Law firm celebrates milestone

Partners serve area for more than 20 years

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They started out as friends and grew into family.
And after more than 20 years together, Rickey Minix and Clyde Simien are still partners, heading up a successful civil law practice that has served Lafayette for more than 20 years.

In that time, Simien and Minix have become a prominent name in the Lafayette legal community, drawing the respect and acclaim of other lawyers considered to be their competitors.

The pair of black attorneys also stood out as trailblazers, providing not only a choice for potential black clients, but also paving the way for other black attorneys to follow.

"These guys are trendsetters. As a young black lawyer, I look up to these guys," said Pat Magee, an assistant district attorney for Lafayette.

Magee said Simien and Minix changed perceptions.

"They tore down a lot of ill-conceived misconceptions about black attorneys in Lafayette. We're standing on their shoulders," said Robin Jones, a prominent civil litigator who worked for Simien and Minix formerly.

"It was a step for Lafayette to have a black law firm that people in the black community could turn to and feel like it's one of their own that they could go to," Jones said.

Graduating from local St. Landry Parish high schools in the late 1970s, Simien and Minix attended UL and graduated in accounting. By 1980, both men had graduated from the Southern University Law Center in Baton Rouge with their juris doctor degrees.

"They always wanted to be an attorney," Simien said. From elementary school, it became a natural progression from high school to law school.

Both began their legal careers as law clerks, with Simien clerking at the 16th Judicial District Court and Minix working at the 18th Judicial District Court.

After a year, both took on positions as assistant district attorneys.

On July 13, 1987, they opened a private practice specializing in civil law from car crashes, personal injury, and other related claims. Since opening their own practice, the two have garnered local acclaim for being one of the first black-owned and operated law firms in the Lafayette area.

Simien said he and his partner didn't encounter racism when they opened up but instead were welcomed by the community, both black and white.

See FIRM on Page 38

About Simien and Minix

Simien and Minix has been active since July 13, 1987.

The firm deals in civil matters that include wrongful death, personal injury, car collisions, offshore accidents, and other matters.

For more information on Simien and Minix, contact them at 269-5225 or go to their Web site at www.simien-minix.com.

Currently, Simien and Minix serve 85 percent black clients and 15 percent white clients.
Continued from Page 1B

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One of their more publicized civil cases occurred in 1990 involving the death of Runoise girl Laveshia Thomas, who was killed by a drunk driver in 1990. Minins served as the attorney for Thomas’s family, who sued the city of Runoise after police officers pulled over the man who struck and killed Thomas and released him, even though he was visibly intoxicated.

A judge ordered the city of Runoise to pay the Thomas family $2 million in damages. Minins said the case, even though it was a victory, was a tragedy and will always stay with him.

“T always think of that case because I think of that little girl and I think, ‘That could’ve been my family,’” he said.

Both men have come a long way. In their early years, the law firm operated on a shoe-string budget. We started out by renting that house,” Simon said of their law practice location on West Congress. “I’ll never forget that we moved our lawn at night because we never wanted anybody to see us moving our lawns. We had a very low budget.”

In 1995, they moved to a house on St. John Street that was nicer, Minins said, and larger. In 1995, the practice moved again for the last time to their current office at 101 Rue Hervelle.

They now have a law firm with 30 employees operating out of a two-story, 9,000-square-foot building complete with large offices, meeting rooms and a conference room.

“There’s no question about it that’s a Cinderella story,” Simon said. “We’ve been able to fulfill a lot of our dreams.”

“We work very hard,” Minins said. “But we make time for our families. We try to be organized and try to get a lot done in a day. The key to success is hard work and being organized.”

District Attorney Mike Hanson agreed, citing his own experiences with the two attorneys.

“Jim and Clyde have built up a great civil practice,” Hanson said. “They both work very hard at it and they are very fine individuals and they’re tremendous examples for the entire community.”

Others who know Simon and Minins had nothing but the best to say about the duo, from their natural legal talent to their visionary attitudes that changed the face of law in Lafayette.

“They were the most competent young lawyers in Lafayette to come along in a while,” said Glenn Armorer, an attorney in Lafayette. “I was amazed at how talented they were. I knew they would do very well. They were as good as it gets.”