



Zachary Carter encourages his daughter, Chandler, who shares his interest in the piano. It's one instrument that's important to him—the other is the law.

Law & gospel

For Zachary Carter, the two are 'seamlessly embedded'

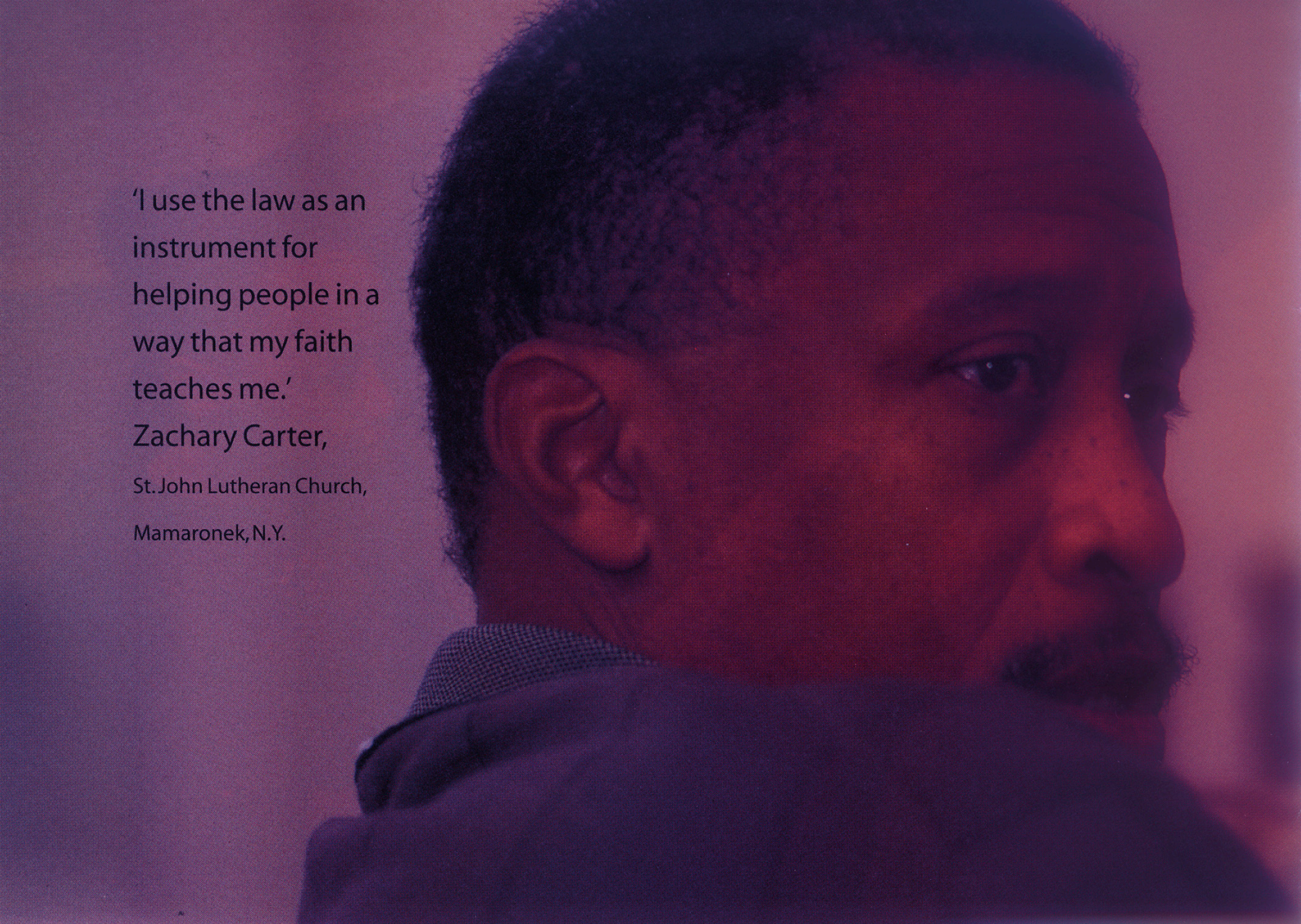
The baby grand piano is the first thing you see in the living room of Zachary Carter's 90-year-old house in New Rochelle, N. Y., and it's played a big part in his family's life.

Zach's mother gave him piano lessons when he was young. Now he watches as Chandler, his 6-year-old daughter who has been taking lessons for more than two years, races to give an impromptu concert. She has only a few minutes between getting her pic-

ture taken and going with friends to see *Pokemon: The First Movie*, but she manages to squeeze in *Ode to Joy* and a few other standards. Zach and Rosalind, his wife, surround Chandler on the bench, quietly encouraging her and then clapping at

By Heidi Ernst

Photos by Jonathan M. Ernst



'I use the law as an instrument for helping people in a way that my faith teaches me.'

Zachary Carter,

St. John Lutheran Church,

Mamaronek, N.Y.

the finale.

