

Education: BA cum laude, Yale College; PhD, Duke; JD, Yale Law School
Company Name: Sanford Heisler Sharp, LLP
Industry: Law
Company CEO: David W. Sanford (Chairman)
Company Headquarters Location: New York, New York
Number of Employees: 89
Your Location (if different from above): Baltimore, Maryland
Words you live by: “Watch the donut, not the hole” – Burl Ives (The Donut Song)
Personal Philosophy: “Fight the Power!” – Public Enemy (Fight the Power)
What book are you reading: *Heavy* by Kiese Laymon
What was your first job: Cashier, Common Concerns Bookstore, Washington D.C. (age 8)
Favorite charity: Backyard Basecamp, Inc.
Interests: Organic urban gardening; Hanns Eisler Nail Salon (H.E.N.S.); uninterrupted sleep
Family: Spouse, Jason David Boughton; children, Karin Zidane and Jude Francis Eda Boughton



The Choice is Yours

In July 2014, I was ten weeks pregnant with my second child, six years out of law school, and seven months into my first stint as a managing partner. Swamped with case work, administrative responsibilities, and near-constant headaches and nausea, I felt both exceptionally precarious and incredibly fortunate.

I am the sole wage earner for my family. My salary now is just less than a first-year BigLaw associate’s, and almost four times the median household income in my city. I am a cisgender White woman, an only child gifted with privilege from birth. The fancy schools my parents paid for amplified that privilege and opened the doors to my career. I work for a law firm that is nationally recognized for bringing gender discrimination cases on behalf of women lawyers, many of them mothers.

As a litigator and a manager, I define a functioning workplace as one hospitable to human life. Yet my own choices about how to work and live have at times sent a different message.

I can see it in the blog post I wrote six years ago, a pseudonymous meditation on “Lawyering While Pregnant,” seeded with strategic invocations of “my usual 12-hour days,” my full-time caregiver spouse, and how much I loved my job. Delicately balancing what felt like risk on all sides, I recounted disclosing my pregnancy early to explain away my comparative lack of productivity: “I don’t want

to give the appearance of having simply decided that I prefer a forty-hour week, something all of us at my firm are regularly reminded that we have not signed up for.” On the surface, I called out the war between work and human life; beneath it, the narrative seethed with my compulsion to affirm that, for me, work came first.

Litigating employment discrimination cases, I frequently observe that people from historically underrepresented groups who assume positions of power often do so at least in part by covertly reproducing or reinforcing some of the same stereotypes we may overtly disclaim and resist.

As I type this essay (three weeks late, sorry!) on my sofa underneath my snuggling six-year-old daughter, half-dreading the looming post-pandemic return to office life, I recognize the costs of my own ambivalent performance of work-life imbalance. See, for example, the barrage of trivial work emails sent from the hospital bed where I lay with my hours-old daughter the day I gave birth. I regret the covert but legible message those emails carried; I renounce it.

There may be good intentions and even linguistic precision when we call bias “unconscious” or “implicit,” but I increasingly resist these terms. To combat stereotypes and bias in our work and our lives we must make the unconscious conscious, the implicit explicit.