



## “Joi” de Vivre

Meet the CBA's Dynamic New President, Joi Kush

BY HALEY HEMEN

---

**L**ife will not wait. We all know it's true, but how many of us truly act that way? For attorney Joi Kush, those are words to live by. “It's a reminder to live without regret, worry, or judgments,” she says. “Anything can happen at any time. There are people every day sacrificing their lives, and there are people whose lives are cut short for no reason. We have to live intentionally. I have experienced loss, but I also have seen a lot of suffering. I know how lucky I am to live the life that I have, and I want others to be as aware.”

Joi has definitely lived her 36 years to the fullest, traveling widely and taking on challenges that may have seemed impossible to others. Now, she takes on the role of CBA president in the wake of a global pandemic that has drastically changed business as usual—for the better in some ways. “Never before have we been more connected,” Joi says of our post-COVID-19 reality. “I am thrilled about the changes that have been adopted over this past year. Remote options have enhanced access to justice by making it easier for litigants to appear in court,

and they've given many parent-lawyers a more flexible workday. Of course, there are negatives as well, but this new remote world has opened up new possibilities. I look forward to the day when I can operate my law firm while traveling around the world—this is now a true possibility.”

In her role as president, Joi will continue using services like Zoom and hopes to engage CBA members through platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. She also plans to promote the CBA's podcasts, Getting' Legal With It, Modern Law Revolution, Stairway to ATJ, Our Voices, and Colorado LEADS. “My goal is to have broad outreach and to promote our members through social media and other outlets. Of course, I am extremely excited to see and meet people in person. CBA presidents are supposed to visit each local bar association during their bar year. During my visits, I hope to engage members through an activity or community service project. It would be great to move away from the hotel ballroom or office and be more creative in our engagement.”

### Spirit of Service

For Joi, the decision to pursue a legal career was heavily influenced by the values her family instilled. “Service to others' is our family motto,” Joi says, “I wanted to pursue a career that would be challenging and yet provide a service to the community. My success is measured by how many lives I can positively impact.” Her father, Leslie Kush, is a retired Special Forces medic and an aspiring entrepreneur. “He taught me the value of assimilating to my surroundings and respecting other cultures.” Her mother, Kimberly Kush, raised three kids while working, volunteering, and at times, attending school. She most recently retired as an alternative high school teacher in Widefield School District 3. “She taught me the value of empathy, listening, and giving back. Both of my parents taught me that success is not defined by material things, but by the number of lives you touch. My brothers, Benjamin and Justin, are Eagle Scouts and always put other people's needs ahead of their own.”

At one point, the idea of service to others almost translated into military service. “In 2003,

I was a freshman in college at the University of Denver. I was walking through the student union and saw a table advertising for candidates to become officers in the US Marines. I was curious, so I approached the table to read more. The gentleman smirked somewhat at my desire to join—I am only 5 foot 2 and around 115 pounds, so I assume he thought that I didn't have the grit."

Because she's not one to back away from a challenge, Joi signed up and, during the summer of 2004, attended Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Quantico, Virginia. "We started with over 60 females in our platoon but only graduated with around 39. Halfway through the program, they give you the option to drop out with 'no questions asked.' After the halfway point, you could be asked to leave if you did not perform well. Thankfully, I made it. I learned a lot about personal responsibility, grit, and teamwork during that program. After that session, I was supposed to return after my junior year in college.

"Unfortunately, before returning to OCS, I was diagnosed with compartment syndrome—a painful condition caused by pressure buildup from swelling of tissues—in my left leg, which required immediate surgery that summer. After that summer, I traveled to Beijing, China, for the fall semester of my senior year, where I ultimately decided not to finish the program and become a commissioned officer. I realized that I enjoyed my freedom and did not want to be limited in my travels."

### Embracing Other Cultures

As a student, Joi continued her travels, living, studying, and working in China, India, Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Impressively, she committed to learning the local language wherever she landed. "I was taught to assimilate to your surroundings and to not expect others to accommodate you. Plus, it was great to learn a new language and culture."

Her work in China, both in 2006 and 2008, focused on writing about legal issues in China, including intellectual property law. In Thailand and Vietnam, she worked at a non-governmental organization focused on creating law-student-run legal clinics to help citizens learn about



1



2



3

their legal rights. In India, she taught English to Tibetan refugees, and in Japan, she taught English to a Japanese family, was a ski instructor for an expat family, and taught literature to a dyslexic child.

Reflecting on her experience, Joi says, "I think the major difference between working in the United States versus working in China, in particular, is the concept of *guanxi*. This concept essentially means the ability to build a strong bond and relationship with someone. In order to get something accomplished, whether personal or business in nature, you have to have *guanxi* with the person you are interacting with. I greatly admire the fact that in China, large business deals are accomplished by a handshake and a short contract. In the United States, no deal

1 Joi with her husband and her big red truck.

2 Pups Briley and Chuck.

3 Maynard.

can be completed unless there is a substantial contract full of boilerplate language that is negotiated over countless hours. I appreciate the simplicity and integrity of doing business in China."

### Call to Family Law

As for her current practice area, family law, Joi feels that it is something that found her. "I did not believe that I would practice family law, but in retrospect, I guess I always knew this was my calling. In undergrad, one of my





**1** Joi's parents celebrate 45 years of marriage.  
**2** Ben, Justin, and Joi.



**2**

many jobs was a nanny. I enjoyed engaging kids and watching them grow intellectually. In law school, I interned with the Albany Law School Civil Rights and Disabilities Law Clinic to advocate for children with disabilities. I also wrote a paper on gestational surrogacy. After law school, while I was trying to find a job in Colorado, I took a two-day course on family law. Unfortunately, it took me about three years after I took that course to find my way back. Family law is intellectually challenging, emotionally exhausting, and quick paced—I enjoy every moment. Family law is not for everyone, and I am proud and honored that I can help families every day.”

Joi also credits the CBA for helping her gain her footing in the Colorado legal community. Moving back home to Colorado from New York after law school, Joi took advantage of her first year of CBA membership to make local connections. “I was pretty involved in law school, but I was not really focused on one particular goal nor did I understand what I really needed to do to make the necessary connections in the legal community. In Colorado, the CBA gave me a place to land. I attended some CLEs and other networking

events, where I was easily accepted. I felt like I had found a community where I could be myself, share my experience, and be part of something.” It’s a feeling she hopes to foster for others in her time as president. “I have no personal agenda. I want the organization to thrive and for members to have a sense of belonging and community.”

**Life Outside the Law**

At home, her support system includes her husband, “a true feminist and my biggest cheerleader. He provides undying support for my (sometimes outlandish) goals and dreams. More importantly, as a professional personal chef, he feeds me.” Rounding out the family are “my puppers, Briley and Charlie/Chuck, who always bring a smile and a laugh. I have a step-cat named Maynard, and he is okay too.”

When not tending to her pets, Joi pursues some majorly impressive hobbies, including

running half marathons. The first was in 2009 in Thailand, where she decided to challenge herself to participate in the company fundraiser. “I had three months to prepare for the run and, at the end of the summer, I completed 13.1 miles through the fields of Thailand. I watched the sun rise over the valley while each stride reminded me of the blisters forming around my foot. It was magical.” She has also started training for a triathlon, but her main hobbies the past year have been biking and river kayaking down the Arkansas. “I am still learning how to properly maneuver my duckie down the river, but with every swim, I get a little bit better. I can’t wait for the day when I can tackle some 4’s in a hardshell.”

Given her track record, there’s no doubt Joi will reach this goal—and many others along the way. The CBA looks forward to an exciting year ahead with this go-getter leading the association. **CL**