

PUBLICATION

Spotlight on Mabel Arroyo

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Mabel Arroyo was born and raised in Mayaguez, on the western coast of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. She attended college in the same town, then moved to San Juan to attend the Inter American University Law School. Shortly after graduating from law school, Mabel was appointed by Governor Pedro Rosello as an assistant district attorney. The Puerto Rican Senate confirmed Governor Rosello's appointment, making Mabel one of the few females to occupy the role of an assistant district attorney in Puerto Rico. As an assistant district attorney, Mabel worked for the Antitrust Division, protecting businesses and consumers from unfair or deceptive trade practices. While working as a prosecutor, Mabel met and married Tim Churchill, who was in Puerto Rico on work assignment for North Carolina State University. In 1997, Tim accepted employment in Middle Tennessee, and they relocated their family to the Nashville area.

Even though Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, the official languages of Puerto Rico are both Spanish and English, with Spanish being the primary language. Upon Mabel's relocation to Nashville, she recognized that being bilingual created an opportunity for her to practice immigration law, particularly given the significant Hispanic community residing in the area. Mabel began her immigration practice in a small Nashville firm that specialized in immigration law, assisting individuals and local families to obtain U.S. citizenship for themselves or for their family members. As her practice grew, she began to take on more corporate clients and transitioned to a larger firm. In July 2006, Mabel joined the Nashville office of Baker Donelson, and was named a shareholder in 2009.

In addition to assisting corporations with foreign worker employment matters, Mabel also assists hospitals and colleges, such as St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and Meharry Medical College, with securing visas for talented and skilled researchers from abroad. "By helping these outstanding researchers obtain their visas, I feel an even greater sense of reward because I know that my efforts not only help my clients, but also benefit the community at large," Mabel says.

In addition to maintaining her successful practice, Mabel is active in Baker Donelson's diversity initiatives and believes that the Firm's commitment to diversity is what sets it apart from so many of its competitors. Mabel had an early impression of this commitment when, during her hiring interview, she requested that she be able to retain her individual Hispanic clients, many of whom she represents on a pro bono basis. While other firms in the area indicated that they would not welcome her representation of these clients, Bruce Doeg, Office Managing Shareholder of the Nashville office at the time, told her she could retain her individual clients without question, just as she could retain her corporate clients.

In the five years she has been with the Firm, Mabel has made a strong impact within the Nashville office and has served as a role model for other diverse female attorneys. She has been listed in The Best Lawyers in America® in Immigration Law since 2007 and sits on the board of directors for the Tennessee Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Mabel is a frequent lecturer on various topics of immigration law, and she also teaches immigration law at Nashville School of Law. Outside of work, Mabel enjoys spending time with her husband and two children, Mia, age 9, and Robert, age 12, and can often be found cheering in the bleachers or on the sidelines of one of Mia's or Robert's sporting events. Mabel is also an avid runner and completed the Country Music Half Marathon in April. She and her family maintain their ties to Puerto Rico and visit at least once every year.

