

In an episode of Ask The Experts, Steve O. converses with Angela Giampolo about the beginnings of her firm and how they climbed their way to the top as Philadelphia's leading experts in legal, health, financial, and home improvement. Educating the world when it comes to the fields of Workers Comp Law, Wealth Management, Family Law, Estate Planning, Pain Management, and more, Angela Giampolo is here to set the bar high for LGBT Law.

Top lawyer attorney Angela Giampolo specializes in LGBTQ Law, which has swept the world in a rising wave of relevancy and acceptance. A lot of problems plague today's society but the law surrounding the LGBTQ community is not one of them. This episode provides insight on important topics such as

The Humble Beginnings of the Giampolo Law Group – We Are Not So Different

I started my firm 13 years ago. Originally, I'm Canadian but I was born in the US. I don't really remember living here so we moved to Quebec when I was young. People, especially within the LGBTQ community, know how accepting Canada has been. After all, the country changed the laws 20 years ago to amend the constitution to make marriage gender-neutral. So we're talking decades and decades ahead of the US in terms of progress. When I opened up my law firm, I was still very naïve. I just wanted to represent the LGBTQ community for all of our legal needs.

We own real estate, we slip fall, we go bankrupt, we form families, we have estate planning needs, and all of these other things. And yet, we're discriminated against. We also have other needs that have nothing to do with the fact that we're gay. Because of this discrimination, I wanted to create a law firm and solve all of our legal needs. But even 13 years ago, I was naïve to the fact that there's gay law, there's straight law and there's a line drawing the difference between both.

Therefore, Giampolo Law Group was formed 13 years ago as a general practice law firm geared towards the LGBTQ community. And then I created Philly Gay Lawyer as the brand and the entity that fought for rights. So, there's the law firm and then there's the advocacy piece. And lastly, there's obviously still very much a need.

Five Years Later: What Has Changed?

It's been six years really. When marriage equality started becoming a reality that's when things changed. So, it's harder to say just five years because we've had marriage equality now for six. So, what a lot of people in the United States don't realize and even LGBTQ individuals don't

know is that there are 1,138 state and federal rights tied to the institution of marriage. Most countries do not. Canada does not. Canada has four.

I never thought I'd agree with Rand Paul on anything but if this country wanted to have marriage remain a religious institution, they should not have tied 1,138 state and federal rights to the institution of marriage. So, you should not die unmarried in this country if you have a committed partner. The laws are such that you're hugely behind the eight ball legally and financially if you do not get legally married.

So, how have things changed since marriage equality? They've changed greatly. Pre-marriage equality, the estate planning that I would do was very different. If a couple came to me and they were partners in both business and in life, how I would treat them as business owners would be much different if they were married business owners. If they were partners in life but married, I would treat their business documents and their state planning documents all very differently.

So, those 1,138 state and federal rights, that is what we fought for. Yes, we fought for legitimacy and the right to get married but implicit in the right to get married where all of those legal and financial measurements that we now enjoy both from a tax perspective and then creditor protection. Like I said, from business and real estate and whatnot. So, things have changed greatly from how I do what I do.

The Impact of Television and The Evolution of Allies

A lot of people downplay the impact of television. But going back to when Ellen came out on TV, her career took a huge downturn because of it. And then Rosie O'Donnell came around and there's not enough that can be said about the impact especially of Rosie when at 4:00 PM she was in every single person's living room across the country on a daily basis. To have a lesbian zoom in... Back before zoom but to zoom in to every single household across America at 4:00 PM even though she didn't make a big deal out of her sexuality and that clearly wasn't the point of the show. But there was nobody after both Ellen and Rosie's appearance in mainstream media that could say that they didn't know a gay person. That they didn't know someone who identified as LGBTQ.

Not to generalize in any way, shape, or form but things are harder for us. And I always joke, especially before marriage equality, that we would drive from Philadelphia down to Fort Lauderdale our little gay Mecca and Wilton Manors. We would pass a lot of places between here and Wilton Manors that I would say '*they don't like our kind in their parks*' and so we try not to run out of gas in these parks and we try not to hold hands in these parks. But then, most, just like President Obama, evolved.

