

# OC METRO

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## DAWN OF A NEW ERA

**OC'S CONCERT HALL  
OPENS TO WORLDWIDE  
ACCLAIM**



**Cesar Pelli**  
His vision for  
OC's newest  
landmark

**CHAPMAN U's  
FILM SCHOOL  
GOES BIG TIME**

**ART LINKLETTER  
ON HEALTH, AGE  
AND ETHICS**

**VIRTUAL BUSINESS  
MOVES BEYOND  
THE HOME OFFICE**

## EXECUTIVE WING

## Nicole Whyte, litigator

Founding partner is also mother of four children, ages 6 and under.

Every morning Nicole Whyte arrives at work to see her name on the building in which her law firm is located: Newport Beach-based Bremer Whyte Brown & O'Meara, LLP.

The South African-born, 41-year-old mother of four children under age 6, including a newborn daughter, is founding partner in the firm she and Keith Bremer launched in 1997. The legal firm, which today boasts 100 employees, including 60 lawyers, recently won a \$3.2 million case for a client who sued a South Orange County restaurant after suffering a violent case of food poisoning.

Associate Editor Kimberly Porrazzo met with Whyte to discuss career, motherhood and the legal profession. Here are excerpts from their conversation.

**OCM:** You run a large law firm by day and you're a mother of four, including a baby daughter. Your situation begs the question, 'How do you do it?'

**WHYTE:** Number one, I have a great support system. I have my sister, who moved out from South Africa when my first child was born. She has literally been my right-hand person at home. She's been taking care of my kids. She's since gotten married here and has kids of her own, but we have one big happy family. She lives two blocks from me. She has been unbelievable ... and is a big part of the reason I've been able to be successful; because I have such knowledge that my kids are secure and safe and loved.

**OCM:** Would you - could you - have done it without her help?

**WHYTE:** I don't think I would have the large family that I have. I was very



Nicole Whyte

entrenched in my career and very driven in my career, and I felt I'd invested a lot. Would I have made different decisions? Maybe ... This gave me the options and flexibility to really have both worlds.

**OCM:** What attracted you to law?

**WHYTE:** I've always regarded law as being a challenge. It was a tough profession, particularly being a woman. I think I grew up in very much a male-dominated world. I grew up in South Africa; I was educated there ... It was old-fashioned. There were certain careers for men and others for women. My father discouraged me from going into law. He thought law was very much a male-dominated

profession and not particularly feminine. But I've always had something of a fascination with the law and the idea that being involved in the law is in some fashion shaping the history of mankind, being involved in decisions that are going to shape that history.

**OCM:** How would you compare South Africa and the United States when it comes to advancement for women in the legal profession?

**WHYTE:** It's a struggle here, but in South Africa we were perhaps 20 years behind the U.S. in terms of women being considered more equal in the legal profession. When I started, it was very difficult as a woman coming out of law school to find a job, much less move up within a law firm and become a success... Even here, there's a lot of ground to be covered to get to where it is equal.

**OCM:** What type of law do you enjoy practicing the most?

**WHYTE:** I primarily view myself as a litigator. Give me any type of litigation and I can thrive. I feel like it's my forte. As far as the diversity of areas that I practice in, that's a function of the diversity of our firm.

**OCM:** You really seem to love what you do.

**WHYTE:** I think of law as being a calling and truly a profession. Though it has very much become a business and there's a tendency to get away from it as a profession and a calling, I still see it as that and I do think it's a wonderful, noble pursuit. **OCM**

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