



Who is Neema Bell?

By the time she was eight years-old, Ms. Neema Bell was trying to figure out what words like "right", "wrong" and "fair" really meant. She says, "Even at a young age things needed to make sense to me!" Who knows if that kind of thinking helped Ms. Bell become one of the first African American women in this community to be an equity partner in a majority law firm [Equity Partner means she is an owner of the business]? Attorney Bell became a partner in a very big law firm named Schumaker, Loop & Kendrick in 1996 and started her law career with the same firm [business] in 1988.

Growing up, Ms. Neema Bell lived in a very big house. Her maternal grandparents stayed on one side of the house. Her great-aunt lived on another side. Ms. Bell stayed in the middle of the home with her mom, dad and two brothers. Ms. Bell says people in her family often worked two jobs. According to her, "... going to school was my job and I had to work hard at it too!" She expects the same from her grandchildren and other young people she touches. Sitting around her grandmother's kitchen table is where Ms. Bell was reminded by her family that she could be anything she wanted to be.

In sports, the winner gets a trophy. She thinks kids win when they do well in the classroom. She says, "I wanted to do just as well on my spelling test as anyone else." Ms. Bell says, "When you win in education you are making a better life for you and your family."

Ms. Bell is the best example of winning in the classroom. She was the very best in her law school class. She was chosen as the valedictorian of her graduating class at the University of Toledo's Law School in 1986. She thinks Law is a good career. She tells young people, "The stuff of the law is important; it gives you the discipline to learn; it teaches you how to think, and it helps you to make good decisions in life."

Speaking as a woman, Ms. Bell believes part of a female's job is to make her family stronger, "We are the mothers, the grandmothers, and we are the sisters. "We look out for, and care for, everybody in the family." "We have to be prepared to do so and that means getting the best education possible." She tells young African American females to treat yourself like you want others to treat you. She says "...treat yourself with grace and dignity every day!"

Ms. Neema Bell learned early how to win at life; you can too!

