

CHARLES A. KOECH

Associate, Mintz, Boston

Suffolk University Law School, 2014

After spending time as an assistant district attorney and then working as vice president and counsel at State Street, Charles A. Koech recently moved to private practice. As part of the corporate group at Mintz, he works on issues such as venture capital, M&A and capital markets.

Q. What do you consider your biggest achievement as a lawyer to date?

A. My biggest achievement has been my journey from the inner city of Boston where I grew up to where I am today. I have overcome hurdles both visible and invisible and continue to push forward.

Q. What advice would you offer new law school graduates?

A. Never give up. Part of developing is failing. Some people are going to think the world of you and some are going to think you aren't as talented as the next person, but it doesn't matter as long as you bet on yourself and keep moving forward.

Q. What's the toughest part of your job?

A. Ensuring that I am continuing to develop by asking myself: "Am I continuing to grow?" If the answer is no, then I need to find a solution, whether it is asking for more work, refining some skills or looking for another position. It can be tough because it's not always clear whether I am actually stagnant or just being impatient, but it is really important to engage in that self-reflection.

Q. What's one thing about you that might

surprise people?

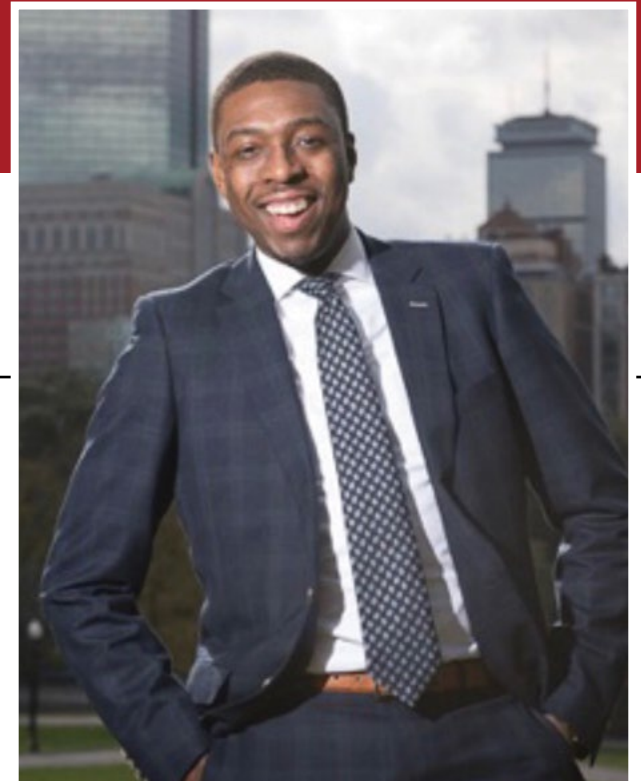
A. I love to read non-fiction and biographies, regardless of who the people are.

Q. What makes someone a really good lawyer? Are you there yet?

A. I think what makes someone a really good lawyer requires being an excellent communicator and the ability to think globally. An excellent communicator has the ability to explain where things are and how things are at a very basic level in a clear and concise manner, knowing when to get into the weeds and when not to. Thinking globally means understanding that a decision is not made in a vacuum, but that the outcome impacts and is tethered to other things. I'm working on being a really good lawyer — I don't think I've practiced law long enough at this point to say I'm already there.

Q. As a lawyer, what are you most afraid of?

A. That I'm not going to be able to create opportunities for people like me, who aren't the typical demographic for a lawyer. I want to create those opportunities and open doors for people from disenfranchised communities and show them all the things that are possible. **MLW**



"My biggest achievement has been my journey from the inner city of Boston where I grew up to where I am today."

Board member, Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association; co-founder and co-implementer, State Street's Inclusion and Diversity Committee; participant, Anti-Defamation League's 2017 Glass Leadership Institute

JENNIFER L. MIKELS

Associate, Goulston & Storrs, Boston

Boston University School of Law, 2011

Atrial lawyer specializing in professional liability defense and complex commercial matters, particularly those involving business divorces and unfair business practices, Jennifer L. Mikels has tried many cases to verdict in court and private arbitration. She actively participates in bar association and other professional activities, including volunteering for the National Trial Competition.

Q. What's the most satisfying case or matter you've worked on so far?

A. For the past four years, I have been representing an individual, pro bono, who is currently living as a refugee in the Middle East after fleeing his home country with his wife and young children in the face of severe persecution. In 2018, my work led me overseas to help prepare this client for a high-stakes interview in connection with his pending application for resettlement in the United States. Meeting his family in person for the first time was an experience I will never forget. The matter is still pending.

Q. What is the best piece of professional advice you ever received?

A. When I was a very junior associate, a great mentor of mine said to me, "Don't try so hard to be a good lawyer." What he meant was to stop sweating the small stuff and be fearless. Do not be afraid to look for creative solutions and step outside the box because that is what can turn a "good lawyer" into a "great lawyer."

Q. What's one thing about you that might surprise people?

A. When I was younger, I sang as part of a choir at Carnegie Hall.

Q. How has the pandemic affected your life and career?

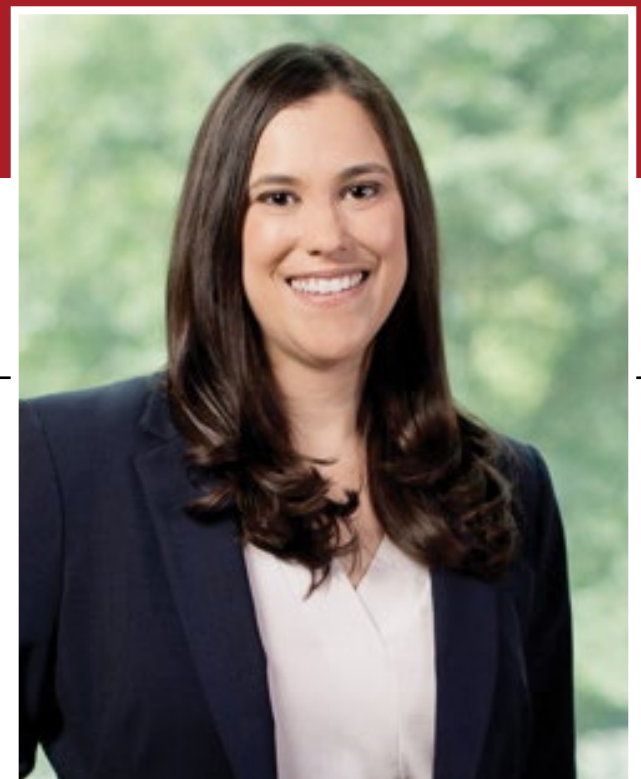
A. I never thought I would spend my days trying to be a full-time lawyer and a full-time stay-at-home mom at the same time. While the constant mix between work-life and home-life is challenging, it has also been incredibly rewarding to spend so much time with my 15-month-old son.

Q. What's the most important thing you've learned since you started practicing law?

A. The bar is a small, tight-knit community. The relationships you build with opposing counsel are very important, as your "adversary" one day may well be your "ally" the next.

Q. What makes someone a really good lawyer? Are you there yet?

A. Empathy, passion, experience, and the drive to do better. We are all striving to become "really good lawyers." I like to think I possess the qualities and am on my way. **MLW**



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Member, Women's Bar Association and Boston Bar Foundation; judge, moot court and mock trial competitions; pro bono work