Given the fact that Obama, one of our now staunchest allies at one point said he needed to evolve on this issue, I think any of our straight allies can safely say the same thing. Our allies

can say that at one point, they were against anti-marriage equality but they're not anymore. It's great and it's because of evolution. It's because they've evolved.

But there are others who are not evolved. Just like the head coach of the Las Vegas Raiders NFL Football team. One of his players came out as gay and he resigned. He resigned because 13 years ago, he was bashing against it. It must've bothered him to the point of giving up a 10 million contract. A month or so ago, I remember discussing this with Steven O. He used interesting language to describe being surprised by the coming out like '*he's so big.*' It's interesting because even as people evolve, they still have a visual or a stereotype or a generalization of what a gay man looks like. And it doesn't look like a huge, massive linebacker or a manly football player. That's why so many pro athletes have stayed closeted. It's the toxic masculinity, the generalization of what a gay man should look like.

Just like with Michael Sam and how he's wanting to come out. I respect him tremendously because he came out before the draft. Purposefully so that a coach like the Raiders coach wouldn't draft him or the Cowboys in particular which is one of the most homophobic teams both internally, institutionally, admittedly, all of the things. And so, he just wanted to say '*hey, look*' and came out prior to the draft because he knew that whichever team took him was taking all of him and doing so knowledgeably. And of course, we know how that ended. He ultimately didn't end up on a team but he had the courage to do so. And there may as far as the resignation goes, who knows what all played into that but ultimately it's for the best because the least amount of toxic energy in football and just professional sports generally right now is for the best.

Jeff Rohrer of the Dallas Cowboys came out last year and admitted to being gay. He talked about how tough it is. Is it still tough coming out of the closet?

Absolutely. Even the language used to frame the entire ordeal – '*admitted to being gay.*' It's not something we admit to. People admit to a crime; you don't admit to being gay.

That hits the nail on the head for me. The verbiage and the language around '*admitted to.*' So, yes, there is still a need to come out. I bet I'd love to if he'd be open to being interviewed by me. I'd love to interview him for my podcast and see what the process was like. What happened last year led him to decide to live authentically and openly as himself. And the word admitted. It's admitting it to yourself first and then just living openly. There's no need to admit anything to anyone. That's not what coming out is. But in the coming out process, out to you, as a sports agent that he knew back in the day to his fellow football players, to his fans, I'm sure he still has fans. I'm one of those lesbians that's not a huge football fan so I have no idea who he is. But I know the inner struggle that man has gone through to get to the point as a 40-year-old man and admit to himself that he's a gay man and then come out to the world.

What is LGBTQ Law?

I made it up to put it on my business card 13 years ago. And because it is the easiest way to describe my representing the LGBTQ community and all of the integrated and enmeshed practice areas that are involved in doing so. So, if you say that I'm a real estate attorney or I'm a corporate attorney, that there wasn't anything that fits specifically to say that I represent the LGBTQ community. But implicit in that is the practice areas that most people know of estate planning, family law, and everything that, that would entail from adoptions to disillusions, pre-marriage equality or if they're unmarried.

So, anything from disillusions to divorces, to adoptions. That all falls under family law. Will's trust estates, last will, and testament, estate planning, LGBT name changes. Not just transgender name changes but also for millennial couples who are now getting married and instead of just choosing one last name, they're doing a hyphenated version of the last name of both last names. And so, a lot of name changes around that. So, all of that is sort of inclusive in LGBTQ law. Within family law, we're also changing the face of premarital agreements and postnuptial agreements.

What are the practices within the LGBTQ Law?

That's everything that I just talked about. This includes estate planning and family law. Within family law, we have adoption, premarital agreements, postnuptial agreements, and name changes. And then for my clients, they own businesses and real estate so I have a lot of contractor developer clients, CEOs of non-profits, CEOs of small to mid-sized businesses, anything under 5 million. Anything above 10 million, they would need someone on staff.

