

WOMEN, INFLUENCE & POWER IN LAW AWARDS

RECOGNIZING TRANSFORMATIVE LEGAL LEADERSHIP

Our 2019 special report honors women who have demonstrated a commitment to advancing the empowerment of women in law.

law firm honorees

MIRIAM KIM

MUNGER, TOLLES & OLSON

Partner
Since 2012

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

WHAT WAS YOUR ROUTE TO THE TOP? I am a partner at Munger, Tolles & Olson, and my practice focuses on complex business litigation and internal investigations with an emphasis on trade secrets, marketing and false advertising claims, and technology disputes. My route to the top is a story filled with family, mentors and sponsors who supported me in each phase of my career. I was born in Los Angeles to a Korean American immigrant family. My grandfather was persecuted for his Christian faith during World War II, and my father marched for justice in the wake of the L.A. civil uprisings. Because of my family, I developed a passion to open the doors of justice wider for diverse communities. After graduating from U.C. Berkeley School of Law, I began the first phase of my career in Boston at Goodwin Procter and as a law clerk to Judge Levin H. Campbell, retired, of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. At Goodwin, I was fortunate to join a trial team representing Applied Materials. Not only did I experience the thrill of a favorable jury verdict, but I learned the importance of having good mentors. In 2005, I joined the San Francisco office of Munger, Tolles & Olson and looked for new mentors. This led to a phase of complex cases, trials and pro bono work with top lawyers like Greg Stone, Jerry Roth and Carolyn Luedtke, who continue to mentor and sponsor me today. The next phase of my career was marked by the births of my sons. With the support of my husband and colleagues, I worked a reduced-hour schedule and focused on “local cases for local clients.” This approach enabled me to develop relationships with technology companies in Silicon Valley, serve as a community leader and make partner while working part-time. I wouldn’t have made it through this phase without the support of our late managing partner Sandra Seville-Jones and the women leaders of the Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area (the largest local Asian American bar



association in the country). As my sons grew older, I began to expand my practice and take on more leadership roles, including as president of AABA. Inspired by role models like Malcolm Heinicke, Jeff Bleich and Dale Minami, I looked for opportunities to help others advance to the highest ranks of the legal profession. I am proud that I was particularly active in efforts to open the doors of justice wider by diversifying the California judiciary. I am not sure where the next phase of my career will take me, but I know that there will be family, mentors and sponsors supporting me along the way.

WHAT IS THE BEST LEADERSHIP ADVICE YOU’VE GIVEN, OR RECEIVED, AND WHY DO YOU THINK IT WAS EFFECTIVE? Look for opportunities to lead cases and organizations that you are passionate about. I use the 1 a.m. test. Is this a cause I’m willing to work on at 1 a.m.? If so, it is likely a cause that I can inspire and mobilize others to join.

LOOKING BACK, WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN WHEN YOU STARTED OUT IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION? I wish I had known how to advocate for myself more effectively. ■