor. My family and I moved to Florida in 1985 where I went to work for the Pinellas County Clerk of Court. I was appointed to the County Court Bench by the Governor of Florida in 2015 and elected to County Court Judge in 2016.

What do you find rewarding about working in the legal profession?

As an attorney, the most rewarding part of my work was the pro bono services I was able to provide to people in need of representation in the areas of landlord/tenant, family, and criminal matters. Also, I worked collaboratively with the bar associations, the Hispanic Outreach Center, and other community organizations to help to provide access to justice. As a judge, I find it rewarding to adjudicate cases in a fair and impartial manner while ensuring that people are treated with respect and dignity.

Was there anything interesting or unusual about your journey to becoming an attorney?

I was born in a small shack in the mountainside of Puerto Rico. My mom was a single mom. I was one of seven children. My mom was determined that poverty would not define us. She moved us to the tenement slums of New York City when I was two years old. We struggled to survive but persevered despite the obstacles and challenges. I would never have imagined that I would rise up from those circumstances to become an attorney and now a judge. It was through her strength and perseverance and my commitment to giving back that has marked my journey to becoming a judge.

National Origin (Puerto Rican)/Ethnic Background/Race (Hispanic) Economic Disadvantage/Challenges (see answer #3) Religion (Catholic)

**TOM MASTERSON**

Age: **66**
 Practice Area(s): **Personal Injury Litigation/ Professional Liability Litigation**
 Undergraduate Degree/Major: **Sociology**
 Year Passed the Bar: **1975**
 Age When Admitted to the Bar: **25**

**Why did you choose to become an attorney?**

I became a lawyer due to encouragement from my father, who was an attorney, to go to law school. Attending law school was something that I viewed as being a positive educational goal, even if I elected not to practice law.

What do you find rewarding about working in the legal profession?

(1) The friendships and relationships that I have developed with other lawyers, judges and clients has been a very important part of my life. (2) In the personal injury and wrongful death area of law, there is an opportunity to feel as though you have made a difference in the lives of clients when a case is successfully concluded. (3) Handling the types of litigation I specialize in has been a continuing learning process, not just about the law, but also about many medical issues that related to the issues that our clients have been forced to face. It makes each new case interesting and educational.

Was there anything interesting or unusual about your journey to becoming an attorney?

During my law school career, and for the first 15 years of my legal career, I was actively engaged in judo competition and coaching the 1984 & 1988 Olympic Judo Teams. This provided me with many life experiences that I believe made me a better lawyer.

Athletics and coaching also have many lessons for the practice of law, especially for a trial lawyer. Lesson number one is that there is no substitute for hard work to prepare for competition or a trial. In times in which people are looking for shortcuts to success, the reality is that in most instances working harder than those with who you will be in competition is the key to success. Athletics also teaches those involved that no matter how hard you prepare and train, there is always the possibility that an official can deprive you of success with a bad call. When this takes place, whether in a competition or in court, it can be discouraging and devastating. Protests and appeals are available in athletics and the legal system to make an effort to right a wrong... but sometimes we are forced to live with the impact of the decisions made by judges and officials. That's life!

An initiative of the St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) Diversity Committee to improve diversity awareness and inclusion of SPBA members and expand the concept of diversity to include the following: **AGE, DISABILITY/MEDICAL, RACIAL AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND, ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE, GENDER IDENTITY/EXPRESSION/SEXUAL ORIENTATION, RELIGION, PARENTING STATUS, and VETERAN STATUS.** This board is also used as a traveling exhibit to area schools to teach students and guests about diversity and inclusion. The intent is to illustrate that the legal profession is an opportunity for people of all backgrounds.

FACES OF THE LAW

**PATRICIA M. LEE**

Age: **53**
 Practice Area(s): **Family/International/Hague Convention**
 Undergraduate Degree/Major: **History/German**
 Year Passed the Bar: **1992**
 Age When Admitted to the Bar: **28**

**Why did you choose to become an attorney?**

Prior to going to law school, I was working for an ecumenical outreach program for the poor and homeless during the time when the Cuban Mariela boatlift hit Florida. Because of my language skills, I was charged with dealing with them when they came into the facility, and learned of the harsh realities of discrimination and abuse of these voiceless people, sometimes even children, living alone on the streets. I really wanted to learn the skills necessary to have a real and lasting effect in helping these people. I felt the law would give me those skills.

What do you find rewarding about working in the legal profession?

I am able to have a lasting and often positive affect on people's lives. I can help children in crisis who have been kidnapped, abused, or are otherwise suffering from adverse childhood experiences. I am also able to reunite the families of people who are operating as strangers in a strange land, who are often not able to communicate in or understand the language of the country they find themselves in and have virtually lost all hope.

Was there anything interesting or unusual about your journey to becoming an attorney?

I think that everything I did before becoming a lawyer contributed to what kind of attorney I am: social work, learning foreign languages, traveling the world, growing up in a binational home comprised of strong, intelligent and accomplished women, and studying abroad. This helps me communicate with people from all walks of life and those who don't speak English. I also think cultural sensitivity is important to help give me empathy and understanding.

