

Angelique Strong Marks

Serving on the State Bar of Michigan Board of Commissioners can be a daunting experience for very seasoned members of the Bar, much less younger attorneys. But Angelique Strong Marks, who served on the Board of Commissioners as part of her leadership role with the State Bar Young Lawyers Section, did not hesitate to be courageous when her principles were involved. Whether she was concerned about racial issues or professional matters or community service, Ms. Marks articulated compelling reasons for support of her position. Throughout Angelique's life and career, her passion has been consistent.

Angelique's passion is supported by the considerable substantive experience she has already garnered in the profession. As vice president and corporate legal counsel for the Handleman Company in Troy, Michigan, she is responsible for all legal compliance, cases, complaints, and counsel. She reports directly to the chief executive officer and chairman of the board of directors of the \$1.2 billion (revenue) publicly-traded company with operations in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada. In Angelique's role, she provides advice and counsel to Handleman's senior officers and to the committees of the board of directors. Of significance is the fact that Ms. Marks established the in-house legal department as Handleman's first in-house counsel in its 71-year history.

Her work at Handleman and with various local and national bar associations has been noticed by other members of the profession. The American Bar Association Business Law Section recently selected Ms. Marks to serve as its ambassador. The Business Law Section developed this two-year highly competitive appointment to encourage lawyers of color to participate in its activities, with the goal of developing and supporting future leaders in the section.

Ms. Marks, who is a native of Cleveland, moved to Michigan when she accepted a po-



Left to right: Amari Ajene, age 3; Dr. Jay B. Marks, educator and educational consultant; Angelique Strong Marks; and Jalia Iman, age 6 months.

sition as an associate at Hardy, Lewis & Page, P.C., where she represented General Motors Corporation and Delphi Automotive in state and federal employment law matters. She later served as the sole in-house counsel for Frank's Nursery & Crafts, reporting to its chief executive officer and chairman of the board of directors, providing counsel for its 256 stores in 15 states. Ms. Marks later gained experience practicing corporate securities and finance at CMS Energy and DTE Energy.

Community and Professional Activities

In addition to her numerous corporate activities, Ms. Marks spends an incredible amount of time in community service activities. She has served as the executive champion at Handleman for her work on the Royal Oak AIDS Walk since 2004, assisting in coordinating and fundraising for the event.

Angelique is not only a community worker but a creative leader, founding Village JAJA,

which means God's gift, in 2003 with her husband, Dr. Jay B. Marks. The nonprofit, community-based organization's purpose is to provide programs and information that will positively impact members of the African-American community specifically and society generally. With the support of the Detroit Zoo, the organization sponsored the Zoo Crew, which encouraged African Americans to take their children to the zoo on a monthly basis. Through the organization, Ms. Marks volunteers at speaking engagements portraying historical African-American women characters, such as Harriett Tubman and Sojourner Truth. Her portrayals have been heard at church organizations, high schools, and the Sojourner Truth Foundation's annual fundraiser dinner.

Another leadership role for Ms. Marks is originator and co-chairperson of the Young Lawyers Section's S.K.I.P. to Make a Difference Project. S.K.I.P., which stands for Save Kids of Incarcerated Parents, is a nonprofit

organization that provides support for students who attend elementary school in Detroit, Michigan. When developing the program, Angelique's goal was to host a program that would allow the S.K.I.P. participants to have a positive experience with members of the legal community. The first program entailed the students pairing up with a lawyer buddy and learning about various aspects of the law. The program was such a success that the Young Lawyers Section created a follow-up program during which the students participated in a mock trial, after which they had to make a decision as to whether Ben Wallace would have to cut his afro hairstyle to play basketball in the NBA. Although Ms. Marks is no longer a member of the Young Lawyers Section, she is continuing her efforts with the S.K.I.P. program by serving on its board of directors.

