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Women in law

Three leading Bahamian lawyers reflect on their success

By Catherine Boal

The Bahamas' financial services industry is second only to tourism in terms of the contribution it makes to the country's gross domestic product. It is not surprising then that the sector has attracted a number of highly trained professionals from the legal field. **The Bahamas Investor** talks to three of Nassau's top female lawyers about the challenges involved in working in such a fast-paced and dynamic environment.

Melinda Bacchus-Maynard, Ginton, Sweeting & O'Brien

Melinda Bacchus-Maynard, an associate at Nassau law firm Ginton, Sweeting & O'Brien, specializes in commercial and corporate law, financial services and investment.

Born in Nassau to a Russian mother and Guyanese father, Bacchus-Maynard grew up in a professional household. "My mother was a dentist and my father a doctor, so I was always exposed to the medical profession. Law was another profession I was interested in, but did not know anything about, since we had no lawyers in the family. I thought it was fascinating."

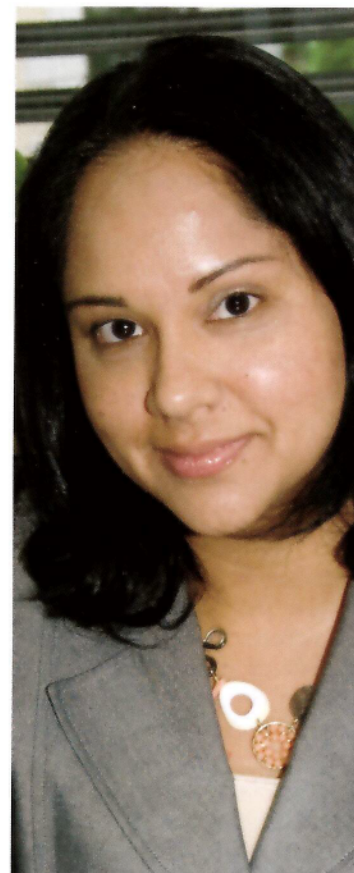
Despite being drawn to law, Bacchus-Maynard was still uncertain of what she wanted to do after leaving boarding school in Toronto. Looking for a degree that would be attractive to prospective employers and not exclude her from studying law at a later stage, she chose to study psychology, with a minor in marketing and sociology, at Palm Beach Atlantic University in Florida. It was while she was working through a business law module on her marketing course that she became committed to building a career in the legal field.

After completing her undergraduate degree, Bacchus-Maynard spent three years in the UK, firstly at Leeds University and then moving to London to complete her bar examination. After qualifying, the lawyer-to-be decided it was time to return to where she was raised.

"Once you have been away, you have a new appreciation for home and you are more recognized and respected there," she says.

Other factors were also pulling her back. While

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BARBARA CHRISTOFILIS/©DUPUCH

completing her law degree, the ambitious student worked during the summers at Bahamian law firm Higgs and Johnson, which offered her a pupillage once her studies were completed.

From Higgs and Johnson, Bacchus-Maynard moved to Lennox Paton where she met fellow lawyer Brian Ginton, whom she now describes as her "mentor." When Ginton left Lennox Paton four years later to form his own company, his apprentice was only too happy to follow him. "I have worked closely with him for my entire professional life. It was natural to move with him," she says.

Bacchus-Maynard has now been with Ginton, Sweeting & O'Brien for over four years.

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But work isn't everything and one of her biggest motivations is "providing for my family." Family is very important to the hard-working wife and mother. "You work hard and you play hard," she explains—and with a two-year-old daughter at home, there are plenty of opportunities for play. Bacchus-Maynard's husband is civil litigation lawyer Peter Maynard, but she says the two rarely talk shop at home and spend their free time taking frequent trips to Eleuthera to visit family.

At work, Bacchus-Maynard relishes the opportunity to develop her skills and experience different facets of the job. Ginton, Sweeting & O'Brien has been advising the Albany development partners since the development began and Bacchus-Maynard is proud of her involvement with the \$1.3-billion project.

"Working on Albany showed all the different phases and areas of law involved in getting a development up and running, from forming the company to dealing with the approvals process," she says.

Albany may have been one of the highlights of her career so far, but Bacchus-Maynard has no intention of slowing down. "I want to continue

climbing the corporate ladder and stay on top of any legislative or government changes in my field.

"I love to be busy," she laughs, "but it is about balancing work and family time. As my father always says 'steady as she goes.'"