

Judge Cymonie Rowe

By Misty Chaves

Newly robed Judge Cymonie Rowe is no stranger to the courtroom. Before her recent appointment onto the bench, Judge Rowe practiced in front of the bench for nearly twenty - years, zealously advocating for her clients.

Judge Rowe was born in Hartford, Conn. to immigrant Jamaican parents. At the age of four, her family relocated to Palm Beach County, where she has resided ever since. She has one sibling, her younger brother, Therol Rowe. She graduated high school from St. Andrews in Boca Raton- Her extended family is large and many of her aunts, uncles and cousins pursued their higher education at The University of Miami. Thus, when it came -time to matriculate to college, there was simply no other choice but UM.

While a student at UM, Judge Rowe earned degrees in broadcast communications and psychology. Her dual degree taught her not only how to speak succinctly, but how to communicate and approach persons of varying backgrounds, ethnicities, educational levels and social classes with understanding and temperance.

After graduating from UM with her dual degree, the question loomed, “what now?” UM Professor Paul Driscoll, whom she fondly refers to as not only a past professor, but an advisor, mentor and friend, encouraged her to apply to law school – an educational path that was not previously on her radar. Judge Rowe applied and was accepted to Nova Southeastern School of Law where she obtained her Juris Doctorate in three years, even though she attended classes part time and held several jobs clerking for local attorneys. Judge Rowe found herself embracing the law and achieving many accolades, including the position of Editor of the Nova Southeastern International Journal of Law. Judge Rowe attributes the genesis of her legal career, as well as a “life lesson learned” to Professor Driscoll (now the Vice Dean of the University of Miami School of Communications). In hindsight, she realized the importance of listening to others’ opinions and embracing them, even if they take you outside of your comfort zone. Professor Driscoll told her she would make an exceptional attorney and, while perhaps not totally believing him initially, “time” has revealed his wisdom.

After graduating Nova Southeastern in 1997, Judge Rowe started a legal career that would take her through some of the best insurance defense firms in Palm Beach County. She crafted and honed her trial skills with Flanagan, Maniotis; Dickstein, Reynolds; Kirwan, Spellacy; and Green Akerman. She eventually accepted a job with Liberty Mutual, handling primarily complex defense litigation cases and mentoring junior attorneys.

There have been many events that have shifted the currents of her life. In 2002, while caring for her uncle, an undercover police officer who had been shot and was learning to walk again, she met Steve Hinkel. Steve was visiting a roommate who was also going through rehab. That fated encounter led to wedded bliss. Cymonie and Steve have enjoyed 14 years of marriage.

Probably one of the most life-altering moments for Judge Rowe, was in 2005 when, during the course of her career, her father passed away. She describes him as a kind, loving, hard-working family man and wells up with "tears of appreciation" when she speaks of him. As the sadness of his passing washed over her, she acknowledged an urge inside to do more, to serve, to connect with her community. In 2006, she first applied for a judicial appointment. In 2016, and after four (4) applications, Governor Scott appointed Cymonie Rowe to the 15th Judicial Circuit.

Judge Rowe commenced her new role as a Palm Beach County Judge on August 11, 2016, presiding over a civil docket of approximately 1300 cases. She has enthusiastically embraced her newest challenge with the same philosophy that has propelled her throughout her career. It's simple, really: The Golden Rule – do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Civility and professionalism towards your fellow attorneys will not only be encouraged, but demanded, within her courtroom.

Judge Rowe credits much of her character, her dedication to work, her temperament, and judicious nature, to her family. Her beloved father instilled a healthy work ethic and desire to complete all undertakings to the utmost of her abilities, never taking shortcuts and never giving up; her mother continues to inspire her as she oversees a family owned and operated Home Health Agency, serving the needs of Palm Beach County; her brother, Therol Rowe, and her husband, Steven Hinkel, assist with the operation of the family business; and her grandmother, with whom she spent much of her youth, instilled a simple mantra with which she governs her life: Be Kind, Be Strong and Be Humble.

Judge Rowe tries not to take herself too seriously; but the job? The job she takes VERY seriously. She considers it her privilege to serve Palm Beach County and to do so with a smile.

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