We also have employment law, which is a very large area of law to handle. Within just a year ago with Bostock and the Supreme Court case, it now says we can no longer be fired for being gay at least on a federal level. We may not have state protections but we have federal protections that from a discrimination standpoint employment law on the plaintiff side, not just the owner of the business.

Listen to Angela Giampolo on Out Boss Talk Now!

If you want to watch my podcast, it's called Out Boss Talk. it's geared predominantly towards business owners so LGBTQ entrepreneurs and business owners. It's through iHeart media so it's the only LGBTQ podcast that's distributed and promoted by iHeart media which is awesome. They're great. They're wonderful.

So, season one is under wraps at the moment and we'll be dropping the next season fairly soon. Previous shows that I've had speak out was a previous show that I've had. So, I've had radio

shows and in the past. If you Google me, those previous shows can pop up and again. They are interview-based style but this one, in particular, is going to be geared towards LGBTQ entrepreneurs and just people that are living out and like a boss.

Giampolo Law Group Plans On Spreading Throughout the Country

I'm spreading out all throughout the United States. I haven't officially announced it yet because I'm still in the midst of getting licensed in other states before I can actually say that. I have to be licensed before I can say that I'm actively practicing as an estate lawyer in these other states. But by March 2022, the goal is to be in at least 10 states and have the first-ever nationwide law firm geared solely towards the LGBTQ community.

It's going to be different for each state because laws are different for each one. It differs both in-laws as well as in the overall acceptance of the LGBTQ community. So, in June of 2022, I will be taking my nonprofit. It's called the Caravan of Hope and it's exactly what it sounds like.

Caravan of Hope is going into rural areas where the LGBTQ community is underserved and underrepresented especially bisexual-pansexual folks and elderly and youth individuals. The laws are different from state to state. As I said, we have federal employment protections but we definitely don't on a state-to-state level. We have states where we're not allowed to adopt and or be foster parents depending on the laws of that state.

So, there are state by state laws where how the LGBTQ community is treated is different but more so than that it's from an overall acceptance standpoint and whether someone in Mobile Alabama feels comfortable to reach out to a lawyer for or if a transgender person feels comfortable reaching out for a name change. How they'll be treated by the judge and how they'll be treated in the court system. That's where the advocacy piece comes in. That it's not so much the black letter of the law so much as the ways in which we're treated and considered legitimate equal counterparts.

Isn't it sad that it is labeled as LGBTQ law?

A lot of straight allies will say that we shouldn't have to identify it as estate planning LGBTQ and instead, it should just be estate planning. From my point of view, there's pride around it. I feel proud saying that LGBTQ law is a practice area because that is who I serve. Is it sad that the laws are desperate and different? Yes, absolutely. But from an estate planning perspective, we do have unique needs. We don't have the traditional get married everything down to a child.

My estate planning for my LGBTQ clients involves a lot more charities than my average straight. It also involves a lot more pet trust than my average straight couple. We don't have children as

often as my straight couples. So, it is different. Just purely because we're different and there's nothing wrong with that. But obviously yes, from the ways in which we're discriminated against is clearly sad. But I own the term LGBTQ law with pride despite the fact that it came about 13 years ago when things were much different.

Need help in planning your estates? Reach out now!

Giampolo Law Group is so passionate about estate planning they went so far as to trademark where *'there's a will there's a way.'* A properly structured trust will avoid putting your loved ones through the expensive lengthy and emotionally draining court probate process. Most importantly, you can prevent some or all of your assets from being subject to estate law upon your death allowing more of your estate to be enjoyed by your loved ones.

The marriage equality ruling drastically changed the legal landscape for LGBTQ couples and Giampolo Law Group is experienced with what those changes mean for estate planning. Giampolo Law Group can help you establish or reorganize your estate plan to address your concerns while accounting for the complexities in state and federal laws.

The attorneys at Giampolo Law Group are experienced in assisting clients with estate planning specifically in preparing or revising wills, trusts, and other ancillary documents such as powers of attorney and hospital visitation forms. Contact Giampolo Law Group today for a complimentary consultation (215) 645-2415.

Remember where there's a will there's a way.