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Deborah Gordon



Birmingham resident and civil rights and employment attorney Deborah Gordon grew up in a Huntington Woods home with a keen sense of political awareness and

advocation. As the daughter of the late Lou Gordon, Detroit media host, commentator, reporter and columnist who gained national fame during the turbulent era of the 1960s and '70s with his hard-hitting journalistic style, she became politically aware and involved at an early age.

"My father was incredibly dynamic, doing whatever he thought was right and not cowering to authority figures," Gordon explained. "Our family watched and read the news and saw the civil rights movement unfold on black and white TV...I was attending U of M when everything changed."

During this tumultuous time, Gordon earned a bachelor's degree in English literature from the University of Michigan then taught at a local high school for a year before entering law school at University of Detroit Mercy. "At that time, you never heard of a woman in law or medical school. Women generally went to college for teaching, nursing, dental hygiene, or social work."

Fortunately for Gordon, she learned of another woman attending law school and this sparked her interest in pursuing a career in law.

After graduating from law school, Gordon worked for the state of Michigan as assistant attorney general, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Division followed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) as a senior trial attorney. In 1980, Gordon took her well-earned experience and began working in private practice, focusing on civil rights and employment discrimination.

When her partner left their practice, Stark and Gordon, in 1999, she launched her current Bloomfield Hills-based law practice Deborah Gordon Law, continuing her passion for cases involving civil and constitutional rights and discrimination. Over the years, Gordon and her team have taken on and won many demanding and challenging high-profile cases. "In this type of litigation, there's a lot of pushback and a lot at stake," she explained.

For those who feel they may have been discriminated against in the workplace, Gordon advised, "Depending on the circumstances, because it can be dicey since they report to a corporate entity, start with HR [Human Resources]. Document, or make a record in writing at the time when an incident occurs...Not everything bad or uncomfortable that happens at work is illegal. Michigan is an employment-at-will state which is the opposite of a good union contract. Understand this and be ready because your employment can end at any time. Most important is to create a record and look for an attorney."

With over 40 years of legal experience, Gordon has earned numerous recognitions and honors and has been listed annually in "Best Lawyers in America" since 1987. Over the years, she has been involved with many legal organizations. Currently, she is on the board of directors of the Accounting Aid Society, an organization that helps low- and moderate-income residents of southeast Michigan with tax and financial education and services.

While Gordon is passionate about her "extremely full-time" legal work, she makes time for reading the print editions of six newspapers daily as well as a book club with friends in the legal community. She is also a big sports fan, loves travel, and enjoys living in Birmingham. She has two "incredible" daughters – Sarah Gordon Thomas, who works with her at her law practice and Annie Gordon Thomas, who works at Detroit Country Day School. She is also delighted to be a recent grandmother.

"I love my cases and clients and still find my job extremely enjoyable," she said. "Although great strides have been made in the U.S., discrimination of all kinds still exists. People need to be knowledgeable about their rights. I hope by bringing a case that employers and government authorities do better."

Story: Tracy Donohue

Photo: Laurie Tennent

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