

RIVERSIDE LAWYER

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MAGAZINE

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Recipient of the 2019 Saint Thomas More Award

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and Raised Voices to Injustice**

**International Sex Trafficking and Money
Laundering Rings in Southern California**



The Official Publication of the Riverside County Bar Association



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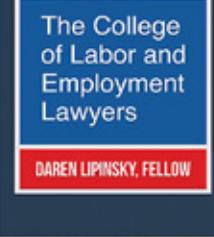
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RIVERSIDE LAWYER

MAGAZINE

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MISSION STATEMENT

Established in 1894

The Riverside County Bar Association, established in 1894 to foster social interaction between the bench and bar, is a professional organization that provides continuing education and offers an arena to resolve various problems that face the justice system and attorneys practicing in Riverside County.

RCBA Mission Statement

The mission of the Riverside County Bar Association is:
To serve our members, our communities, and our legal system.

Membership Benefits

Involvement in a variety of legal entities: Lawyer Referral Service (LRS), Riverside Legal Aid, Fee Arbitration, Client Relations, Dispute Resolution Service (DRS), Barristers, Leo A. Deegan Inn of Court, Mock Trial, State Bar Conference of Delegates, Bridging the Gap, and the RCBA - Riverside Superior Court New Attorney Academy.

Membership meetings monthly (except July and August) with keynote speakers, and participation in the many committees and sections.

Eleven issues of *Riverside Lawyer* published each year to update you on State Bar matters, ABA issues, local court rules, open forum for communication, and timely business matters.

Social gatherings throughout the year: Installation of RCBA and Barristers Officers dinner, Law Day activities, Good Citizenship Award ceremony for Riverside County high schools, and other special activities, Continuing Legal Education brown bag lunches and section workshops. RCBA is a certified provider for MCLE programs.

The Riverside Lawyer is published 11 times per year by the Riverside County Bar Association (RCBA) and is distributed to RCBA members, Riverside County judges and administrative officers of the court, community leaders and others interested in the advancement of law and justice. Advertising and announcements are due by the 6th day of the month preceding publications (e.g., October 6 for the November issue). Articles are due no later than 45 days preceding publication. All articles are subject to editing. RCBA members receive a subscription automatically. Annual subscriptions are \$30.00 and single copies are \$3.50.

Submission of articles and photographs to Riverside Lawyer will be deemed to be authorization and license by the author to publish the material in the Riverside Lawyer.

The material printed in the Riverside Lawyer does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the RCBA, the editorial staff, the Publication Committee, or other columnists. Legal issues are not discussed for the purpose of answering specific questions. Independent research of all issues is strongly encouraged.

CALENDAR

August

- 3 **Zoom**
Noon
Civil Litigation Roundtable with Judge Craig Riemer
MCLE
- 11 **Zoom**
Noon – 1:15 p.m.
Civil Litigation Section
Speakers: Richard Cohn and Atticus Wegman of Aitken Aitken Cohn
Topic: “Cross Examination of Experts—Setting Them Up and Knocking Them Down”
MCLE

SAVE THE DATE

September

- 26 **RCBA Annual Installation of Officers Ceremony**
2 p.m.
Please watch your mail for invitations.

Please see the calendar on the RCBA website (riversidecountybar.com) for information on how to access the Zoom meetings.

EVENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
For the latest calendar information please visit the RCBA's website at riversidecountybar.com.



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(September 1, 2020 - August 31, 2021)

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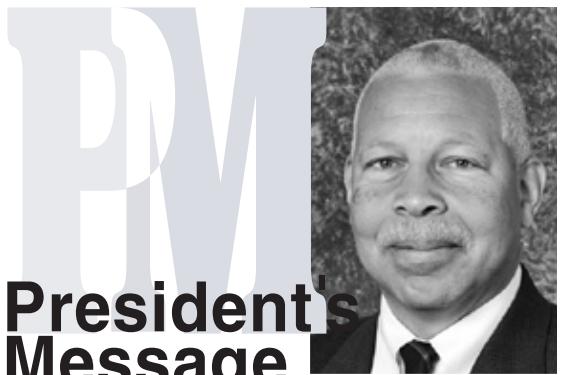
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President's Message

by Jack Clarke, Jr.

