



**Katy Parker** *Partner, Tin Fulton Walker & Owen, Wilmington, N.C.*

Katy Parker hesitated about making the decision to go to law school. "I didn't think I was smart enough," said the Atlanta native, who graduated cum laude from the University of Georgia School of Law and was named its Outstanding Woman Law Student of the Year. "I was always so afraid of failing. It's the kind of subtle sexism that makes women doubt themselves and holds us back in our careers."

Yet, Parker, only 43, has accomplished a lot in a short time. After law school, she served as a law clerk to U.S. District Judge John Nangle in Savannah, Ga. After that, she practiced for five years at Holland & Knight in Florida, focusing on media law and commercial litigation. A passionate civil rights proponent, Parker then moved to North Carolina, where she served as legal director for the state's American Civil Liberties Union for six years.

"What Katy accomplished in six years was nothing short of amazing," said Jennifer Rudinger, the state ACLU's executive director. "She was our one and only attorney in the legal department, and yet she put together a healthy docket of cases that even included some that were reviewed at the [U.S.] Supreme Court level."

During her stint, Parker trained upwards of 50 law school interns — about half of them women. "She did her best to turn them into world-class civil rights attorneys," Rudinger said. "She wanted to help people carry the torch." She also has mentored young women attorneys through the North Carolina Association of Women Lawyers and the North Carolina Advocates for Justice.

Parker has a young daughter with her husband, a lieutenant colonel in the Marines who's been deployed several times to Iraq and Afghanistan. She sees a difference with young women lawyers today who want to have a family.

"The generations before mine always seemed like such bad asses," Parker said. "They knew they had to get in there and fight. I think the current crop of young lawyers is feisty in a different way. They don't think they have to play the game, and if we've helped to create an environment where they don't have to work twice as hard as the men all the time to get the same amount of credit, then we've done something right."