

Profile:

Lena Korial

Lena Korial is the owner of Korial and Associates, LLC

WHAT DOES SHE DO?

Korial specializes in immigration law.

WHY?

"I was born in Iraq and I came to Jacksonville when I was seven." Korial has a natural compassion for people who uproot their homes and relocate half way across the globe. "Most of my clients are Arabic primarily because we speak the same language. But I also have a few Albanians, Asians and Russians."

THE CHALLENGES

"Trying to give equal amount of attention to each case." Korial often works 13 or 14-hour days and even dips into her weekend time to help her clients. Korial says immigration procedures are much more than simple paperwork drills. "It's at least a one-year process. You get to know their family and their children. They invite you over for dinner. Trust is important. That's the biggest complaint I hear about other attorneys. They don't keep their clients informed. They feel like they just want their money and that's it." Like many areas of law, immigration law is complex and cumbersome to sort out. "Some clients have two or three ways of getting a green card or visa. You have to narrow it down for them." Because many immigrants may know little or nothing about America's legal system and poor English skills compound the problem, Korial often finds herself as more of a trusted friend and advisor than attorney. "It comes down to making a choice for them. Basically, their life is in my hands. They may have worked for several years and saved to get here." Although her clients satisfaction is her top priority, she sometimes feels the pressure. "They put a lot of guilt trips on you. They say 'my children are depending on you. Their future is in your hands.'"

PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

"I had two clients in detention and there was no bond set." The two women could not legally



out from underfoot and dead bolting the door. I managed to get them out of detention and have the removal hearing canceled." Korial explained to the judge that the two women had a relative in the area, which showed stability. "They really are innocent. They were scared and they didn't want to get married just to get residency."

A CALLING

"I always wanted to be a lawyer. I think, when I was 12 or 13, I decided I wanted to go to law school, even though I didn't know what it was." After graduating from Bishop Kenny High School, the naturalized Jacksonville native headed north to Chicago to pursue higher learning. Four years later, with a bachelor's degree in political science and psychology from Loyola University, Korial headed to the University of Florida for her law degree.

VENTURING OUT

A fresh face to the Jacksonville legal scene, Korial spent five months practicing immigration law in Tampa for another firm before striking out on her own. "I had lots of clients, so I figured, why not take care of myself? Plus, I wanted more responsibility. I have a lot now, maybe more than I wanted," she laughed. Korial doesn't regret starting her own firm, but recalled the initial trepidation in the beginning. "You have to be fearless. It's very scary signing the lease because you know you have to be there a year. You just have to have faith in yourself." Clients are variable, but expenses remain constant, with a staff of two and an office lease to pay for. Korial is the last per-