



### Voting and Knowledge: Still Vehicles for Change — Ask Nicholas C. Johnson, Esq.

by: Amy Pettway

Anticipating change in diversity while watching it unfold requires a plan of action, according to Nicholas

C. Johnson, Esq. Stellar examples of this premise include Attorneys John Howe, Rosalyn Sia Baker-Barnes, Judges Bradley Harper and Lou Delgado—all notable trendsetters in the Palm Beach County legal community. As this year's F. Malcolm Cunningham, Sr. Bar Association's (FMCBA) President-Elect, Nick brings with him the hope of continued change through voting awareness.

Born in Kingston, Jamaica in the late 1970s, Nick might not have considered law as a profession during his childhood. His late grandmother, however, discerned that he would one day become a lawyer because his words were many. Today, there is no doubt that Nick's passionate, persuasive communication throughout the course of his legal career has proven his grandmother right. Nick attended Boston University for his undergraduate education, followed by the University of Florida for graduate studies. It was St. Thomas University School of Law that provided Nick ample training ground to use law as a platform for change to those who are unheard or unaware.

Nick's first position as an attorney was as Assistant Public Defender for misdemeanors and felonies. Former Supervising Attorney John Rivera, at first blush, described Nick as "organized." However, Mr. Rivera quickly clarified that this quality was not simply a "clean desk organized... but rather a person who is driven and works with a purpose." FMCBA President Lawonda Warren described this purpose as emanating from passion about community and justice. She expounded, "Nick is a passionate attorney who cares about his clients, the community, and justice. What I admire most about Nick is that he is not afraid to challenge the status quo or ruffle feathers to do what is right."

So, without question, Nick has demonstrated a deep commitment to

seeking justice. The means to seeking justice is voting. While his energetic pursuit to inspire others to vote is admirable, one could question—what's behind the energy? In 2004, Nick celebrated two milestones. He became a citizen of the United States, and he voted for a U.S. president for the first time. Upon reflection, Nick relayed that "[i]t was one of my most memorable experiences because I felt as if I had a voice, no matter what my background or financial circumstances."

This backdrop has defined Nick's work ethic as it relates to clients and community relations. Nick's current position at Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll requires expertise in handling medical malpractice, personal injury and wrongful death actions, while carefully understanding the overall socio-economic needs of his clients. Each day, Nick is moved by his clients' personal experiences, which at times, extend from injuries to death. Needless to say, his greatest reward is to achieve favorable results for his clients. An additional one is to continue to learn from his clients' different perspectives.

When joining clients' experiences with the importance of voting, Nick takes a very deliberate, constructive approach. He has accumulated a catalog of information about his clients' circumstances over the years, compelling him to advance voting rights and awareness even more. Particularly, bills that are passed through state legislation which adversely affect his clients go virtually unnoticed by them. For this reason, Nick advises, "Always vote!" Most critical to this resounding message is Nick's objective to reach the younger, soon-to-be voters and to educate them on how each vote becomes a vehicle for change. As President-Elect of FMCBA, Nick is laboring over an "initiative to encourage our younger generation to vote and practice civic engagement in both local and national issues."

An additional goal for Nick is to further FMCBA's commitment to diversifying the judiciary of Palm Beach County. The objective here is to increase

visibility in diverse communities and to widen the association's exposure to non-lawyer residents of Palm Beach County. On a broader scale, Nick's dedication to change is undeniable, as he actively demonstrates the highest professional leadership as a Director of the North County Section of PBCBA, member of the Florida Justice Association Diversity Committee, and member of the American Association for Justice Minority Caucus.

Two mottos shape Nick's passion and direction. "What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead." by Nelson Mandela. And, "Out of many, One people." Motto of Jamaica. Nicolas C. Johnson's professional contributions and future endeavors as FMCBA's President-Elect epitomize the conclusion that diversity, inclusion and knowledge enhance Palm Beach County's preeminence.

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