My Final Thoughts During a Time of Cataclysmic Change in Our Country, Which I Hope Is Just The Beginning or, Put Another Way,

BLACK LIVES MATTER!

But in view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens The sure guaranty of the peace and security of each race is the clear, distinct, unconditional recognition by our governments, national and state, of every right that inheres in civic freedom, and of the equality before the law of all citizens of the United States without regard to race.

-HARLAN, John Marshall, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537, 559-560 (1896).

In questions of power, then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution.

-JEFFERSON, Thomas, *Resolutions*, November, 1798, in *The Complete Jefferson* (assembled by Saul K. Padover, New York; Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc., 1943), p. 133.

This is my last column as president of this venerable association and, incredibly, for reasons completely separate from an ongoing international pandemic, I cannot in recent memory, recall a time of such tumult. Last month, I watched a sworn officer of the law slowly crush the life out of a fellow human

being in broad daylight, before multiple witnesses, while the witnesses were recording the act and pleading with the officer to stop what he was doing. The man who was killed was a black man.

That same week, I saw a video of a Harvard educated black man simply ask a Caucasian woman to leash her dog in a park. Within seconds, the woman first threatened and then proceeded to call the police and tell the 911 operator that an African American man was threatening her life and that she needed the immediate help of the police. How could she have thought so quickly to try and weaponize the police force against a man of color who was speaking in a civil tone to her? Those incidents, along with the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and Rayshard Brooks, in such a short time frame, were almost more than I could withstand.

How could this happen? Three of the incidents concerned members of our community, who like us, swore to support and uphold the Constitution. Then it occurred to me that perhaps, we have reached a point in our society where, performing a ritual such as taking an oath to support the Constitution is really just an empty act mumbled by would-be "peace" officers, and perhaps would-be "attorneys," who just want to have a title to provide them with some kind of thin smear of "official" legitimacy. But I did not want to believe that. So I asked our Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco and the City of Riverside's Chief of Police Larry Gonzalez to share their perspectives on the oath to uphold the Constitution and what it really means. I asked them because in our current environment, with calls for defunding our police forces becoming even louder, I wanted to know their thoughts at this pivotal moment. Here is Sheriff Bianco's reply:

Growing up, I had no idea that my career path would require me to solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States and Constitution of the State of California. As fate would have it, my favorite classes in high school and college were history and civics classes. That first oath in 1993, as a deputy with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, came with the burden of understanding the gravity of the words I had just repeated.

Our Constitution provided the bricks and the mortar that built the greatest country in the world. I swore to protect that document, the direction it provides, and what it represents against all enemies, foreign and domestic. A document meant to provide We the People all of that safety, security, and freedoms found no other place in the world. Knowing history is important to understand that our founding fathers, eleven years before drafting our Constitution, had already declared and memorialized that ALL men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

As I reaffirmed my oath upon taking the Office of Sheriff in January of 2019, I again realized the burden and gravity of that oath. Today, we are being forced to realize that many men and women before us failed to realize the mandate contained in this oath. Was it just a formality to them? Did they understand the words they were repeating? Do they truly have the wherewithal to support and defend our Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic? As Sheriff of Riverside County, a Constitutional

Officer, I have an obligation and a duty to live up to my oath. The residents of Riverside County, ALL of them, surely deserve it.

Here is Chief Gonzalez's reply:

It's been over 27 years since I first raised my right hand and swore to uphold the Constitution of the United States, and the State of California, as a peace officer. Even as I stood there completely inexperienced, as a young academy graduate, the gravity and importance of that act was not lost on me. I took that oath in front of my fellow officers, my family and friends, and chiefs and sheriffs of law enforcement agencies throughout the region. That night, I also recited the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics. Among several important promises, I swore to respect the rights of all men to liberty, equality and justice.

