

Jewish Woman

MAGAZINE

Stacy D. Phillips

Bringing Ethics to Family Law

Her A-list client roster includes former baseball star Darryl Strawberry; former Miss USA, Deborah Shelton; Erin Everly, once married to heavy-metal musician Axl Rose; and Darcy LaPier, ex-wife of action film star Jean-Claude Van Damme. And yet, in her work as a Los Angeles family law specialist, Stacy D. Phillips, 46, often must wrestle with less than glamorous concerns: divorce, custody, paternity, postnuptial agreements and other complex areas of matrimonial litigation and mediation.

A founding partner of Phillips, Lerner, Lauzon & Jamra, LLP, Phillips has practiced family law exclusively since 1984. In a field where tensions often run high, she exudes warmth and civility. "I see my role as a lawyer as being a partner with my clients, to educate them and help them make decisions at an incredibly stressful and emotional time," she says. "It is my preference to resolve divorce cases out of court whether there is settlement, mediation or collaborative law. When there is no alternative, I believe in litigation with respect. At the end of the day, however, it is my job to get the best result possible for my clients, taking into account all the variables involved."

Considered one of the nation's premier experts in family law, she frequently lectures at law schools, bar associations and professional groups. She is a sought-after guest on such television programs as *Good Morning America*, *The Insider* and *Celebrity Justice*, and on the BBC and VH1 networks. In addition, she is frequently quoted in such publications as *BusinessWeek*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *People* and *Cosmopolitan*. Phillips has written articles for the *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (a legal publication), *Divorce Magazine*, and other publications advising divorcing couples on ways to reduce financial and emotional costs, as well as many other related topics. Her first book, *Divorce: It's All About Control, How to Win the Emotional,*



Psychological and Legal Wars, is due out in August.

Phillips' expertise has garnered her many accolades, including a spot on the *Los Angeles Daily Journal's* list of "Top 50 Women Litigators in California" in 2003 and 2004. Her peers designated her as one of Southern California's "Top 50 Female Super Lawyers" in 2005 and one of Southern California's "Super Lawyers" in 2004 and 2005.

A graduate of Columbia University School of Law and Dartmouth College, Phillips is the daughter and granddaughter of New York lawyers. She attributes the Jewish values instilled by her family as a major inspiration. "Judaism and ethics are at the core of who I am," she says. "I believe in the morals and integrity that go with the tradition."

Phillips honors the memory of her late grandparents by co-establishing, with her parents, the Phillips Family Fund at the Dartmouth College Ethics Institute. The fund gives an annual award to the student who writes the best paper on ethics and sponsors a student internship at the institute.

Having seen the impact of domestic violence in her work, in 1994 Phillips helped draft a bill to extend the statute-of-limitations period, allowing victims of domestic violence to sue their abusers in civil court, and testified before California's Assembly Judiciary Committee in support of the bill, which was subsequently enacted into California law.

She serves on the boards and committees of many Los Angeles area organizations assisting women, children and the aging, including Legal Momentum, a legal defense and education fund affiliated with the National Organization for Women, and Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services. A mother of two, she has also helped underwrite the grammar-school education of a brilliant young girl whose family wouldn't be able to afford private school.

"I want to serve as a role model for young women," Phillips says. "I was raised to believe that if you're financially successful, it's your responsibility to give back." —Lisa Alcalay Klug

Lisa Alcalay Klug is a freelance writer who lives in the Los Angeles area.

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