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[From Juvenile Court to Award-Winning Attorney](#)



By Jeanne Leong

Carmen Day was 17 years old when she found herself in juvenile court facing a possible year-and-a-half probation sentence on a criminal charge. She pleaded with Superior Court Judge Charles Dortch to reduce her

sentence, vowing that she would make a better life for herself and that he might one day see her as a lawyer in his courtroom. He gave her a break, sentencing her to six months of probation. Day made good on that promise from 2006 when she graduated with honors from Rutgers Law School in Camden in January 2020. She is now an associate attorney at the Brown & Connery law firm in Westmont, New Jersey. “I believe I was destined to be a lawyer,” said Day, who lives in Erial, New Jersey.

After finishing high school, Day attended Camden County College, but dropped out twice before returning to school. While earning her associate’s degree and working full-time at a mortgage company, Day started her own business, SheSoWavy Hair. She went on to complete a double major at Rutgers–Camden in 2016, graduating with honors and earning degrees in criminal justice and political science.

While attending law school, she juggled work, her courses, and responsibilities at home with her husband and two young daughters. “When I felt overwhelmed and discouraged, I kept reminding myself that my current struggles were only temporary and that I was going to be a lawyer, no matter what it took,” Day said.

As a participant in the Rutgers Law School’s Children’s Justice Clinic, Day was certified as a legal intern and had the opportunity to work as a juvenile defense attorney to represent children in criminal cases. “Having gone through the juvenile system myself, I was and continue to be extremely passionate about helping young people turn their lives around, just as I have,” Day said.

Day’s honors include the Rutgers Law School Richard L. Barbour Jr. Memorial Award, the Camden County Woman of Honor Award, a New Jersey Legislature citation, and a U.S. House of Representatives proclamation. Day, who does motivational speaking at area schools, is a member of the Rutgers Alumni for Diversity, Inclusion, Community-Building, and Access in Law and Brown & Connery’s Diversity and Inclusion committees. She also is on the board of the I Dare 2 Care Association and founder of the Take a Chance on Law, a mentoring program for prospective and current law students that partners with the Rutgers Law Minority Student Program.

In Day’s second year of law school, she had an opportunity to reconnect with Judge Dortch, who showed her mercy a dozen years before, when she was among a group of students observing proceedings in his courtroom. After the class spoke with Dortch, a 1984 graduate of Rutgers Law School in Camden, she met with him privately to tell him her story. “It was so important for me to show him that his compassion in the courtroom played such a huge role in restoring my own faith in the law, and helped inspire me to continue to fight for my dreams of becoming a lawyer,” she said.

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