

# New Orleans CITY BUSINESS

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COMPANY

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## Monica Sanchez

**Position:** Cochran-Latino Sanchez Firm managing partner

**Age:** 36

**Family:** husband, Jeff Mitchell

**Education:** bachelor's degrees in economics and political science, Ohio University; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law; master's degree in international and comparative law, Tulane University Law School

**What did you want to be growing up?** A lawyer.

**What was your first job?** In Panama, my first job was at my mother's pathology clinic. In the United States, my first job was as a law clerk at the Murray Firm.

**What's the last book you read?** "Angels and Demons," by Dan Brown.

**What have you always wanted to do but haven't?** Open a pro-bono clinic.

Even though she manages her own law firm and recently planned her wedding, Monica Sanchez makes it a priority to spend time at Hispanic-related events to offer free counsel.

"Because I'm Hispanic, I know how difficult it can be to communicate in a second language," said Sanchez, who moved from Panama to attend college at Ohio University.

"It's my goal to inform the Hispanic community who are recently here what rights they have in America," she said.

Sanchez said she worries about the Hispanic workers who have been coined "walking ATMs" because they keep all of their earnings in their pockets. They are targets for robbers and, because most of them do not understand this country's law, they do not try to legally fight against the thieves.

Sanchez attends local soccer matches, church services, festivals and other events that attract Hispanics to educate them about their rights while they live in the United States.

"My goal is for the Hispanic community to get to the point where they trust the legal system," she said. "I want to educate as many people as I can. I want to make justice available and accessible to everybody."

The daughter of a pathologist, Sanchez immigrated to America to further her education.

"I chose law because my parents said I was too argumentative," Sanchez said. "I love it because I get to help people and assist the 'little person.'"

But earning advanced degrees in the United States didn't come without challenges.

"I learned English when I was in Panama, but in college it was my second language," she said. "When you're 18 and in a foreign country by yourself, it proves difficult."

Sanchez persevered past the language barrier, earning a double major in political science and economics. Even with her numerous degrees, she said she is still reminded of the challenge of being a female attorney.

"It's still a guy's world out there," she said.

Even so, Sanchez continues to bring the law to those she feels are the most vulnerable. She travels along the Gulf Coast with the Mexican Consulate's mobile clinic to offer free legal advice to Hispanics. She also serves as vice president of the Hispanic Lawyers Association in New Orleans, a group that pushes for positive changes for Hispanics in the law.

"I'm here in America because I can make more of a difference as a bilingual attorney than I could in Panama, where everyone speaks Spanish."•

— Amy Ferrara Smith