In my current position, I now have the pleasure of conducting the swear-in ceremonies for every officer hired by the Riverside Police Department. Each time, I watch these young men and women fill with pride as they recite the words of the oath, I find myself still humbled by its meaning. And I feel proud. I'm proud of how far we've come, and I'm proud to honor our fallen by never forgetting to live the words of that oath every time we wear the badge. Even in these trying times, I find solace in the knowledge that the incredible majority of our community trusts us to keep them safe, without reservation. And the incredible majority of officers and deputies throughout this great nation fulfill their duties with bravery and integrity, never breaking their oath.

The similarly of their viewpoints was striking and poignant. As a point of reference, when we became attorneys, we said these, or substantially similar, words:

I solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of California, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of an attorney and counselor at law to the best of my knowledge and ability. As an officer of the court, I will strive to conduct myself at all times with dignity, courtesy and integrity.

I would ask that each of us ask ourselves if we could recite those words now and really know beyond any doubt that we could uphold that oath truly to support the Constitution. This Country, so far, has been unable to expel the poison of racial hatred and division. But this time, at least to me, it feels like something broke. The peaceful protests that have occurred throughout the world suggest that we just might be trying to turn a corner. Maybe we can do it this time. Maybe these recent deaths and horrible images, will

force us to confront and exile the demons of not just racial intolerance and bigotry, but of all irrational intolerance. But such a change will be excruciatingly hard. I remember about twenty years ago, when I was serving on the Riverside Mayor's Police Use of Force Review Panel, I had an occasion to talk with one of the deputy chiefs of police. I cannot recall his name, but I asked him if there were additional tests or screenings the Riverside Police Department could use to vet police applicants. I do not remember his exact words, but he told me something close to this:

Jack, our biggest challenge in recruiting is that we can only hire from the human race.

We have choices as we go forward. We can choose to really and honestly look at ourselves. I tell my children that the only thing in life you really have even a chance of controlling is "yourself." So I want to be clear that when I say we need to look at ourselves, I am not saying we need to point fingers. We need, each of us, to remember, we swore to support the Constitution of the United States of America which means, if we each are true to our oath, that this will have to become a country in which **Black Lives Matter** – and in which, derivatively, every Human Life Matters.

As I take my leave, I want to thank the entire Riverside County Bar Association Board of Directors for their hard work this year. Those Board Members are:

Sophia Choi, President-Elect

Neil Okazaki, Vice President

Lori Myers, CFO

Kelly Moran, Secretary

Erica Alfaro, Director-at-Large

Megan Demshki, Director-at-Large

Mark Easter, Director-at-Large

Chris Johnson, Director-at-Large

Jeff Van Wagenen, Past President and

Paul Lin, Barristers President

It has been one of the highlights of my life to work with such able and committed people and I want especially to thank Sophia and Neil for their outstanding leadership on multiple initiatives.

I also want to thank Charlene Nelson and the entire staff of the Association. I think the phase "they worked tirelessly" is sometimes used too much, but in their case it is true and accurate.

Finally, with assistance of the company Apris, under the supervision of Mr. Don Gilmartin, we were able to complete a fair sized renovation of the Bar Association Building even during a pandemic. Some of the "before" and "after" pictures will be posted on our Association website.

Please take care all and be well.

Jack Clarke, Jr. is a partner with the law firm of Best, Best & Krieger LLP.





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BARRISTERS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Paul Leonidas Lin



You Stay Classy Riverside Barristers

Seven thousand four hundred and seventy-one words. How do you measure, measure a year?¹ Well, a word count of the last 10 articles is one way.

As I close out the final months of my term as a lame duck president, I wanted to take this moment to express my gratitude.

