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LOCAL ATTORNEY NICOLE WHYTE SETS AN INDUSTRY STANDARD BY MENTORING FEMALES IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

Many people desire to make a change in this world, but often times the demands of their lives make them feel it is impossible to contribute something of value. Nicole Whyte, founding partner of Bremer Whyte Brown & O'Meara LLP, is not one to stand by simply dreaming of what could be. She knew long ago that she not only wanted to make a difference in the world, but she wanted to bring change through her work in the legal field and contribute to the changing of history.

A native of South Africa, Nicole began working to make a difference in society when she changed her college major, and earned her law degree in 1987. In 1991, she immigrated to the United States and made her way to Orange County, California, though she knew virtually no one in the United States and very little about the U.S. legal system. After having been in the United States for less than one year, Nicole passed the most difficult bar exam in the country, the California Bar. Gary Smith, of Smith Smith & Kring, LLP, saw something special in Nicole and immediately offered her a job as an associate attorney in his firm where she began handling complex civil litigation matters. She was an instant success! In fact, armed with an incredible desire to prove herself, within three years, she rose to the level of



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By 1997, Nicole left that firm with Keith Bremer to form Bremer & Whyte in Orange County. Such an accomplishment is extraordinary for anyone, but particularly for a female attorney. In less than 10 years, Bremer & Whyte has grown into Bremer Whyte Brown & O'Meara LLP with 65 plus attorneys and 5 offices throughout the Southwest.

As a result of Nicole's determination and achievements, she's become a role model for other females starting out in the legal profession, and often goes out of her way to help them achieve their goals.

"Nicole gave me an opportunity early on in my career," says Laurie Rau, who has known and worked with Nicole for years. "She provided opportunities for me to grow by showing me that I could take on responsibilities beyond my experience level." Rau commends Nicole on being accomplished all around and not just as a female. "Nicole is the mother of four young children, the youngest of which is 4-months-old, and still maintains a reputation for working extremely hard and always taking time to help others regardless of how busy she is," Rau says.

The legal profession has traditionally been a man's world, but Nicole feels it is slowly changing. Since the year 2000, a growing number of women have been entering graduate school and have been doing so at a higher rate than men.

"When I entered into the profession, there were very few women. Most men felt women would enter the legal field, get married, have children, and drop out to raise their kids," Nicole says. The truth she believes is there are not many companies in the legal field today offering women flexible working situations or encouraging women to move up the professional ladder. Nicole, however, recognizes the strengths female attorneys bring to cases and says that women are often able to look at cases differently than men.

Nicole has taken the wisdom she's gained, and used it when providing advice and guidance to young women in the field. Knowing there are still so many obstacles they will face, she openly shares her own experiences

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and how she's been able to succeed. "Women in the legal profession are still not entirely accepted," Nicole says. "There is a gender bias when you go to trial, and it seems there are assumptions that the women are not to be taken as seriously," she continues.

"I think Nicole would be outstanding in anything she did because it is her nature, and she will work hard to achieve what she wants," says Orange County attorney Kere Tickner, who has worked with Nicole since Tickner's first year in the profession. "It is unusual for anybody to get to her level; most men won't even get to her level. It is not that she's busted through the ranks as a female, as much as she simply stands above many men and women," she continues.

Tickner says that Nicole helps women in the legal field by setting a high standard, and she adds that she and other females in her office hold Nicole as the standard to which they strive toward. According to Tickner, Nicole is fearless in court and inspires and teaches others to be the same. "Nicole has made me and others into better lawyers," Tickner says.

Attorney Ross Feinberg, of the firm of Feinberg Grant Mayfield Kaneda & Litt, LLP, has worked with and opposite Nicole on many cases. "Nicole is an elegant, polite, and classy lady who is extremely efficient and well prepared," Feinberg says. "She understands that you can get positive results for a client while remaining professional. She understands the big picture," Feinberg continues.

Nicole's character has not only made her a successful attorney, but has added to the success of so many others. While fulfilling her dream of making a difference through her career, she has set a higher standard of civility for attorneys and paved the road for the increasing number of women entering a field previously dominated by men.

