

NEVADA TRAILBLAZERS

Meet Chaka Crome:

After a Long Career, Attorney Wants to Apply Her Experiences to Help Children



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

After more than two decades in the law, owning her own business, helping hundreds of clients, and achieving every other metric of professional success, Chaka Crome is winding down Crome Law Firm. But that doesn't mean monthly vacations to the beach and margaritas on tap. Crome, always one to set her own path, has something she considers far more important in mind—using the skills she's gained as a lawyer, business owner, and community advocate to mediate family law matters, invest in future attorneys, and help Nevada's children through non-profits and volunteering. She has a laundry list of battles to tackle: children's education, mentoring, and healthcare—and more. Her goal? Apply her decades of experience to help move the needle for Nevada's children.

Crome was born and raised in Las Vegas. Her parents separately came to Nevada from Mississippi hoping to escape racism and create a better life for their families. Before they retired, her father was a bellman at Bally's, and her mother was a blackjack dealer at MGM. Her parents always set a powerful example for her. They were vigilant about investing time into mentoring children and stressed the importance of loving and including everyone. She credits her parents for the values that were instilled in her as a child: the importance of education, giving back, and the ambition that their children could be anything they wanted. Today, those same values guide their children's lives. In fact, Crome's brother, Diaz Dixon, has spent his entire career helping non-profits thrive.

Crome excelled in high school and went to the University of Nevada-Reno (UNR) as an undergraduate with an academic scholarship. At the time, African American women were the smallest population on campus. UNR provided mentors, including Elijah Andre Thorn, to offer guidance to students of color. She majored in English Literature and enjoyed being a member of Pi Beta Phi. To support herself through college, she worked as a nanny for several families.

"Being a nanny has always been one my favorite jobs. I love children, so hanging out with them was fun, not work," Crome said.

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Upon graduation, Crome had her heart set on law school. After making a list of law schools to apply to, The University of Akron, in an act that now seems like fate, offered to waive its application fee. She seized the opportunity to apply with a fee waiver—and was accepted, with a full tuition scholarship for the first year. Never having set foot in Akron—or Ohio—she accepted The University of Akron’s offer.

Crome came back home to Las Vegas each summer to work as a law clerk. In a casual conversation, Crome told her uncle that she was looking for a legal job in Las Vegas for the summer. Luckily, her uncle’s basketball friend, “Larry” (who most of us know as Commissioner Lawrence Weekly) took time out of his busy schedule and offered to help. Since Crome had an interest in criminal law, Commissioner Weekly recommended applying to Goodman, Chesnoff & Keach (now known as Chesnoff & Schonfeld, a criminal defense firm). Even during the interview process, it felt like it was meant to be. David Chesnoff was preparing for a trial in Akron, Ohio. Crome prepared for the trial all summer in Las Vegas, continued working on the case during her 2L year in Akron, and was at the trial in Akron.

Although Chesnoff was leading the largest criminal trial in Akron at the time, he always took time to meet with other law students and answer questions. He was courteous from his first interactions with the security guard while entering the courthouse through his last interactions with the judge. Crome observed that, although he was a world-renowned attorney, he took time to mentor and be kind to others. While other students struggled to decide which firm they wanted to work for, Crome was confident in her choice to join Goodman, Chesnoff & Keach.

“Ever since I met Chaka, I was struck with her enthusiasm for the law, her intellect, and her maturity,” said Chesnoff, Crome’s longtime mentor. “She’s highly motivated and extremely loyal. In addition to being my long-term colleague, she’s my always friend.”

She enjoyed the strategy of trial but quickly learned that she would face racism in the legal sector. At trial, a prospective juror asked to be dismissed from a case where the crime was between two Caucasian people. His excuse? He confirmed he “did not like different races mixing” while looking at Crome, who was the only person of color in the courtroom.