First, a thank you to all who have attended our events this past year, the Barristers certainly would be purposeless without the continual support and engagement from our community. A personal thanks from me to those who have given me kind words on my silly monthly puff pieces. I certainly hope I was able to bring a smile or a chuckle, especially these last few months.

But, most importantly, I would like to acknowledge my board this year. They are the hard working men and women behind the scenes that made every event possible this year. Thank you Alex, Ankit, David, Goshi, Lauren, Megan, Mike, Patty, and Stuart for making every board meeting something to look forward to. I truly could not have asked for a better board.

In normal times, this would be the portion of the article where I introduce and welcome the following year's board. However, as they say, "Man Plans, God Laughs." The only person I can introduce now is Goushia Farook, who will be taking over the reins of the Barristers shortly. As for the rest of the new Barristers board...

Elections for 2020-2021 Barristers Board

To describe these last few months as tumultuous would be a masterpiece of an understatement. The Barristers have been carefully watching the back-and-forth changes in state regulations regarding the reopening of businesses. Given the fluidity of the situation and the desire to have the largest voter turnout possible, the Barristers have decided to hold the elections electronically.

Between **July 10 to July 20, 2020**, you can visit the Barrister's website to view the candidate's statements and vote for the 2020-2021 Barristers Board. Only Barristers who have attended at least two (2) events this past year are eligible to vote. Voting will be closed by end of business day on July 20, 2020.

¹ A riff off "Seasons of Love" from the musical *Rent*, for the uninitiated and bored.

Go to RiversideBarristers.org for more information.

Candidates for 2020-2021 Barristers Board

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Alejandro Barraza

Lauren M. Vogt

Member-at-Large:

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David P. Rivera

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Lauren M. Vogt

Brigitte M. Wilcox

In accordance with our bylaws, Goushia Farook and Paul Leonidas Lin will automatically assume the office of **president** and **immediate past president**, respectively, for the 2020-2021 term.

And maybe, just maybe, if the stars align and everything is right with the world, we may have one final Happy Hour at Retro Taco to celebrate the incoming board before they are officially sworn in. But, that is too unpredictable to plan this far out. Please keep in touch with us through our social media for any last minute events.

It certainly has been an extraordinary honor to serve as your Barristers president this past year. I am proud of everything that was accomplished this year and look forward to seeing everything that will be accomplished under Goshi's reign. As I conclude my final article, let me leave upon you these parting words from legendary musician, actor, and filmmaker O'Shea Jackson,² *Bye, Felicia.*

Follow Us!

Stay up to date with our upcoming events!

Website: RiversideBarristers.org

Facebook: Facebook.com/RCBABAARRISTERS/

Instagram: @RCBABAARRISTERS

Paul Leonidas Lin is an attorney at The Lin Law Office Inc. located in downtown Riverside where he practices exclusively in the area of criminal defense. He is a past president of the Asian Pacific American Lawyers of the Inland Empire (APALIE) and founding member of the newly formed Riverside County Criminal Defense Bar Association (RCCDBA). Paul can be reached at PLL@TheLinLawOffice.com or (951) 888-1398.



² Sometimes known by his stage name, Ice Cube.



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"Study at, or graduation from, this law school may not qualify a student to take the bar examination or to satisfy the requirements for admission to practice in jurisdictions other than California. A student intending to seek admission to practice law in a jurisdiction other than California should contact the admitting authority in that jurisdiction for information regarding the legal education requirements in that jurisdiction for admission to the practice of law."

My JOURNEY THROUGH THE GLASS CEILING

by Virginia M. Blumenthal

"No."

That was the consensus answer in the mid-1970s when, fresh from law school, I sought a job in the Riverside area.

"I'm sure you're going to be a very good attorney," a male attorney told me after a very long interview, "but unfortunately, our clients would never accept a woman attorney."

Undaunted, I applied at the district attorney's office, the public defender's office, and every major law firm in town.

They all said no. NO!!!!

