

ABA Commission on Domestic Violence Quarterly E-Newsletter

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Get to Know the Commission

In this section of each E-Newsletter, we will introduce you, the reader, to a member of the ABA Commission on Domestic Violence to increase an understanding of the Commission, its members and its work. In this edition, we hear from Chris Griffin about his longstanding commitment to the Commission and his reflections on how his involvement has impacted his work and life.

Chris Griffin is a native of Tampa, Florida. He received his B.S. degree, summa cum laude, from Florida State University in 1976, and his J.D. degree, also summa cum laude, from the Florida State University College of Law in 1978. Chris practices with the Tampa office of Foley & Lardner, engaging in general commercial litigation, with concentrations in business torts, corporate dissenter's rights, restrictive covenants, and trade defamation.

Chris initially served as Co-Chair of the ABA Commission on Domestic Violence from 1994 to 1997 and then rejoined the Commission in August 2004. For his initial service he was persuaded by then ABA President-Elect Roberta Cooper Ramos that (a) there was no issue more important to our system of justice, and to America's lawyers, and (b) the issue could never be addressed adequately without the active involvement of men. He then set out to educate himself on the issue, and quickly came to agree with Roberta one hundred percent. Since the conclusion of his tenure as Co-Chair, Chris has searched for ways to maintain his involvement in advocating for victims of domestic violence, including service on the Board of Directors of The Spring of Tampa Bay, the local domestic violence shelter. Ultimately, he realized that he wanted again to serve the American Bar Association via the Commission on Domestic Violence, and that is why he asked then President-Elect Robert Grey for the opportunity to rejoin in 2004.

According to Chris, at first the Commission's principal task was to convince America's lawyers and judges that domestic violence deserved their utmost attention, and to convince Americans generally that domestic violence is a crime like any other, not a "private matter" to be handled within the family. The early Commission years were spent traveling the country proselytizing on these points, and attempting to change the paradigm of how domestic violence was understood within the legal system and within society generally. While Chris and his Commission colleagues were pleased with the great progress made on those fronts, they recognized that much more remained to be done.

Chris is most proud that the ABA Commission on Domestic Violence has brought the issue of domestic violence to the forefront within the ABA and our legal system, and that it has educated lawyers and other citizens that domestic violence cannot be adequately addressed unless and until all elements of society come to understand the depth and

breadth of the problem and its terrible and insidiously debilitating effects on women and children across all socioeconomic strata.

Chris offers that what he has come to understand most fully as a result of his work with the Commission initially and since is that men must always understand how their attitudes and behavior subtly affect all women around them, both within and without their families. Men must always demand zero tolerance from themselves and from other men around them.

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