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Gloria James-Civetta

Amarjit Singh Sidhu
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; YbYgjG\Yb

Q. Are you Specially Trained in Divorce Law?

Ms Gloria James-Civetta is a certified Associate **Mediator** at the State Courts of Singapore and the Singapore Mediation Centre (SMC). She is a Harvard Law School trained Mediator and one of 19 lawyers in the SMC panel of trained **Collaborative Family Practice** lawyers.

Being trained in these areas helps our company provide additional services to our clients. This allows clients to consider various options and avenues in taking their case forward. With our track record and experience we have successfully mediated cases and achieved successful settlement for cases under the collaborative route.

As a member of the Law Society of Singapore's Family Law Practice Committee, Gloria was closely involved in the ongoing changes to the Women's Charter (Cap 353) and the Family Courts of Singapore Mandatory Counselling and Mediation Project. She is also a family law Tutor at the Singapore Institute of Legal Education.

Q. How Many Years Have You Been Handling Divorce Cases For?

Ms James has been representing both Local and Expat clients for **19 years** and has presided over:

- *High Net worth Local and Expat contested divorces in Singapore*
- *Cross-border Divorces involving various jurisdictions – UK, Australia, USA, Europe, Indonesia, China, S.E. Asian Countries*

She has been profiled in publications ranging from The Straits Times to the Singapore Women's Weekly and is a regular contributor to various other newspaper columns related to Family and Criminal law in Singapore.

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Q. What is Your Philosophy in Handling Divorce Cases?

Our philosophy is that every client's case is important to us. Simply put, our duty is to dispense advice based on law and our extensive years of experience and previous precedents.

Q. How Many of Your Cases go to Trial?

Cases only go through the litigation route (trial) only when all other avenues have failed. Trial is always the last resort as we are mindful over costs. Sometimes we take cases to trial when the other party is very unreasonable and make demands that warrant a judge to make a court order.

What we strive to achieve is a fair balance and the best possible results for our clients in the alternative avenues and trial process if needed.

Q. Are there any Changes in Singapore Divorce Law that Could Affect My Case?

To be implemented in October 2014, the new Family Justice Act, seeks to transform the family justice system to lessen the anguish and hurt for family members.

The new Family Justice Courts will comprise of:

- a) *Family Court*
- b) *Youth Court – replaces the current Juvenile Court*
- c) *High Court (Family Division) – will hear appeal cases from the Family and Youth Courts*

The new Family Justice Courts will specialise in family and child law, providing expertise for both parties to reach a fair and equitable settlement.

Modification of existing procedures and practices:

1. *A new judge-led approach – A judge will be appointed to each case, and will direct the case moving forward. This is in contrast to the old adversarial approach, where lawyers on opposing teams are primarily responsible for bringing matters forward. This aims to serve the needs and sensitivities of both parties (not merely one), and to benefit the family as a whole.*

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2. *New Central Registry* – the Registry will manage all cases.

- a. Urgent cases where violence and family safety issues are involved may be placed on an expedited track.
- b. Cases will be handled in accordance with their requirements, in recognition of the fact that each case comes with its unique set of facts and circumstances.

3. *Family Justice Rules committee for a more efficient process.*

A contested divorce may often be a lengthy one. Multiple court documents need to be filed, with parties exchanging complicated affidavits several times. The Family Justice Rules committee will play a role in simplifying court forms, reducing the length of affidavits and developing templates to ensure that only relevant information is presented.

This will reduce the time spent by lawyers in double-checking all pertinent details and result in lower lawyer's and court fees. Also, fewer Pre-Trial Conferences (PTCs) will mean that the divorce process will be brought forward and can be concluded more quickly.

Where a child is involved

The court may appoint a registered medical practitioner, psychologist, counsellor, social worker or mental health professional to examine and assess the child with the function of preparing expert evidence for use in those proceedings. The child's state of mind and well-being may be considered, with the professional healthcare or social worker providing help and support for the child during this difficult period.

More changes may be introduced in time to come. The Family Justice Act is only the first step in strengthening the social support network for families in difficulty. As we progress in time, the law evolves. Thus as lawyers, we keep ourselves apprised with the latest developments and latest court decisions that can affect a case, so that we can always provide the best advice to our client.

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Q. Is My First Consultation With One of Your Lawyers Free?

During your first consultation, you will speak directly with one of our family lawyers **FREE** of charge.

Our lawyer will:

- a) Explain how the divorce process works
- b) Address your questions and concerns
- c) Explain the choices you have
- d) Agree with you on a strategy or path to follow.
- e) A lawyer will be assigned to you based on your personal needs so that you can obtain the best possible outcome in your case.

This article was written by Gloria James-Civetta.

Contact Our Experienced Divorce Lawyers

Lawyers at *Gloria James-Civetta & Co* are family law specialists who understand Singapore law and how to protect your rights throughout the divorce or mediation process.

Whether you are facing uncontested divorce, litigation or simply just want to divorce, we have the expertise you need to protect your interests and your future.

You may Contact us by calling 63370469 and asking to schedule a consultation with one of our Family Lawyers.