So I hung out my own shingle, landed a string of family law cases, and parlayed hard work and lots of good luck into a burgeoning criminal defense practice. Blumenthal Law Offices, founded in 1975, was the first woman-owned law firm in the region.

Back then, judges, jurors, and other attorneys were often surprised to see female counsel in the courtroom. Sometimes, I felt invisible; other times, my competence stunned the stakeholders, who expected little or nothing from a woman attorney.

First, there was my unusual path to the law. Society at the time expected "girls" to pursue careers such as nursing, office work, stewardess, bank teller, or teaching. After earning bachelor's and master's degrees at CSU Northridge, I began teaching. I taught English, math and drama at Moreno Valley High School and became an adjunct instructor at Riverside City College. At both schools, I coached speech and debate.

One day I had an idea: If I took a legal research class, I could help my students build better arguments in their debate competition. When I inquired at Citrus Belt Law School, who had just opened their doors, I was told there were several prerequisites before I could take the legal research class, which was not being offered yet. These prerequisites were contracts, torts, and criminal law. Soon, three nights a week, I, the teacher, was a student myself. After the first year of law school, I had more classes I had to take and, finally, after the second year of law school was completed, I could take the much desired legal research class. After I completed the legal research class, I realized I had fallen in love with law. So I finished



law school, took the bar exam, was fortunate to have passed on my first attempt, and the search for a job commenced.

I laugh when I say that the only reason I have my own law firm is that I was the only one willing to hire me. When I first hung out my shingle, I did not realize that practicing law was also running a business.

Before long, criminal law had engaged my heart and mind; I loved the practice and challenge of defending the accused. I believe in our legal and constitutional rights. I appreciated criminal law for the same reason I enjoyed teaching: I felt I was making a difference.

Adapting to a new career posed no problem; raised in a military family, I had moved repeatedly and attended more than 20 schools before graduating from Polytechnic High in Riverside.

My parents were the world's greatest prosecution jurors. When one of my father's friends would say, "John, how could you allow your daughter to become a criminal defense attorney," he would wag his finger in their face and reply, "Now, you listen to me: I put

my life on the line and my fellow sailors gave their lives for the rights and freedoms that my daughter defends."

Only five years later, when Attorney Ralph Evan Brown, the newly elected president of the Riverside County Bar Association, asked me to be the keynote speaker at the 1980 annual installation of officers dinner, I was totally shocked!! Usually all installation of officers keynote speakers were distinguished individuals from major metropolitan areas. There had never been a woman keynote speaker. Attorney Brown had made arrangements for then California Secretary of State March Fong Eu to be the keynote speaker. Unfortunately, she had an emergency arise and was unable to attend. So Attorney Brown asked me!!! From March Fong Eu to Blumenthal!!!

That address entitled, "From Mini-skirts to Briefs," made an impression on the audience of male attorneys and opened some eyes and minds to my grit, moxie, and passion as a litigator. The title of the speech caused controversy by itself! The speech must have had some

impact because it helped raise my profile in the legal community.

For the next four decades, I tried many, many jury trials. I introduced mannequins in the courtroom as demonstrative evidence.

In 2019, I had the rare opportunity, for a trial attorney, to argue before the California Supreme Court. I am not an appellate attorney. The joy of the argument was that my opposing counsel was a former mock trial student of mine from 20 years ago.

Three months after oral argument in *People v. Aranda* (6 Cal.5th 1077), the justices issued a 6-1 decision in my client's favor. The ruling barred the Riverside County District Attorney's office from retrying Mr. Aranda on a charge rejected by a jury in 2011. Because the issue

had not been litigated for many years, the high court ruling made *People v. Aranda* a landmark case in California.

Now, many decades later, I lead a group of attorneys and staff devoted exclusively to the defense of the accused. Blumenthal Law Offices, based in Riverside, also features attorneys Jeff Moore, Brent Romney, and Heather Green along with administering the indigent defense contract in Riverside.

