

PUBLICATION

Charles K. Grant: Giving Back First

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Charles K. Grant is a shareholder in the Firm and a native of Nashville. Charles' personal history reveals why his life is premised first on giving back and always on providing excellent professional services.

Charles was one of 15 children, and the youngest of nine sons. His father, Roscoe C. Grant Sr., was a local businessman and state board member of the Tennessee Republican Party. Charles' mother, Verleon Smithson Grant, was a staunch Democrat who participated in many local campaigns. Together, Mr. and Mrs. Grant instilled in Charles and his siblings a strong sense of responsibility to others. After Charles' father passed away when Charles was eight, Mrs. Grant supported her family by teaching at a juvenile detention facility during the day and waitressing during the evening. The lessons to Charles were that teamwork, community involvement and service to others should not be undervalued.

After high school, Charles enlisted in the United States Air Force, where he served for three years. Due to his aptitude for languages, Charles was assigned to train at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center in Monterey, California. Though balancing eight hours of training a day with weekly tests to stay in the highly competitive program, Charles still found time to tutor Vietnamese children and volunteer on Sundays at the Monterey County Suicide Prevention Center. In 1988, Charles received a Bachelor of Science from The Citadel, and in 1991, a Juris Doctor from Washington and Lee University School of Law.

Charles knew early on that he wanted to be in the courtroom, so he accepted court-appointed criminal cases as a young lawyer to hone his skills. In his current practice, Charles handles complex employment and business litigation matters, including collective actions under the Fair Labor Standards Act, Employee Retirement Income Security Act claims, and discrimination and harassment claims under state and federal laws. He is a seasoned trial lawyer, having tried over 45 jury trials in federal and state courts.

Charles has received a number of awards, many for his pro bono service. By way of example, because he believes that disenfranchisement has had a significant effect on black males, in 2004, Charles launched a focused effort to restore voting rights to former felons who reside in Tennessee. Initially, Charles filed a number of complaints against the Tennessee governor on behalf of several former felons. Charles then recruited a handful of Nashville attorneys to assist him, ultimately restoring voting rights to about 150 persons. "Even though my efforts admittedly did not attract any big firm clients," Charles said, "this was the right thing to do and I did it because I could." Otherwise, Charles consistently accepts cases disseminated from the local pro bono board to ensure that he is doing his part in providing access to justice.

In addition to his successful practice, Charles serves on a number of nonprofit boards, including Project Reflect, which founded Smithson-Craighead, Nashville's first charter school. Charles is active in the Firm, including previously serving on the Firm's Recruiting Committee and chairing the Firm's Nashville Office Recruiting Committee. Charles serves on the Firm's Nominating Committee, where he works with shareholders across all offices to recommend attorneys to serve on the board of directors. Between spending time with his wife of 31 years, Terry, and their two sons, Donovan and Denmark, his thriving practice, and his civic commitments, Charles says there is no such thing as a "normal" week in his life.

On December 6, 2013, Charles took the gavel as the President of the Nashville Bar Association (NBA). In so doing, Charles became the first African-American president to be elected since the NBA's inception in 1831. Charles humbly credits this milestone as an "accident of timing," expressing his gratitude and pride that the NBA selected him to be its leader.