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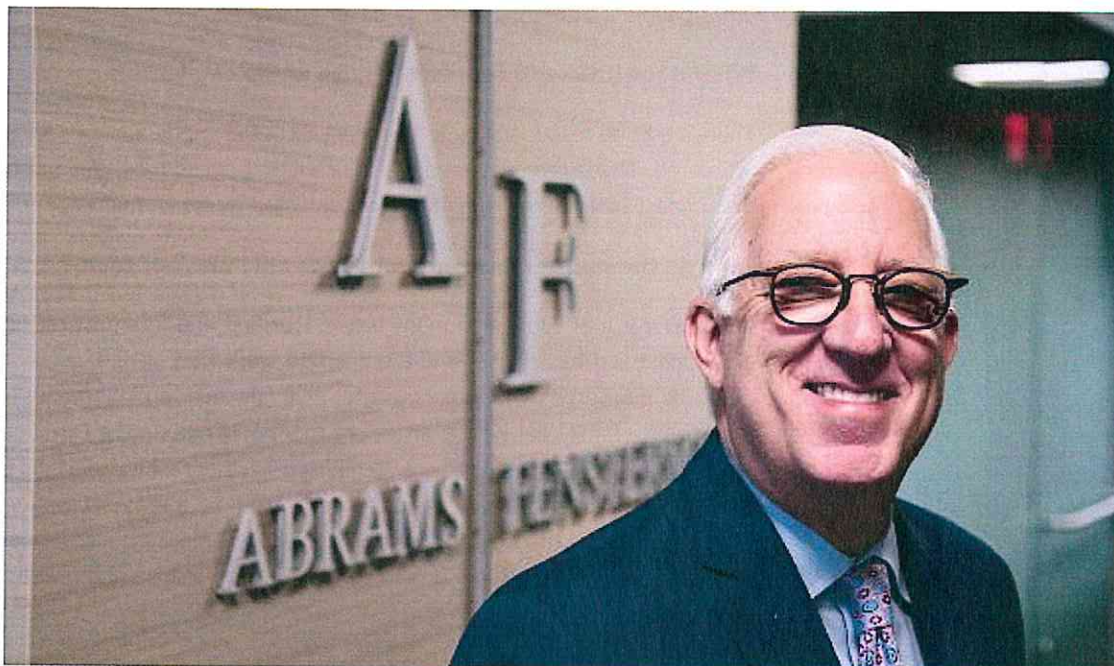


Photo by Judy Walker

Executive Profile: Bob Abrams

By: Adina Genn | October 15, 2018 | 0

Bob Abrams, the cofounder and executive partner of Abrams Fensterman, which has offices in Lake Success, Long Island City, and New York City, has long advocated for victims' families. His clients include the family of Kathleen Durst, the deceased wife of Robert Durst, featured in the HBO mini-series "The Jinx." He is also considered an expert on health and elder law and has twice been invited to participate in the White House Conference on Aging, which takes place once a decade.

Now, Abrams is preparing to bring that expertise to attorneys across the nation at a time of aging baby boomers. Abrams spoke with LIBN about his work, and the role empathy plays in his practice.

Tell us about the cases you're working on now.

I'm working on several cases right now representing the [families of] victims of murder to ensure that the justice on the civil side and criminal side.

How did you come to represent Kathleen Durst's family?

On the Durst case, Kathie was murdered on Jan. 31, 1982. Many years later we did some work for Kathie Her mother was a client for estate planning. That was probably in the 1990s. We had no idea this was the a murder victim, but many years later the family decided it was time to overcome all the different tactics in the case [that Robert Durst] tried to cover up.

What were some of the complications?

He used his resources to berate the family.... He lied. He said he loved Kathleen and had nothing to do with murder ... In an interview with a Los Angeles prosecutor, he took the Fifth Amendment. What we've done confirmed that Kathie was never pronounced dead... she was treated as a missing person. The first victor she was] declared dead on the date of her disappearance. Now we are bringing action to forfeit his interest in Kathie's estate.

What's it like to work on these kinds of cases?

There's no such thing as closure for family members of murder victims. They spend the rest of their lives [in fact] that someone they loved was brutally murdered – in all cases for no valid reason. Some are random other people it's greed. The family never recovers.

What does it take to represent these kinds of clients?

There's a huge responsibility to the client to get as many answers as possible as to why their loved one was murdered. These cases take up a significant amount of time, but I also spend my time working on litigation that impact older persons, and family-contested guardian matters and estate litigation.

How do the murder cases affect the people on your team?

The reality is it affects us on many levels. Our first and foremost role is to serve and act as attorneys The emotional toll it has on me, and the people I work with, is very great. In the Frankowski murder [a case in which a man was murdered by a family member allegedly over an inheritance], not only does it make no sense – not only the family but whatever history the family has. In the Durst case it affects multiple generations – mother, siblings, children and grandchildren. They are all wonderful people who have to deal with this horrible tragedy for the rest of their lives. It leaves a void. As a lawyer I very much understand that my legal advice have to represent their clients, but the difference for me is [is to witness] them putting forth legal arguments that the clients, which they know or should know were not true and cause additional pain to the families that I represent.

How about the toll for you and your colleagues on a personal level?

The bottom line is it makes me work harder. We just work harder ... to get answers for our clients [And realize] how lucky and fortunate you are for the good things in your life, for your family and the people that are important to you.

Tell us about your firm.

I want to say how proud I am about Abrams Fensterman The attorneys I work with on a day-in, day-out are incredibly talented and dedicated – especially the younger attorneys who make sure I remain vibrant and current with what's going on in the world because they're so smart and capable. They challenge me and cause me to rise to the highest levels that I possibly can.

What's your involvement with the Aging and Longevity Law Institute and Aging and Longevity program for the Touro Law Center?

I'm working on launching a master's program [designed for lawyers interested in aging and longevity law] in January 2019. The demographics are such that individuals who are 50 years or older comprise 100 million Americans. A major percent live longer and deal with legal issues that the prior generations didn't have to want to teach lawyers and provide tools to advocate for their clients, for planning and litigation It takes a practitioner to mitigate all these issues and make sure their clients are protected We want to take the aging and longevity law to a whole new level ... It will be a national program expected to attract practitioners around the country.

There's an online component?

We developed a unique approach to provide material online and also on an interactive basis. A lot of the content was personally created on experience I've had over the last 30 years.

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