

# member SPOTLIGHT



**Erica Aisner, Esq.**

In this feature, Tejash V. Sanchala, Esq., Employment Law Committee Co-Chair and Board Member, interviews WCBA members about their experiences and insights.

He welcomes any comments and suggestions for future columns. Tejash's contact information can be found at: <http://www.villanuevalaw.com/tejash-v-sanchala.html>



**Tejash:** How long have you been a member of the WCBA?

**Erica:** 14 years

**Tejash:** What is your current job and practice area?

**Erica:** I am a partner with Kirby Aisner & Curley LLP. Dawn Kirby, Julie Curley and I proudly opened our doors on April 1. We specialize in bankruptcy law, representing businesses and individuals, debtors and creditors as well as distressed transactions both in and out of bankruptcy.

**Tejash:** How did you become involved in the bankruptcy field?

**Erica:** Like many people, I sort of fell into it. I not sure anyone starts out dreaming of becoming a bankruptcy attorney. My first internships in high school and in law school were for a family friend who practiced bankruptcy and commercial litigation. Since that was the experience on my resume, it led me to my first job... I always enjoyed bankruptcy classes in law school and even competed in the bankruptcy moot court team. However it happened, I am glad it did. I truly love helping people find their way through tough times.

**Tejash:** What is one of your favorite legal success stories?

**Erica:** I represented a high-end fashion

designer who was being pursued by an over zealous former professional who was fixated on putting her out of business, or worse. He was literally trying to litigate her into the ground until she had no choice but to close her doors. The litigant's counsel seemed to take on the vendetta as well which made the situation even more volatile. We were able to file her company into bankruptcy, neutralize the litigant. Not only did her company survive but it is flourishing and I often see her line in a publication or in the media and when I do, I am reminded of what we accomplished together.

**Tejash:** Who were some of your legal mentors?

**Erica:** My first legal mentor was Alan Resnick who in many ways is a founding father of bankruptcy. He was my bankruptcy professor at Hofstra and he took what would otherwise have been a stale subject and made it fascinating. I was lucky enough to keep in touch with him years after I graduated and when he started referring me clients I was truly honored and proud. Another early mentor was Leslie Berkoff, a bankruptcy partner at my first law firm after graduation, Moritt Hock & Hamroff, LLP (Garden City, New York). Leslie not only taught me about practicing the law, but showed me how important it is to get outside the of-

fice and connect with other professionals. She brought me to countless events, introduced me to everyone she knew and engrained in me the importance of having a network. She continues to be a friend and mentor to me for which I am so grateful.

**Tejash:** If you were not practicing law, what would you be doing?

**Erica:** I would be a teacher. Not just because you get out at 3:00 and have summers off (which is pretty nice) or for the pension (also pretty nice), but because I love children and making a difference in their lives.

**Tejash:** What might people be surprised to learn about you?

**Erica:** In my spare time I am a volunteer chair of the day camp in my neighborhood. We have approximately 60-70 kids enrolled in a full day/ 8 week day camp. We handle everything from hiring, licensing, programming to my personal favorite, coming up with the arts and craft curriculum. My children, Mollie (11), Samantha (8) and Andrew (4) all attend the camp so it is even more rewarding to have a hand in the best part of their summer.

**Tejash:** What do you splurge on?

**Erica:** Travel. I love to plan trips and my wish list is long.

**Tejash:** What is the best hour of your day?

**Erica:** 9 p.m. That's when I get to exhale and enjoy the quiet.

**Tejash:** What is one great movie you have seen or amazing book that you have read in the past year and how did it have an impact on you?

**Erica:** Right now I am reading *Girl Stop Apologizing*. It is very timely because it is about how women approach their goals. Given that I am just opening a law firm with two other fabulous and strong women, Dawn Kirby and Julie Curley, it has given me a valuable perspective and incredible positivity about the adventure that we are embarking on.

**Tejash:** What are some of your favorite vacation trips?

**Erica:** That is a tough one! Best trip so far was my honeymoon. We took a cruise (small ship) through the French and Italian Riviera. It was amazing in every way. In May I am going with my family and my mother to Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park. It will be my first time at a National Park and I'm sure it will top the list of favorites as well.

**Tejash:** What is the best advice you have ever received?

**Erica:** My husband, Michael, often tells me that I need to put my oxygen mask on first. As a working Mom, volunteer and all-around "yes" person, I often forget (as many of us do) to take care of myself. Thankfully I have an incredibly supportive husband who makes sure to remind me because it is only when I do, that I am able to be everything that my family, friends and clients need me to be.

**Tejash:** When is the last time you were outside of your comfort zone?

**Erica:** Right now. I am not a risk taker when it comes to my own life and I instinctively avoid change. Perhaps it's a result of years of representing struggling businesses and entrepreneurs. It has taught me to play it safe. Starting this new venture has definitely pushed me out of my comfort zone but with the support of my family, friends, clients and most importantly my exceptional law partners, I am ready for the next chapter in my professional life.

**Tejash:** What advice would you give to new lawyers?

**Erica:** Find an area of the law that you truly enjoy and don't settle. Also, don't forget to give back. Whether it is pro bono work or volunteering your time in

something completely unrelated. I serve on the Board of Volunteer NY! Which is a not-for-profit organization headquartered in Tarrytown, NY. I love this organization for so many reasons but my favorite is the reach that Volunteer NY! has – helping to support thousands of other not-for-profits and the incredible work they do in so many different arenas.

**Tejash:** What is one of your future ambitions?

**Erica:** To own a boat. My Mom and Dad owned a marina and boat yard when I was young. My childhood playpen was a Boston Whaler on the showroom floor. There is nothing like open water to calm the soul and the carefree feeling of skipping across the water with the wind in your hair. Unfortunately, I married a land lover so this goal may take some work.

**Tejash:** What is your favorite part of being involved with the WCBA?

**Erica:** Creating relationships with so many experts in various specialties in the Westchester legal community. It makes us all better lawyers when we don't know the answer but we know who to call!

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