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“Ladies in Law”: Two Minority Women Leave Large Corporate Detroit Firm to Start Their Own



Two former attorneys from Bodman PLC, one of the largest law firms in Detroit, created their own firm after finding that large corporate law was not a good fit for them. Jasmine Rippy and Ameena Sheikh (pronounced “shake”) left the prominent firm and formed The Rippy + Sheikh Law Firm PC, and are branding themselves as the “Ladies in Law.”

“Most people kill for a job like that,” Sheikh said. “People think we’re crazy [for leaving].” But Rippy and Sheikh left the corporate world behind because they wanted to connect more with clients. Sheikh explained, “at the big firms, you don’t get to go into court much or work closely with clients.” The ladies also wanted a greater variety of work. “I don’t like doing the same thing every day,” Rippy said. “That gets old.”

Now, the 30-year-olds represent individuals and small businesses in various practice areas, including criminal defense, traffic/license matters, family law and estate planning. “Every single day is different,” Rippy said of life at their firm. “We’re never sitting in one place all day.”

Their office is also very different from the traditional, corporate law setting. It is in the Russell Industrial Center near downtown Detroit – a former automotive factory that is now a hub for artists and creative professionals. “We are creative people and wanted an office that sparks that creativity,” Sheikh said. “We love being surrounded by so much culture and creativity,” Rippy added. “It really drives us in our practice.”

Their diverse backgrounds give them the perfect balance to serve their wide-ranging clients. “We’re yin and yang. We’re 50/50,” Sheikh said.

Rippy, who is African American, grew up in Cleveland, Ohio watching her father work as an attorney. She attended the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill then returned to Ohio for law school, inspired by her father. Rippy was awarded a full academic scholarship to the University of Toledo College of Law. After graduating in the top 10% of her class, Rippy started her career at Bodman.

Sheikh, who is Pakistani American, was born and raised in Lexington, Kentucky but her talent for ice skating brought her to Detroit during high school. Sheikh said the lessons she learned while training on Team USA, like dedication and perseverance, help her tremendously in law. She studied at Oakland University’s Honors College before attending Wayne State University Law School on a full academic scholarship. Sheikh also began her career at Bodman.

Rippy and Sheikh love helping clients, but developed the “Ladies in Law” brand because they want to do more. After speaking at Oakland University, they realized they also love teaching people about law. “People find law fascinating and informative but it can be difficult to digest,” Rippy said. “We love teaching people and we know how to have fun.”

The “Ladies in Law” have already started a series of instructional, yet entertaining, legal videos on Instagram, the first titled “Prisoner Letters.” Their chemistry, youthful energy and

passion for law is undeniable. “Many people think all attorneys are snooty and uppity,” Sheikh said, recognizing the negative connotation surrounding law. “We want to change that perception and bring our legal knowledge to the masses in an entertaining way.”

In the future, Rippy and Sheikh will continue to “Rip it up and Sheikh it up” as they challenge traditional expectations of what the practice of law looks like. If you are interested in learning more about the “Ladies in Law”, visit www.theladiesinlaw.com or follow them on Instagram at www.instagram.com/theladiesinlaw/.