Outside of court and philanthropy community activities, I enjoy Neil Diamond, Rottweilers and basketball, as well as spending time with my four children, including Heather Green, and seven grandchildren. In 2018, for my 70th birthday, I took a bus full of girlfriends skydiving.

After all the times I heard "no" at the start of my career, I am blessed, honored and grateful that today, many people hear the name Blumenthal and say "yes."

Virginia M. Blumenthal is a trial attorney in Riverside, specializing in criminal law.



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THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE

by Maya Sophia Braslaw

This year marks the 100 year anniversary of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, which guaranteed American women the right to vote. This historic milestone presents the opportunity to reflect back on the 72 year fight that led to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment and its relevance to fights for equal rights today.

Since the founding of the United States, women were universally excluded from voting. Only when women began to fight against this restriction was their exclusion made clear. The movement for woman suffrage began in the Nineteenth century during the fight against slavery. When Elizabeth Cady Stanton joined the antislavery forces, she and Lucretia Mott agreed that the rights of women, as well as those of slaves, needed change.

Their fight began on July 19, 1848, when the first women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York, which was attended by 68 women and 32 men. At the Seneca Falls Convention, a declaration was issued that called for women suffrage and for the right of women to educational and employment opportunities. Quickly thereafter, the first national women's rights convention took place in Worcester, Massachusetts, with more than 1,000 in attendance. At another women's rights convention in 1851, Sojourner Truth delivered her memorable speech, "Ain't I a woman?" This speech would make the fight for the American women's right to vote one of the most diverse and inclusive groups of activists of this time period, consisting of both men and women of various races. Another convention held in New York in 1852, was the first joint venture between Stanton and suffragist leader Susan B. Anthony. Together, these two dynamic women led the American suffragist movement for the next 50 years.

In 1861, the Civil War began and the fight for women's rights was put on pause until the end of the war. As soon as the war ended, Stanton and Anthony formed the American Equal Rights Association, an organization for white and black women and men dedicated to the fight for equality. The first federal women's suffrage amend-



Susan B. Anthony
Everett Collection/Shutterstock

ment was introduced to Congress by Senator S.C. Pomeroy of Kansas in 1867, but was rejected. As the years went on, the women and men of America continued to fight for women's rights both at the federal and state level, even forming separate organizations to concentrate in each area.

The National Woman Suffrage Association was formed in 1869, with the objective of securing the ballot for women by an amendment to the Constitution. The American Woman Suffrage organization was founded by Lucy Stone in 1869, with the goal of securing woman suffrage amendments in the constitutions of various states. In 1890, the two organizations merged under the name National American Woman Suffrage Association and worked together for almost 30 years.

In 1871, the anti-suffrage party was founded by many people, including prominent women. This organization did not stop their fight. In 1872, Anthony registered and voted for Ulysses S. Grant in the presidential election. Anthony was arrested for voting and in defense argued that the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment entitled her to vote. This defense, however, was unsuccessful and she was convicted. So the long fight went on. By 1877, California Senator A.A. Sargent introduced the woman suffrage amendment into Congress that included the language, which would eventually become the Nineteenth Amendment.

Flash forward to 1913, the suffragists organized a parade in Washington D.C., which was the first public demonstration in the nation's capital for women's suffrage. In 1917, the United States entered World War I and Alice Paul, a very outspoken advocate for women's rights, was arrested at a demonstration along with others. They were all arrested, convicted, and treated terribly while incarcerated. The news about their treatment spread fast, and even with World War I still going on, President Woodrow Wilson announced that women's suffrage was needed as a war measure. In November 1918 when World War I had ended, women had acquired equal

suffrage with men in 15 states and both major political parties were committed to women suffrage.

As their fight came to a peak in 1919, the woman suffrage amendment, originally written by Anthony, was passed by the United States House of Representatives and the Senate. Wisconsin and Illinois were the first states to ratify the Amendment and Tennessee the 36th state. On August 26, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was adopted as law and proclaimed by the United States Secretary of State as being part of the Constitution of the United States.

