

## LESLYE M. HUFF

Because Justice Requires it, I Persist

LESLYE M. HUFF is the managing member of HUFF LAW, LLC, a new full service legal professional company. Her areas of practice include Employment, Family Law, Discrimination, Wills, Probate, Small Business & Nonprofit Start-up. Prior to developing her private practice, she was an Assistant Director of Law, Labor & Employment Section, City of Cleveland, Law Department where she counseled and defended City Departments in labor and employment matters including employment-discrimination litigation, civil service defense, arbitrations, labor negotiations, and workers' compensation.



Prior to serving the City of Cleveland, Ms Huff served the State of Ohio as a Civil Rights Field Supervisor at the of Ohio Civil Rights Commission, Cleveland Regional Office, where she supervised investigations of charges of discrimination under Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4112, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act and defended Regional Recommendations before the Commission.

Ms Huff earned both her BS and her BA degrees from Cleveland State University and received a National Institute of Mental Health Fellowship for graduate work in psychology.

Ms Huff received her Jurist Doctorate law degree from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law where she earned the Judge Lloyd O. Brown Fellowship and received the Richard C. Schafer Memorial Award for Outstanding Clinician in Employment Law.

Ms Huff is a graduate of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Citizen's Academy and served on its **Northern Ohio Hate Crimes Work Group** where she advocated for LGBT rights. For several years, Ms Huff served on Ohio's Racial Fairness Project Board.

During law school, Ms Huff founded the **LesBiGay Law Students Association**; she presented papers on LGBT advocacy at John Marshall College of Law of Chicago, Antioch College, the University of Iowa College of Law, and Yale University School of Law, and other venue. While in law school, the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights chose Ms Huff to serve as a legal intern under William Kunstler and Michael Deutsch; as an intern, she performed crucial research for Leonard Weinglass on the successful **Mumia Abu Jamal** death penalty appeal.

Her activism in the late 1960's and 70's informs her lesbian-feminist sensibilities. Her understanding of the parallels and intersections of racism and other forms of oppression, enlighten her quest to defeat the habit of domination that pervades our

culture. Since the early 1980's, Ms Huff has pressed for a dialogue within African-American communities regarding heterosexism and speaks truth to power with a velvet glove regarding homophobia and chronic racial fear-response. Just as ardently, Leslye Huff pushes (ever so gently) the majority LGBT community to dig a little deeper to break the habit of domination that impedes the unification of disenfranchised peoples and increases the trust deficit that exists between minority and majority communities. Leslye Huff was a co-convenor of the Radical Thought Conference for Women and the founder of such organizations as Black Women of Califia and Blakmajik Rainbow Productions.

In 1993, Huff published an article titled "***Black Ministers Declare War Against Lesbians and Gay Men***" in Ohio's largest African American newspaper, the **Call and Post** and used it to galvanize Cleveland's Black community to successfully oppose the ministers' anti-gay campaign. Recently, Ms Huff published a seven-part article in the **Urban Crusader News** weekly entitled "***Marital Bliss Under the Constitution: Thoughts on Opposite-Gender Marriage, the African American Community, and LesBiGay Rights.***" Other published work includes ***Deconstructing Sodomy.***" which may be found in American University, Washington College of Law JOURNAL OF GENDER AND THE LAW. Her book, entitled **BLACK LESBIANS DO NOT EXIST**, is scheduled to be published in the Spring of 2006.

Currently, Leslye Huff is Vice President of **BlackOut Unlimited, Inc.**'s Board of Directors, the largest African-American LGBT organization in Ohio. She is on the National Steering Committee of **Freedom to Marry**, a New-York-based national non-profit civil rights organization that advocates marriage equality. She is a member of the **National Black Justice Coalition**.

In 2000, the American Bar Association (ABA) General Practice Section awarded Ms Huff one of its three Diversity Fellowships. The fellowship allowed her to serve on the Editorial Board of the ABA GPSOLO Magazine as Issue Editor of the "Estate Planning" July-August 2002 edition and on the Membership Training Committee of the General Practice Section. Periodically, Ms Huff provides Continuing Legal Education seminars for the ABA's Commission on Women. Ms Huff served the National Lesbian and Gay Law Association as Council Representative to ABA-YLD.

Ms Huff chaired the Continuing Legal Education Committee of the Norman S. Minor Bar Association, Ohio's largest African American bar association. Ms Huff was a member of the Council of Delegates, the Ohio State Bar Association (OSBA) and was Vice Chair of the Board of Governors, New Lawyers Section. Ms Huff is a former board member of the Ohio Women's Bar Association and served on its judicial screening committee.

A life-long activist, the daughter of civic-minded parents who stressed the value of public education, higher education, and community service, Ms Huff flourished in Lincoln Park, a small segregated section of Penn Hills Township, Pennsylvania. She

earned a music/academic scholarship to Duquesne University. Grounded in her parents' philosophy that behooves us to "make the world better" and reminds us that "many hands make light work," Ms Huff has been a leader in community and non-profit organizations as diverse as The Cleveland Orchestra's Community Relations Committee; Board Vice President, Imani African-American Dance Company; Board member, Lesbian-Gay Community Services Center of Greater Cleveland; and Chair, Women's City Club Annual Mental Health Institute. Ms Huff served for three years on Governor Richard Celeste's State of Ohio Task Force on Family Violence.

Ms Huff has traveled extensively – spending several weeks in each of the following countries: Honduras, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Nigeria. On each journey, her goal was to listen to the lives of women and to understand how they cope with the socio-economic and political environments that were often not under the women's control. Many of the women interviewed defined themselves as "market women" who support themselves and their families by selling their crops, wares, or crafts. Even in Cuba, the government permitted grandmothers to keep the profits from the sale of their crafts.

For relaxation, Ms Huff writes essays, short stories, and poetry; for healing she plays the West African djembe, conga drums, and shekere.

Ms Huff has maintained a twenty-three year committed relationship with her best friend and life-partner, Mary Ostendorf, MS.N., RN. As partners for life, they have reared two sons, Daudi Hashim Huff and Kahlil Seren Huff, and are the proud grandparents of three children.