

NEVADA TRAILBLAZERS

BY RYAN GORMLEY, ESQ., AND MARY BACON, ESQ.

After a kindness from a stranger opened doors to her family that were previously closed long ago, Karen Liban Bashor, despite her busy schedule as a trial attorney, wife, and mom, strives to open doors for others so that they can reach their full potential.

When Bashor was just 1 year old, her parents immigrated from the Philippines to the U.S. Her parents, credentialed professionals in the Philippines, had to start over. Her mother, a doctor in her home nation, took a job as a medical assistant in a doctor's office. Her father was a successful architect, who delivered textiles, among other jobs, to help support the family.

A year into their pursuit of the American dream, Bashor's mother, while working as a medical assistant, helped a patient resolve a troubling medical issue. The patient, grateful for the aid, got to know Bashor's family and lent a hand by helping secure a job for Bashor's father at an architecture firm. This kindness launched Bashor's family forward and stayed with her forever. The financial flexibility afforded by the new job allowed Bashor's mother to pursue and complete a residency in pediatrics and re-enter the medical field as a doctor here in the U.S.

Attending high school in Los Angeles, Bashor thought she may want to follow in her mother's footsteps and practice medicine. Yet, as memories of watching her mother stand up for what was right during hard times in various situations stuck with her and she developed a natural affinity for speech and debate, and mock trial competitions, law school landed on her radar.

For college, Bashor attended UCLA, where she graduated, *cum laude*, with a degree in political science and was selected *Phi Beta Kappa*. With her sights set on law school, Bashor and her high school

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sweetheart, Ryan Bashor, both went east to attend law school at Seton Hall University.

Following law school, Bashor started her career at a small civil litigation firm, but was eager to obtain trial experience, leading to her accepting a position as an assistant deputy public defender for the Adult Trial Division at the New Jersey Office of the Public Defender in Essex County. There, she gained the trial experience she sought, even going door to door looking for more trials when she ran out. But it would not be long before Bashor moved back west. After marrying her high school sweetheart, they decided to move to Las Vegas, to be closer to their families once again, in hopes of one day starting a family of their own.

Upon arrival in Las Vegas, Bashor took a job with a civil litigation firm and has continued down that path ever since. A year later, following the birth of her son, Angus, the challenge of attempting to balance her litigation and trial practice with being a new mother changed Bashor's outlook. With tremendous support from her husband and both sides of the family, Bashor managed to continue her practice, even flying all over the country for depositions for a large case after only two weeks of leave (while pumping in airports and courtroom bathrooms) and becoming the first female and minority partner at her firm—but it was all much harder than it needed to be. All of this motivated Bashor to chart a different course for herself and attempt to help others and interrupt the cycle of unnecessary challenges faced by women in the law.

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Initially, Bashor made a change in firms, joining Wilson Elser’s Las Vegas office as of counsel. Wilson Elser had a progressive program already in place to advance the professional and personal well-being of its women attorneys, entitled WAVE: Women Attorneys Valued and Empowered.

Shortly after joining the firm, Bashor took on the role of regional representative for the WAVE program and ran with it. She helped organize programs nationally and regionally, assisted with the mentoring program, and even spearheaded the creation of an annual conference in Las Vegas, which was open to everyone with the purpose to recognize and celebrate the many achievements of women leaders in Nevada’s legal, business, and academic communities.

“I was inspired by WAVE to take the heart of the mission and expand it since many professional women go through similar obstacles, and I wanted to create an event where we could spotlight successful women in our community from all fields, elevate those climbing the ladder of success, discuss key issues, uplift, inspire, and help a good cause,” Bashor said. The first conference, held in 2017, featured powerhouse women in Nevada including: retired U.S. Rep. Shelley Berkley, Justice Elissa Cadish, Justice Abbi Silver, Justice Lidia Stiglich, Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske, and Mayor Carolyn Goodman, among others. Despite an interruption from the COVID-19 pandemic, Bashor is working on building upon that initial success with the new WAVE representative.

Bashor’s focus on blazing a trail for women professionals has not detracted from her own legal practice at Wilson Elser, where she earned a promotion to partner and is regularly prepared to try cases. Bashor focuses on crisis management and defends clients in high-exposure mass casualty events in virtually all areas, including mass shootings, products liability, explosions, and large transportation accidents.

“Karen works tirelessly and passionately on behalf of her clients. In return, she has earned their trust and respect and enjoys an exceptional record of case results,” said Sheri Thome, the managing partner of Wilson Elser’s Las Vegas office.

In addition, Bashor makes time for community efforts and has been recognized for her achievements. She is Wilson Elser’s regional representative in charge of pro bono efforts, a volunteer with Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada, and a former board member for the Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys. She has volunteered time to help keep kids on track with the “Real Talk Youth Impact Program” and has been invited to become a board member with Southern Nevada Dress for Success. Bashor was also appointed by the Nevada Supreme Court to the Nevada Bench-Bar Committee, named by *Business Insurance* to the “Women to Watch” list, and awarded Wilson Elser’s WAVE Maker of the Year award.

Despite all these accomplishments, when asked which title or honor she was most proud of, she did not hesitate, responding that she was most proud to be her son’s mom. If they aren’t working on homework or at The Smith Center, you can likely find Bashor loudly cheering for Angus on the baseball field and working the music as the team’s ballpark DJ.



A young Karen Bashor arrives in the U.S. from the Philippines with her parents.



Karen Bashor and her son, Angus.



Karen Bashor, her husband Ryan, and their son, Angus, attend a Los Angeles Dodgers game.



Wilson Elser held its first WAVE: Women Attorneys Valued and Empowered meeting. Those in attendance included Judge Harmony Letizia (from left), Judge Tierra Jones, Justice Elissa Cadish, Justice Abbi Silver, Justice Lidia Stiglich, retired U.S. Rep. Shelley Berkley, Wilson Elser’s Regional Managing Partner Sheri Thome, Karen L. Bashor, Executive Director for Real Talk Youth Impact Program Sheree Corniel, Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske, and career strategist Janet Wise.