

American Renaissance

There is not a truth existing which I fear or would wish unknown to the whole world.

— Thomas Jefferson

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Urban Law 101 What I Didn't Learn in Law School

Adventures with black clients.

by Donald Williamson

I grew up in a suburb of a large northern city, and had no real contact with blacks until I became a lawyer. After I got my law degree I naïvely looked forward to a rewarding legal career. Little did I realize that 25 years later I would be a self-employed attorney doing domestic and civil litigation for a clientele that is overwhelmingly black.

I didn't plan it that way. I just wanted to do a lot of work in the courtroom, and the best offer I got out of law school was with a small firm that specialized in bankruptcy. Most of its clients were black. Several years later, I set up an independent practice and many of my former clients came to me for domestic work.

Most people do not realize this, but outside the world of corporate or securities law, in any big city the legal profession is to a large degree fueled by the pathologies of blacks and other Third-World people. Of course, whites hire lawyers, but in any city, especially one with a good-sized black population, most of the people who need lawyers are black. In this respect, lawyers are like police officers or social workers—they rarely deal with ordinary white people.

To a large degree, I became racially conscious because of my black clients, who eventually destroyed all my preconceived notions about race. My awakening did not come from one or even a few incidents, but from the accumulation of thousands upon thousands of small interactions.

Day after day my clients continue to amaze me. There is no racial education quite so thorough and convincing as

spending time with blacks, and my clients are far from being the poorest and least competent blacks. They are not indigent criminals for whom I am a court-appointed lawyer. They are people who



can afford (or think they can afford) a lawyer to get a divorce, contest a custody judgment, beat a traffic ticket, etc. Some are government employees who make \$60 to \$70 thousand a year, yet even this group is vastly different from whites.

They Don't Know

One of the most striking things about my black clients is the things they do *not* know. Many blacks, for example, do not know their own telephone numbers.

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They may think they do but they don't, and the problem has gotten worse with the proliferation of cell phones. At least a third of the numbers they leave with my receptionist or on my answering machine are wrong numbers. Often, a

potential client will call several times, each time leaving a variation of the same phone number. I keep calling until they get it right. At first I thought I was taking down the numbers incorrectly, but now I know better. With caller ID, it is clear when what the client says does not match the digital display.

Some callers don't even leave a number. About a quarter of the messages blacks leave do not include either a name or a number. Needless to say, many calls are not returned.

More than a handful of blacks who have come to my office do not even know their own home address (they move often). Many cannot tell me their own spouse's names. Now I know to tell clients ahead of time that they will need this sort of information when they come in. Otherwise, if I ask for someone's address he may look hurt and say, "If I'd known you were going to ask me that I would have come prepared."

Many black men know their children's names but do not know how to spell them. With the proliferation of unusual names among blacks, I can only guess at how they are spelled. One client who told me he couldn't spell his children's names said I would need an encyclopedia to look them up. Many men have admitted to me they are not even sure how to pronounce their children's names. Black woman, on the other hand, often become incensed if you mispronounce the very unusual names they have given their children.

The most unusual name I ever came across was Lisszzttadda. I have never met a person, white or black, who could pronounce it correctly. To my surprise the name is pronounced, "I seize the day." Lisszzttadda had siblings named Raheem, Utopian, Desiorme, Sid-Timothy, Kizzma, and Larilaril. I have occasion-

Continued on page 3