

SAO Profile in Passion – Carla Ribie

Anyone who has met Carla Ribie is made aware of two things from the get-go. She is extremely proud to be Puerto Rican, and she is a diehard Philadelphia Eagles fan. Her parents met in their native Puerto Rico and moved to Philadelphia where they started their family. Carla, the youngest of three siblings, was born and raised in Philadelphia. When she was 14 years old the family moved to Broward County and she has lived there ever since.

Her mother worked for Children's Services in Philly and then worked at SAO Child Support Program here in Miami-Dade. Her father also worked at Children's Services in Philly and then at the Department of Children and Families here before becoming a State of Florida Probation Officer.

As a child Carla never imagined that a career in criminal justice was in her future. She thought she would end up at a school not a courthouse. "I wanted to be a teacher. I liked kids and was always around younger children," she says.

After graduating from Miramar high school in 2006, Carla was focused on going to Broward Community College. During high school she worked at the mall. "The hours were crazy and when I went to college, I needed something stable with regular hours. My mother told me to get an office job so that I could focus on school. So, I applied at the State Attorney's Office and was hired to work in the mailroom."

"Carla's journey from our mailroom to becoming a Felony Division Supervisor working on high profile violent crimes and training other staff is not just about professional achievement. It is also a story of personal growth with an expanded understanding and empathy for the plight of every crime victim who walks through our doors," said State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. "She is one of the most trusted and respected members of our SAO family who embodies the mission of the office."

When Carla first started at the SAO, she figured that she would only be here until she finished her degree and then leave. That was 20 years ago.

After four months in the mailroom, she was promoted to Legal Assistant and served as a division secretary in the Felony Division Unit. In that position she handled the court calendars, requested evidence, and provided assistance to the A, B, and C prosecutors in her unit.

During this time, she found the criminal justice system fascinating and enjoyed learning firsthand how cases come about and what you need to move a case forward. “They invested you in the case, and I got to teach the division attorneys how to navigate the process.”

She studied at Broward Community College for a couple of years before switching to Keiser University and graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Legal Studies.

After six years she was promoted to Trial Coordinator where she worked closely with and supported two division chiefs in their work putting together cases and taking them to trial.

“I loved once a trial took place. It is very satisfying to witness once a family receives justice for themselves or their family member. You are also very aware that there are no winners and the families of the victim and of the defendant will never be the same.”

Carla makes it a point to acknowledge the late DC Tammy Forrest who she worked with for four years. “She was great and she taught me a lot. Though she was a DC, Tammy worked like a Senior Trial Counsel (STC) and that prepared me to work with Gail.”

In 2016, Carla was assigned to work with STCs Gail Levine and Reid Rubin. She loved working with them because “they are incredible prosecutors, extremely professional and expect a great deal from those they worked with. Though they have very different personalities, they included me.”

When asked about which case really made an impact on her, Carla quickly responds, “the Presidente trial.” This was the case against Manuel Marin, co-founder of Presidente Supermarkets, for organizing the torture and murder of Camilo Salazar, a 43-year-old married father of two who had a secret affair with his then-wife, Jenny Marin.

It took a great deal of work and eight years before it all came together. Marin finally turned himself in after fleeing to Spain. It was a complex case, and we were able to simplify it in a way that the jurors could clearly understand who the players were, what each did, and who was responsible for it all. There were many financial records, emails, text messages, cellphone sites, Sunpass records, a co-defendant in Canada and many officers who worked on investigation that had since retired.

For Carla it was very emotional to see all of the moving parts come together to be able to prove the case against Marin and finally get justice for Camilo Salazar and his family. Manuel Marin was sentenced to 30 years in state prison for manslaughter with a weapon, 15 years in prison for conspiracy to commit kidnapping or aggravated battery, and life in prison for kidnapping. His co-defendants Roberto “Bam” Isaac, Alexis Vila Perdomo, and Ariel Gandulla also received prison sentences.

Isaac was convicted of second-degree murder and conspiracy to commit kidnapping and murder and was sentenced to life in prison. Vila Perdomo, a friend of both Isaac and Gandulla, was convicted of conspiracy to commit kidnapping and murder and was sentenced to 15 years in prison. Gandulla, a former mixed martial arts fighter, served 36 months in prison as part of a plea agreement to testify against Issac, Vila Perdomo, and Marin.

Carla has earned a reputation as a person who doesn't back away from a challenge or a project. She actually thrives on solving problems and breaking down difficult projects to achieve what may be impossible for others but not for her.

On more than one occasion she has had the opportunity to work somewhere else for a higher income. In one instance that opportunity came in the middle of some very important cases that she had been working on that were going to trial. "I was invested in the outcome of those cases, and I wanted to see things through."

In many of the cases that she tried with STC Levine, the victims were children. "When I started working with Gail, I was advised to read all the reports on our cases so that I could be caught up and understand what she was referring to. I read all the reports and I left crying. I had to learn to compartmentalize and detach to a certain extent. I have two kids and sometimes it was difficult because and some crime scene images are engrained in my brain."

Carla's passion for her job is evident, and she always felt attached to her cases. "We owe the victim to seek the truth and to seek justice. It is not just a job."

In 2021, Carla applied and was selected to be a Supervisor in the Felony Division in charge of training. She was responsible for onboarding anyone coming in as support staff to Felony Division as a Division Secretary or Trial Coordinator. This brought together her love of teaching and her passion for the work of the SAO.

A few years later in 2024, she was personally selected for a very important special project which lasted for about a year and a half. It involved a few STC cases and volumes of documentation. Once that was concluded, Carla returned to her Training Coordinator position, which she continues to enjoy.

Carla is also very active in the SAO Hispanic Heritage Committee. "For me it is important to highlight the diversity of Hispanic Culture that we have here in Miami whether it is Caribbean, Central American, South American, etc.…"

For her it is important to impart her cultural pride in her two children and so she makes it a point to travel to Puerto Rico to visit family about 2-3 times a year. "I want them to learn about their roots and experience the richness of our culture."

One of the things that Carla appreciates about working at the SAO is that she can have a good work-like balance. "I get to pursue my passion at work and with family."

"Working here I have grown so much as a professional and as a person. I started when I was 18 years old and now, I am 38 with a 10th grader and a 3rd grader. Every step got me to where I am today and I am grateful."