

Kimberly Clark Anderson County Assistant DA

Cover Story by Maxine Session

According to the U.S. Census, in 1930, there were only 1247 black lawyers in the entire United States out of a total number of 160,605 lawyers. Of the 1247, 1223 were male and only 24 were female.

Kimberly Chonda Clark is a 2003 Rusk High School graduate who has launched her career path from the beautiful hills of East Texas,

Some people sit passively by and endure the ills of the world while she chose to actively fight against them. She chose to become an attorney.

Her longtime dream and steps of preparation has been to land an appointment to the Supreme Court of the United States of America. To this day there has never been an African American female to sit in this position.

Born in Las Vegas, Nevada, she and her parents Charles and Shirley Clark moved to Texas when she was a small child.

Being an avid reader, Kimberly excelled in school from elementary through high school, academically as well as athletically. First she thought of becoming a medical doctor but, growing up in Rusk, she had never seen a black doctor.

By the time Kim entered high school her cousin Daphne had graduated law school and become an attorney. She decided, well I can do that too. At that time she began formulating a plan to start as an attorney with the goal to become a Supreme Court Justice. Coming from a now single parent home, she had to figure out how to pay for the years of education this required. Kimberly graduated with distinguished honors at place number six in her class of 118 at Rusk High school, earning thousands of dollars in academic scholarships. "It was hard to be in the top ten in high school", she said, but I

kept my eyes focused. A lot of people helped me along the way. There was a teacher who had just moved to Rusk, Ms. Peacock, and she helped me with the essays that went along with my applications for scholarships and to UT. I was the only one in my high school class to attend UT, a university with more than 52,000 students during my time of enrollment. I had a goal and I stayed focused on that goal. "

The four years following high school graduation were spent at the University of Texas at Austin. Kimberly excelled there earning a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology: Minor Social Work. She was also a part of the University of Texas Women's Track and Field Team as a Shot -putter.

Kimberly said she just worked hard and prayed hard and everything worked out alright. She prepared for and took the LSAT. When she applied to law school, she did not get the one she wanted here in Texas, but was accepted to The University of Arkansas School of Law in Fayetteville, Arkansas. At first she thought of going to work for a year after graduating UT, but she remembers a conversation with her uncle Walter when he said, time is going to pass either way, but if you are in school, you can be getting that degree. So, after she and her family took one visit to the campus, she packed up a U-haul truck, hooked her little car to the rear, and headed to Fayetteville. Kim said, "When you start on a new journey, its important to always reach out to someone who knows more than you do. There is not always anyone there, but in my case I was lucky, Aunt Daphne guided me through. "

Kimberly excelled in law school making the Arkansas Law Review. She was a quarter finalist in the William H. Barrister's Union Trial Competition, and a W. B. Putman Inn of Court, Pupil.



Kimberly Clark, Anderson County Assistant District Attorney

Miss Clark says to other young people who are mapping out educational and career plans, "Make your plans. You don't have to have all the parts in place when you start. Along the way you will meet people who will help you. You can't be afraid to step out. You never know where God will take you to get you there. Stay focused. A lot of things will distract you. You can juggle personal life and family. I never thought I couldn't do it. Once I thought I had failed a class, but got a top grade in it. You get frustrated and it can become overwhelming. As Mama Hazel used to say, some times you can't see the forest for the trees, but in the end it all becomes clear. "

Miss Clark went on to say, I have thought about my goal of getting to the Supreme Court, but when you look at it, the Chief Justices have all been white, all gone to Ivy League schools. They have had the best of the best which has included connections ordinary people don't have, but with the election of President Obama, he appointed

an Hispanic female. The court has been missing someone who has lived the life and must follow the law they make. Things are changing and I'm hopeful that someday my dream will be realized. After all, the first black woman was recently elected President of the State Bar of Texas. It saddens me that a lot of todays young people don't plan their future. People judge you on all sorts of things, but if you work hard and do the right thing, they remember. This helps to determine your character." Attorney Clark graduated UA Law School in 2008 and passed the State Bar of Texas in November 2008. She has had her own private practice in Rusk, Texas and has worked for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. She began her career with Anderson County as Assistant DA in April 2012. She is the daughter of Shirley Burley Clark of Rusk, Texas and Charles Clark of Las Vegas, Nevada. She is the granddaughter of the late Hazel Denman Session and Ms. Adeline Clark of Summerville, New Jersey.