

## Female Powerbrokers Q&A: Munger Tolles' Kristin Myles



*Law360, New York (March 21, 2014, 12:25 PM ET)* -- Kristin Linsley Myles is a litigation partner in the San Francisco office of Munger Tolles & Olson LLP. She served as law clerk for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia in 1989-90 and for Judge Douglas H. Ginsburg of the D.C. Circuit in 1988-89. She has been named among California's "Top Women Lawyers" by the Daily Journal.

In January 2008, Myles was appointed by the U.S. Supreme Court to serve as a special master in an original case before the court, *South Carolina v. North Carolina*, Original No. 138. She presided over the proceedings in the case until it settled in early 2011. She has spoken frequently on the issue of original jurisdiction and water allocation disputes between states.

### **Q: How did you break into what many consider to be an old boys' network?**

A: The key to being taken seriously when you are just starting out is to really know your subject matter. The more you can focus on the substance of the matter, whether it is the client's problem, or a particular issue the court wants addressed, the more people will take you seriously. If you can demonstrate that you know the material very well, other lawyers and clients will look to you for guidance. In short, focus on the substance, and know the issues better than anyone else.

### **Q: What are the challenges of being a woman at a senior level within a law firm?**

A: The great challenge of being at a senior level is that so many women have chosen to leave the big law firms — either to go in-house, or to join smaller firms, or to follow alternative career paths — so there are fewer female colleagues as you get more senior. Some solutions are to connect with those senior women who are in the firm, become a mentor to more junior women, and seek out senior female colleagues outside of your individual law firm. Thankfully, there is a great deal of effort now within the legal community to bring women together.

### **Q: Describe a time you encountered sexism in your career and tell us how you handled it.**

A: Early in my career, I worked on a case for large aerospace company. We needed to interview an older man who had been a senior legal executive for the company at the time it entered into the relevant contracts that formed the basis for the case. He was a man of the old school and not used to seeing women in charge of cases.

When he encountered me, he was taken aback by having a young woman interviewing him and apparently leading the development of the case. Then he announced that he had reviewed our

complaint and that it was the best complaint he had ever read. He asked who wrote it, and when he learned that I did, I gained instant credibility with him. After that, he and I were on the same page, sharing the same tasks and goals. As I said earlier, the best way to build credibility is to know the material better than anyone else.

**Q: What advice would you give to an aspiring female attorney?**

A: Besides being the master of your material, stand up for what you believe in. Don't be shy. Sit at the table. Come in and participate. That doesn't mean you have to talk for no reason, but share your opinion. At Munger Tolles, I was fortunate because all attorneys are encouraged to participate. Whether you are an associate or a partner, we want to hear from you; we want to hear from anyone who has something worth saying.

**Q: What advice would you give to a law firm looking to increase the number of women in its partner ranks?**

A: There are two things law firms can do to increase the number of women partners. First, be sure to eliminate even subtle biases. Make sure when you listen to a female attorney, you are not hearing her or judging her differently because of even a subtle gender bias. Second, firms need to be flexible about part-time schedules and maternity leave. Those things are here to stay, and firms must get used to dealing with the ebb and flow of people's lives.

**Q: Outside your firm, name an attorney you admire and tell us why.**

A: Lynda Guild Simpson at Boeing is masterful at managing complex and challenging litigation projects. She can juggle the complicated internal client considerations as well as the issues facing outside counsel. Lynda makes sure everything gets done in a way that results in top-quality work with the client's interest being well represented.

Renee DuBord Brown, who was at Tessera and is now at Motorola Mobility, has an amazing ability to manage extraordinarily complex matters, including difficult patent cases. In a series of such cases our firm was handling, she did an incredible job managing the numerous substantive patent issues as well as complex case management issues, and did it all with a tough but pragmatic style that everyone appreciated.

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