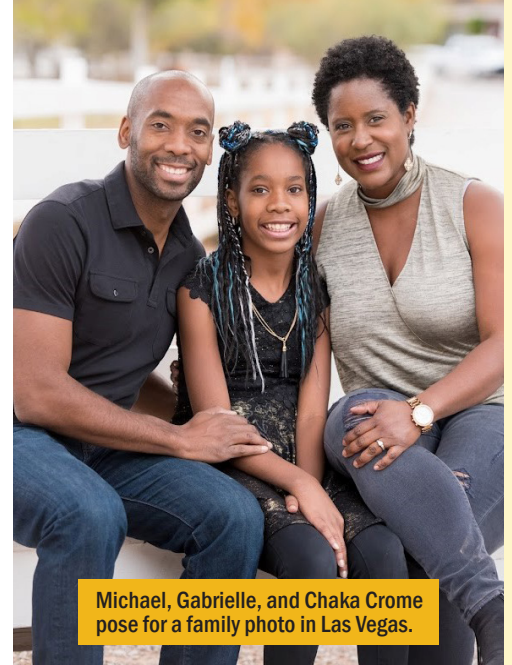
Throughout the years, Crome has been reminded that she does not always fit the mold of what an attorney was traditionally expected to look like. From receiving comments regarding her dialect or her hair, she has never been deterred from doing what she was called to do, which is to help others. Instead of being discouraged, each comment provides her with determination to help others like her and to work harder for people who feel voiceless. In adversity, Crome responds with her trademark perseverance and work ethic.

While happy to move back to Las Vegas, Crome credits The University of Akron for her legal education, cementing her values of charity and mentoring, and meeting her husband, Michael. Together, they share a determined, confident, and courageous daughter—a chip off the old block.

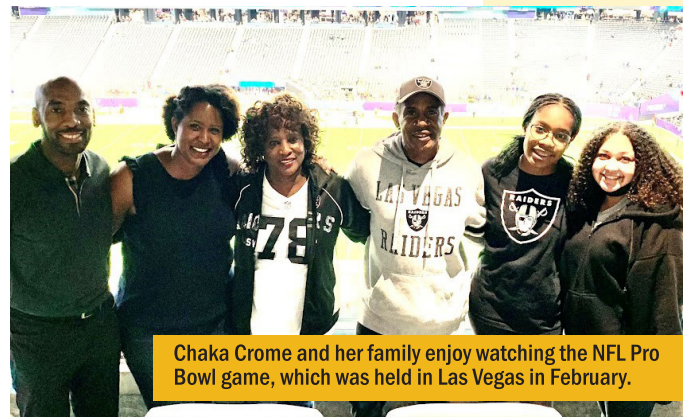
Since law school, Crome’s passion for giving back has only grown. She is a board member of Goodwill of Southern Nevada, a graduate of Leadership Las Vegas (2011), and a member of Canyon Ridge Christian Church. Always looking for avenues to help children maximize their capabilities and thrive, Crome is also an active member, and prior board member, of Jack and Jill of America, Las Vegas Chapter, an organization that provides social, cultural, and educational opportunities for African American children between the ages of 2 and 19.

So, what does Crome do when she’s not helping clients or advocating for Nevada’s children? She loves spending time with her husband and daughter, taking long walks with friends, and reading mysteries and comedic fiction. She is currently working on a non-fiction book about discussions couples should have prior to becoming engaged.

Her advice for other lawyers? Give your time and resources to other attorneys and to your community. Also, remain trustworthy, regardless of your clientele. Cases come and go, but attorneys and judges will remember how you behave during your representation. Finally, find people that have a different background from yours. You may be surprised about how much you have in common.



Michael, Gabrielle, and Chaka Crome pose for a family photo in Las Vegas.



Chaka Crome and her family enjoy watching the NFL Pro Bowl game, which was held in Las Vegas in February.



Chaka Crome supports her husband Michael as he participates in the World Marathon Challenge.



Chaka Crome and her husband, Michael, visiting Ireland.