

# THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

## Dear Judge Kaye

In early May you sat on a panel sponsored by the American Bar Association held during the Women in Law Leadership Academy in Philadelphia.

As reported in a Legal Intelligencer article, "Judges Provide Tips for Female Litigators," there were more than 500 women in the audience. Also sitting on the panel were U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, Norma L. Shapiro, and U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Texas, Barbara M.G. Lynn.

Advice offered during the seminar addressed the appropriate attire for women attorneys, the levels of confidence that women should exude while in court, how loudly women should speak in court and that women should "woman up" and avoid crying in court.

As I understand it, during the discussion you indicated that you "endured" private practice for 21 years before becoming a judge and suggested that women lawyers should "agonize privately" in the face of difficulties at work. You also lamented that women were leaving the practice of law saying, "If you don't stay, then the rest of this conversation becomes kind of academic."

Before I address those comments, I would like to preface my remarks by saying that I admire you greatly. You are a beacon of light in the upper ranks of an otherwise male-dominated profession and have always been an inspiration to me.

I have followed your tireless attempts to eradicate the inequities in our profession and forward the careers of women lawyers, and I have the utmost respect for your efforts in this regard. Your hard work and altruistic spirit is unrivaled. You are a true leader and you are undoubtedly one of my heroes.

For those reasons, it pains me to say that I disagree with the advice you offered women attorneys.

First and foremost, I don't think female attorneys, or male attorneys for that matter, have an obligation to "stick it out" as a lawyer if they are absolutely miserable with their career choice. We've all been handed just one life to live, and it can change quite suddenly, when you least expect it, as I unfortunately learned when my husband was diagnosed with testicular cancer just three weeks before our wedding. He's long since recovered from that illness, but the experience drastically changed my worldview.

As far as I'm concerned, we'd best make the most of this life while we still have it. "Enduring" an unhappy, day-to-day existence out of some sense of obligation to a profession that seems reluctant to accept you for the person you are seems pointless at best, and torturous at worst.

As women, we bring a different set of experiences, skill sets and perspectives to the practice of law, whether due to socialization, biology or a combination of the two. Our profession currently seems unwilling to accept that which we bring to the table. We are expected to behave like men in our professional lives and are penalized for failing to do so.

On the flip side, we're also penalized if we allow those "masculine" behaviors to cross over into our social and private lives. Our lives have become a bizarre, complex waltz wherein we wear different hats, depending on our environment, and attempt to modify our behavior accordingly lest we face the wrath of a judge, colleague, neighbor or preschool teacher.

Perhaps one day our profession will accept women for who they are and embrace the unique skills and perspectives they bring to the table. Until then, many women will abandon the profession for greener pastures rather than endure the misery of non-stop scrutiny and unending attempts to alter their "feminine" personalities.

I don't blame women for leaving, I blame our profession; however, I have faith that attitudes will change over time and more women will stay on the legal career path.

Judge Kaye, I'm quite sure your hard work and tireless efforts on behalf of women in our profession has not been wasted. Slowly, but surely, more women lawyers will rise through the ranks and hold positions of power, inspired in large part by the shining example of women like you.

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Daily Record  
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