

Judicial Profile- Sheree Cunningham

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In 1954, chief counsel for the NAACP, Thurgood Marshall, successfully argued *Brown vs. Board Of Education*. Juan Williams of the *Washington Post* recently wrote that because of *Brown*:

“Today black Americans graduate from high school and college at historically high rates; the result is an unprecedented black middle class, both in size and political clout.”

Two years after-*Brown*, Sheree Cunningham was born in New Jersey. She was educated in our public schools, and attended Ewing Township High School, between Trenton and Princeton.

When talking to our newest County Court Judge, you can feel the radiating energy. It was this early drive that propelled our Judge into high school athletics. She excelled in basketball, field hockey, and volleyball. This energy was applied to the classrooms. She took college preparation courses, and graduated from Ewing in 1974. Her parents both worked and had not gone to college. She headed for the less expensive State University at Rutgers, and graduated in 1978. The Judge applied herself at Rutgers in her off-campus activities. She was awarded the University's prestigious Paul Robeson Award. This was based not only on top grades, but also worthwhile community activities.

Having developed a strong social conscience, she worked with teams of students on projects for the State of New Jersey in nearby intercities. This was a person in college that not only applied herself to her studies, but worked in the surrounding area to better conditions for the disadvantaged. It was natural for her to turn this energy, coupled with a social conscience, into a career of public service. She wanted to go to law school. Many of her peers believed that Howard University Law School was the finest in the country. The Law School is in the center of Washington, and in the center of national policy making. It is also considered by its students to be a university graduating of “legal giants”. The school is frequently visited by national policy makers. There was a real interaction between the Howard students and the policy makers of the Federal Government. During summers she worked for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and for a law firm. She turned her energy to grades, and was selected for the *Howard Law Journal*. She published an article, and became an Articles Editor her last year.

The Cunningham legal family has long been well known and respected in Palm Beach County. Malcolm Cunningham, jr., was one year ahead of her in law school at Howard. They became “friends.” This developed into something more serious; they married after law school. Her first job was as a law clerk for Judge Paul H. Roney of the Federal Eleventh Circuit, who lived and worked in St. Petersburg. Malcolm, Jr., worked as a clerk for Judge Hatchett in Tallahassee and New Orleans, and also for a large law firm in Tampa.

Having served their apprenticeships, Malcolm and Sheree moved home to West Palm Beach in 1985. Malcolm, Jr., went to work for his uncle, T.J., and she became a

prosecutor for David Blutworth. She worked her way up from misdemeanors, through felonies, to major crimes, murder cases, and became the felony division chief. She refers to her work prior to the bench as a “career prosecutor.”

She had always wanted to be public servant. But she has not let her private life languish. Whitney is nine; Kendall, three; and Frank, seventeen months. She does not have a lot of spare time after working, being a wife and a mother. But she serves on the Board of Trustees of the Norton Art Gallery, works for Link, with Delta Theta Sigma, and her church.

The Bar should be pleased that the Governor selected this lady as our County Court Judge. She distinguishes herself with her wit, intellect, quick reasoning ability, and well directed energy. When asked to describe herself, she stated she was “ a fair person, upbeat, and an optimist.”

I asked her uncle, T.J., what he thought about all of this, and he replied that this lady is “bright, very bright.” He also said the Cunningham family has accepted her as if she was born and raised with them.

Our newest Judge has for years liked to read “inspirational” books. She is herself an inspiration for us all.