National Origin (Guatemalan/American)/Ethnic Background/Race (Hispanic/American) Economic Disadvantage/Challenges (I am the seventh child of a single mother. We all had to make our own way in school, through scholarships, working, and loans. However, my mother gave us all the strong belief that anything was possible if you worked hard enough.) Religion (Catholic) Parenting Status (I had one child when I started law school, and a second in my final year of law school.)

**KIMBERLY RODGERS**

Age: **44**
 Practice Area(s): **Marital & Family Law**
 Undergraduate Degree/Major: **Biochemistry**
 Year Passed the Bar: **1998**
 Age When Admitted to the Bar: **25**

**Why did you choose to become an attorney?**

Growing up, I always excelled in math and science and, as a result, I thought I wanted to become a scientist and work in a laboratory all day. However, while in undergraduate school, I participated in an internship at the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office as part of my curriculum. That experience sparked my interest in the law and made me want to use my analytical skills to help people in a more tangible way. After that, I decided to go to law school.

What do you find rewarding about working in the legal profession?

Working in the legal profession allows me to gain experience doing a variety of things and to develop skills that are easily transferrable to different types of jobs. As an attorney, I feel as though my voice matters and I enjoy using it to help other people, especially those who aren't as readily able to help themselves and/or those people, like me, who have to overcome many hidden challenges just to live day-to-day.

Was there anything interesting or unusual about your journey to becoming an attorney?

Reading voluminous information has always been a challenge for me, because of my limited vision. I am totally blind in my right eye and have fingers counting vision in the left. Law school was no exception in terms of the amount of reading that was required. In addition, while in my second year of law school, I had to leave school for several weeks to undergo my tenth surgical procedure to save the little vision that remains in my left eye. During that same time-frame my father was diagnosed with cancer, and I traveled home to Jacksonville every other weekend thereafter to help out at home. My father was able to see me graduate with honors from law school, but he passed away a week after I took the bar exam.

Ethnic Background/Race (Black) Disability/Medical (Legally Blind)

**SKIP TYLMAN**

Age: **64**
 Practice Area(s): **Estate Planning and Elder Law**
 Undergraduate Degree/Major: **Engineering**
 Year Passed the Bar: **2012**
 Age When Admitted to the Bar: **59**

**Why did you choose to become an attorney?**

I never really planned on practicing law. I entered law school for the intellectual challenge and thought that I would enjoy the experience. I like the strategic thinking. I enjoy identifying a principle upon which to base an argument. The analytical and logical reasoning skills required in the legal profession are not unlike the skills required in business and engineering.

What do you find rewarding about working in the legal profession?

I enjoy helping people prevent or solve legal problems. *Potential* clients arrive with a problem. *Clients* leave with a solution to the problem. I also enjoy running my business, *The Baby Boomers' Barrister*. As a baby boomer, I can relate to and empathize with my clients. I have raised children and understand the ups and downs. I know what it is like to take care of parents, and to watch them die. My clients trust me because I understand them. I do for them what I would do for myself and my family.

Was there anything interesting or unusual about your journey to becoming an attorney?

I worked for Procter & Gamble for 25 years and following that, owned a small business for ten years. The first week in January 2009, I decided to check out law school. I found that I had until March 7th to apply, and needed to take the LSAT on February 7th. I had four weeks to prepare. I got a book from Barnes & Noble, took a few practice tests, and sat for the test on my 56th birthday. I also spent the weekend before the bar exam in the hospital after a bicycle accident.

Religion (Catholic) Age (Passed bar exam at age 59)

**JOVITA WYSOCKA KRAVITZ**

Age: **44**
 Practice Area(s): **Personal Injury and Arts Law**
 Undergraduate Degree/Major: **B.A. in English with a Certificate in Communications**
 Year Passed the Bar: **1999 (MA & NY); 2009 (FL)**
 Age When Admitted to the Bar: **27 and 37**

**Why did you choose to become an attorney?**

During college, I began to seriously consider two potential career paths. One was in academia as a professor of English/early 20th century literature, and the other was in the law. While both occupations involve significant research and writing, I chose to practice law as a profession. As a natural advocate for the underdog, I felt I could assist more individuals and have a greater effect on society.

What do you find rewarding about working in the legal profession?

One of the most rewarding aspects of my work is the ability to make a positive difference in someone's life. Often, I am not just an attorney but a counselor, as many clients have few people to talk to about the devastating effect an accident or some other act of malfeasance has had on their daily lives. I have developed some close friendships and bonding moments with clients over the years. This is particularly true with my Polish clients, some of whom find it difficult to express themselves properly in English. Being able to communicate with clients in their native language is extremely rewarding for them and for me.

Was there anything interesting or unusual about your journey to becoming an attorney?

When I began law school, my goal was to be primarily a transactional attorney writing and negotiating contracts on behalf of performing and visual artists. During law school, while working in the law department of an international company in Boston, I found that I enjoyed litigation as well, and that is what I ended up doing the most. I've continued to assist artists with contract and copyright issues over the years, but it has been mainly on a pro bono basis as few artists can afford to pay for legal services.

Ethnic Background/Race (Polish)