

Carmen F. Howell

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Carmen graduated from the University of South Alabama with a major in Political Science and dual minors in Chemistry and Sociology. She was awarded a Presidential Academic Scholarship and was a member of Alpha Theta Chi honor society, Kappa Delta sorority, Pre-Law Society, and Peer Advisor for freshman students. She also volunteered for the Penelope Home for battered women and children, St. Mary's Home Residential facility for abused and neglected children, the YMCA, U.S.A. Women's and Children's Hospital, as well as the Girl Scouts of Mobile. Carmen received her Juris Doctor from Jones School of Law in 2008 where she maintained a 3.0 GPA. In 2012, she received an LL.M. in Taxation from the University of Alabama School of Law. She successfully completed the program and passed comprehensive exams while balancing the demands of a solo law practice.

Prior to opening her own law office, Carmen clerked at the Law Office of Paul Young drafting pleadings and pre-trial motions for criminal and domestic cases. Part of her duties also included researching case law and writing briefs and memoranda in criminal law, domestic relations, will contests, personal injury, and civil defense. Her solo practice has a concentration in the areas of criminal defense, domestic relations, child custody, child support, termination of parental rights, adoptions, juvenile dependency and delinquency, civil plaintiff and defense, and criminal and civil appellate work. She has handled felony and misdemeanor criminal cases at the trial and appellate level. Her criminal appellate work includes the landmark chemical endangerment of a child cases, which she argued twice before the Court of Criminal Appeals, has garnered international attention, including an article in the *New York Times* magazine entitled *The Criminalization of Bad Mothers*, April 25, 2012.

The circuit judge who recommended Carmen said, *"I am both honored and privileged to submit this letter of recommendation on behalf of Carmen Howell. Inasmuch as Carmen's law practice is based in Coffee County and she frequently appears as trial counsel in civil, criminal, and domestic matters over which I preside, I experience more than adequate opportunity to observe her in a professional and community setting and thereby form an opinion regarding her character, competence, and leadership abilities. Without any reservation, I consider her to be an exceptional individual and legal practitioner. I understand that as part of the application process Carmen will present a professional resume detailing her work history and academic and professional accomplishments. While I have not reviewed same, I feel certain the recorded information will be accurate and reflective of her keen intellect and professional competence. Therefore, I will not address those matters, but rather will confine my preliminary remarks to a simple opinion assessment. As a practicing attorney in my court, Carmen is proficient, industrious, completely dependable, and dedicated to the*

rule of law. She is intensely diligent and zealous in representing her clients, but nevertheless able to interact with opposing counsel and the court in a genuine spirit of fidelity without compromising her ethical standards. I do not know specifically the selective placement factors considered in screening applicants, however, I am impressed that you are looking for individuals who understand and appreciate the concept of servant leadership. It is my earnest belief that Carmen meets or exceeds any possible criteria. She currently serves as Coffee County Bar President, a position in which she is both active and innovative with a demonstrated willingness to lead in new directions. Certainly, she has been proactive in broadening member involvement in various bar-sponsored functions, including regular bar meetings that allow for meaningful CLE credit opportunities. Further, she is quick to volunteer herself for activities that involve community outreach and are intended to enhance the legal profession's image in the public eye. Directly related to Carmen's leadership ability is her strong work ethic – as recently stated to me by one of her colleagues, 'quality work is her hallmark.' Because of these combined attributes, I do recommend her as a worthy candidate for the Leadership Forum, and genuinely believe she will greatly benefit from and contribute to same."

In her own words, Carmen said, "On October 7, 2004, I gave birth to my first child—a daughter that I named Sylvia. I earned my Bachelor's degree from the University of South Alabama just two months before she was born. Law school had always been a goal of mine, even after becoming a mother, so in December of 2004 I took the LSAT. I had one of my daughter's pacifiers in the pocket of my jeans while I took the exam as a token of good luck and also as a reminder of why I was taking that test and pursuing a better life for her and for myself.

The pacifier-turned-good luck charm worked because my LSAT score earned me a full tuition scholarship to Jones School of Law. I began law school in August of 2005 when my daughter was ten months old. My then husband and I lived in Enterprise, so I commuted daily to Montgomery for school. I found out I was expecting my second child on the first day of my third year of law school, and she was born three days after my last exam. Staying up late with a newborn in my arms provided me with ample time to study for the bar exam, and thankfully I passed.

Two years later, I began my LL.M. in Taxation program with the University of Alabama. Contrary to my prior college experiences, I managed to earn that degree without having an additional child. However, managing a solo law practice and being a working mother still made it challenging enough to complete. During that time, I was elected president of the Coffee County Bar Association president. As bar president, I plan bi-monthly meetings that include lunch and a CLE program for the attorney members. For the community, I have hosted a pro bono legal clinic for the citizens of Coffee County and I have also coordinated a Wills for Heroes event for local county and municipal law enforcement.

In addition to my practice, children and bar presidency, I also serve as the District V vice-president of the Alabama Criminal Defense Lawyer's Association (ACDLA). I have enjoyed being a part of an organization that provides CLE opportunities, camaraderie and support for lawyers that handle often difficult and unpopular cases. I have handled many unpopular and difficult criminal cases, including the chemical endangerment of a child

appeals involving women that were convicted based on alleged drug use during pregnancy. Although I was not successful, those cases gave me the opportunity to have oral argument twice before the Court of Criminal Appeals and also to work with national organizations that filed amicus briefs on behalf of my clients' positions. My work garnered international attention and was mentioned in the New York Times Magazine; by far this has been my greatest contribution to the legal profession.

I am a hard-working single mother of two that thrives on being busy and challenging myself. I enjoy taking on leadership positions, and would love to have the opportunity to participate in Class 12 of the Alabama State Bar Leadership Forum. I hope to gain a stronger relationship with the state bar and also get to know other lawyers from throughout the state that are part of Class 12. Most importantly, I would like to learn how to better serve my community and local bar association, and I feel like participating in the Leadership Forum will provide me with the additional tools and skills to do so."