But one instrument is even more important to Zachary Carter: the law. Throughout his 25-year career as a judge and lawyer, Carter has tried to express his concern for social justice by getting involved with communities in need and taking on cases of criminal justice and civil liberties.

During his six years as the U.S. attorney for New York's Eastern district, he oversaw 160 lawyers in thousands of cases both locally anonymous and nationally notorious. Among the notorious was the trial of New York City policeman Justin Volpe, who was convicted in the assault of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima.

Thoughts of a career in public service began when Carter was growing up in Washington, D.C., in the 1960s—the time of Kennedy and

King, revolution and riots. Carter's Roman Catholic parents were active in their local civic association and organizations such as the PTA. Because of the example they set and the values they gave him, Carter says he always assumed he would work for the government or in public service.

Degree of service

He did his undergraduate work at Cornell University—where he seized a building with other students in protest of a cross-burning on the Ithaca, N.Y., campus, a fact often included in stories about him to demonstrate his “radical past.” And then he went to the New York University School of Law where he received his degree in 1975.

“My law degree provided a chance to serve in a variety of ways,” he says. “And it has offered a great op-

portunity to help communities solve crime problems and related social problems that tend to feed crime.”

In each of his jobs Carter has worked on different kinds of cases—but all with that mission of serving. He was first appointed an assistant U.S. attorney for the Eastern district, where he prosecuted Medicare frauds, housing discrimination and federal civil rights violations. He worked briefly in private practice on First Amendment issues. Then he moved back to the Brooklyn courts as an adviser to judges and manager of litigation divisions.

For six years Carter served as a judge. Next President Clinton appointed him U.S. attorney back in the Eastern district—the first African American to hold the post.

As U.S. attorney, Carter's office prosecuted a range of cases. Some

Colleagues and adversaries alike agree that Carter's commitment to his beliefs are evident in his work. "Zach has been motivated by the best interests in law enforcement and things of justice, fairness and equality," says Loretta Lynch, who worked with Carter and took over as U.S. attorney for the Eastern district. "He has an overarching commitment to public service. He's quiet, but he's also passionate about the things he believes in."

Even lawyer Marvyn Kornberg, who defended Volpe and tried cases before Carter when he was a judge, calls Carter "conscientious."

Low-profile ways

Carter is also well-known, as it were, for keeping a low profile—almost unheard of in a city where public figures fight daily for face time.

He moved further into obscurity when he entered private practice last July, but he misses each of his previous positions in turn. "There's no one job in which you can accomplish everything you'd like to," he says.

"But all the jobs in different ways provided different opportunities."

As a litigation partner at the New York City office of Minneapolis law firm Dorsey & Whitney, Carter will need to focus on generating business, especially for the white-collar crime group for which he is the co-chair. But he will also perform some public service through the firm's required pro bono work.

By switching to private practice Carter not only increased his family's bottom line, he also succeeded in shortening his commute.

In the past six months he has added eight years to his life, he says, by taking a 30-minute train ride to Grand Central Terminal rather than driving one hour each way through Manhattan and Brooklyn traffic (dropping his family off at school and work in the process). Now he and his

wife, Rosalind Clay Carter, vice president of human resources for A&E cable network, have even met for lunch a few times and ridden the train home together.

In his office the father in Carter is apparent. A couple of months after moving in, boxes still lined the walls and pictures of Chandler were among the few items hanging above them. The family's house, where friends and neighbors come and go, is definitely kid-oriented too, with other pictures of Chandler adorning the walls and a Connect Four game sitting on a windowsill next to pottery and fine artwork. Zach, Roz and Chandler spend a lot of time together, especially on the weekends, when they might be found antiquing or attending concerts or the theater.

The couple belong to St. John Lutheran Church, Mamaroneck, N.Y., and take part in adult forum and Sunday school classes. Zach also plays music occasionally.

Roz, who grew up with Lutheran and Baptist parents in Alabama, keeps busy as a member of council, worship and music committee, and altar guild.

Zach stays fairly anonymous in the 500-member congregation.

Marvin Henk, pastor of St. John, says, "The president of Nabisco attends church here too. He's just Jim to us, and Zachary is just Zach."

And just as Carter's jobs have been a part of him but not something he has called attention to at church or other places, his beliefs are "seamlessly embedded," he says. "My faith has been the vehicle from which I learned values and [it] activates everything I do. I'm certainly conscious of using the law as an instrument for helping people in a way that my faith teaches me I should."

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had high profiles. He successfully litigated reputed mafia boss Vincent "the Chin" Gigante and the two men who stabbed Yankel Rosenbaum in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, in 1991.

Other projects weren't so well-known (stopping no-name crack gangs and helping inner-city communities organize to deal with violent crime). Yet even though Volpe/Louima got possibly the most press coverage of any case in the country in 1999 and Carter reportedly spent nearly every day of the trial watching his prosecutors from the third row, he says no case has been more significant than any other.

An "instrument" again comes to mind when reflecting on Carter's career—this time the one in the first line of a prayer attributed to St. Francis: "Lord, make us instruments of your peace."