From 1999 to 2005, Ms. Marks served as chairperson of the Young Lawyers Section's Holiday Dinner for Those in Need project, which the section sponsored with various bar organizations, including the D. Augustus Straker Bar Association. She coordinated arrangements with the Grace Centers of Hope and the Highland Park Doorsteps shelters, created the menu, shopped for food, and secured volunteers to prepare and serve the food. The volunteers also spent time learning about the shelter and its volunteer opportunities and sharing fellowship with the residents. From 1998 to 2004, Ms. Marks also chaired the D. Augustus Straker Holiday Party, an event that raised donations to purchase "wish list" items for various charities, which included Haven House, Grace Centers of Hope, and Horizon Upward Bound.

Ms. Marks has also been known to help others get involved. In 2002, although no longer employed at the firm, Ms. Marks coordinated the Hardy, Lewis & Page Community Service Project, through which the firm raised funds to provide books and educational toys to the Pontiac Rescue Mission.

Seemingly since Angelique's admission to the Bar, her many professional commitments have demanded her time. She is currently a member of the board of editors for *Michigan Lawyers Weekly*. She has served as chairperson of the State Bar Young Lawyers Section, dele-

gate to the American Bar Association House of Delegates, president of the D. Augustus Straker Bar Association, member of the State Bar Programs and Services Committee, and participant in the Oakland County Bar Association American Inns of Court.

Awards

Ms. Marks has already been recognized for her numerous professional and community activities. She appeared in the inaugural edition of *Who's Who in Black Detroit*, October, 2006; *Crain's Detroit Business*, "40 Under 40," September 2005; and *Michigan Lawyers Weekly*, "Up & Coming Young Lawyers," June 2004. She was awarded the Spirit of Diversity Award, Bloomfield Task Force on Race Relations, May 2001, and the National Bar Association Commercial Law Corporate Counsel Award, 1999–2000. She was also a Joe Dumars/WDIV Community Service Award Finalist and was featured on WDIV Sports Final Edition and Dateline Detroit, June 1998.

Angelique has been invited to speak and write on various topics, including female and diversity issues, African-American history, litigation matters, professional success, corporate representation, workplace safety, racial profiling, and employment compensation. She attends various school career days, mentoring program events, and honor ceremonies.

School Achievements

Ms. Marks excelled in school before her achievements in the legal profession and community. She attended The Ohio State University College of Law, graduating in 1995, after obtaining a master of business administration in finance and management with high honors from Miami University in Ohio. Her bachelor of science in finance and certificate in African-American studies were awarded by the University of Akron.

While in school, Angelique received a U.S. Federal Government Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship, a John Mercer Langston Academic and Community Involvement Scholarship, The Ohio State University Scholarship for three years, the Black MBA Cincinnati Chapter Scholarship, the

Miami University Academic Scholarship, and the Miami University Hall Government Advisor of the Year Award.

Ms. Marks was inducted into the Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society, the Omicron Delta Kappa—The Leadership Honorary, and the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated: A Public Service Organization, where she has served as an executive board member of the Southfield Alumnae Chapter. While in law school and undergraduate school, she was a member and president of the Black Law Student Association and president of the Black United Students Association respectively.

In law school, Angelique was chief justice of The Ohio State University Judicial System, responsible for conducting administrative hearings involving student organizations and issuing rulings on public safety violations. She was a member of the Regional Champions team at The Ohio State University College of Law National Trial Advocacy Competition.

Angelique and her husband have two daughters, Amari Ajene (African for strength/leader and truth, respectively) and Jalia Iman (African for gift and faith, respectively). Staying connected with their heritage, Jay and Angelique have visited Africa and have hosted an annual Kwanzaa celebration over the past 10 years. It is not uncommon to see them at special events adorned in traditional African attire. They are active members of Hope United Methodist Church, where Angelique serves as a Worship Leader.

Jeff Kirkey, past president of the Young Lawyers Section, states that "Angelique Strong Marks is one of the most creative, active young lawyers the section has had. She has been involved in all of the section activities, and many more in the community. Young lawyers have many mentors and role models whom they appreciate, but they are especially motivated when a role model is one of their own." ◆

Francine Cullari practices real estate, estate planning, and business law in Grand Blanc. She serves on the State Bar of Michigan Board of Commissioners and is vice chairperson of the Publications and Website Advisory Committee, where she is responsible for the Michigan Bar Journal. She teaches business law at the University of Michigan, Flint campus.