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# LAW BUSINESS

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De La Rosa



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# Now It's Their Turn

Rising legal stars in the state are seeing the opportunity to change lives for the better and grabbing it. California Law Business looks at 20 of the up-and-coming attorneys.

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## Rebuilding Lives After a Meltdown

Stacy D. Phillips figures that if she had to do it all over again, she might well become a psychiatrist rather than a lawyer.

Ironically, Phillips, 39, made this discovery because she is a certain kind of attorney. As a family law specialist, Phillips says she unearthed in herself an aptitude for dealing with people in the throes of divorce and other meltdowns of nuclear social units.

That doesn't mean she enjoys other people's misery. Instead, Phillips sees herself as a legal caregiver who helps rebuild lives after major crackups. And the mother of two children finds that work more rewarding than the comparative abstractions of other specialties such as corporate law. "My clients have a heartbeat," she says, summing up her flesh-and-blood perspective on her profession.

Phillips' emphasis on people has proved to be a winner for the 1980 graduate of Dartmouth University and 1983 graduate of Columbia University Law School. A name partner in the seven-lawyer firm of Mannis & Phillips in Century City, Phillips has attracted some high-profile clients with deteriorating domestic situations. They include baseball player Darryl Strawberry and Darcy LaPier, estranged wife of action movie star Jean-Claude Van Damme.

In January Phillips won a court ruling that Van Damme must pay \$112,000 a month in support to LaPier and the couple's 2-year-old son.

The daughter and granddaughter of New York lawyers, Phillips says she moved to the West Coast to assert her independence. "I created my world," she says, noting that her father and mother ultimately followed her to Los Angeles and that her father now helps out in her practice.

—Garry Abrams



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