The text of the Nineteenth Amendment reads as follows: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

Soon thereafter, the antisuffragist parties were disbanded. The long fight had proved successful. Through wars, imprisonment, and a lot of opposition, these advocates for change fought for what they believed in. Despite the many seeming failures of these women's journey to secure women's right to vote, the suffragists continued to spread their message of equality. They continued their fight for what they believed was right, even if their opinions were unpopular. It was no easy road. The laws did not change in a day, a week, a year, or even decades.

Historic fights for change do not happen overnight, but with perseverance, commitment, and passion. These women and men changed the history of the United States and created a better country for future generations. For 100 years, women and men had been fighting for women's suffrage. They had made speeches, signed petitions, marched in parades, and argued relentlessly that women, like men, deserved all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

In fights for equality today, there is a lot to learn from these indestructible women and men. Similar to many of our fights for change now, the women's rights movement faced much opposition and resistance, constantly being rejected by those in power and those who urged for change thrown in prison. But like the advocates for change today, they did not back down. They fought for what was right, even if it was progressive or radical. Giving women the right to vote was not a popular idea; often progressive movements are not popular.

There is also something to be said about the rise in the movement's success as it became more diverse. The women's suffrage movement was particularly diverse from the time it began. And because of that diversity, their suffering was heard more clearly. The suffragists

did not discriminate, even against the men who chose to join them. They taught the future generations that they are stronger together, and only through unity and togetherness would the women of the United States be able to gain enough power to change the law. When the country needed change, there were those who were willing to speak out for the cause and push back against the hateful opposition.

There was no button the suffragists could press and suddenly the Nineteenth Amendment would be passed. It was simply not that easy. So, when we are living in a time where almost anything can be achieved instantaneously at the touch of a button, it is important to reflect back on history and understand how our modern politics and government have been formed and changed through passion, patience, and perseverance. From past leaders who were catalyst for change, we can continue to learn and grow to make our nation greater for future generations, a United States that is truly free and equal for all, despite our many differences.

Maya Sophia Braslaw graduated from North High School in Riverside in 2020, and is a freshman at the University of California, San Diego studying film, law, philosophy, and journalism.



NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the RCBA Board of Directors has scheduled a "business meeting" to allow members an opportunity to address the proposed budget for 2021. The budget will be available after August 13. If you would like a copy of the budget, please go to the members section of the RCBA website, which is located at riversidecountybar.com or a copy will be available at the RCBA office.

Wednesday, August 19, 2020

at 5:15 p.m.

Location to TBD

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HONORABLE IRMA POOLE ASBERRY

RECIPIENT OF THE 2019 SAINT THOMAS MORE AWARD

FOR HER EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE AND DEVOTION TO CHURCH, COMMUNITY, AND JUSTICE

by Jacqueline Carey-Wilson

On October 1, 2019, the Honorable Irma Poole Asberry received the 2019 Saint Thomas More Award at the reception following the Red Mass. Every year this award goes to a lawyer or judge in the Inland Empire legal community who gives hope to those in need, is kind, is generous in spirit, and overall is an exemplary human being. Judge Asberry exemplifies all four of these attributes.

Judge Asberry is a native of the Inland Empire. She grew up in Fontana and received her bachelor's degree from the University of California, Riverside in 1976. Judge Asberry remained in southern California for law school, graduating from the University of San Diego in 1979. Judge Asberry practiced law for 26 years primarily in family law with occasional work in juvenile, adoptions, guardianships, and bankruptcy. Practicing in these areas allowed Judge Asberry to witness the fragility of life. This insight was essential for the next chapter in her career.

In 2007, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed Judge Asberry to the Superior Court. She became the first African-American female judge to serve in Riverside County. She later served as supervising judge of the court's family law division, which operated out of Indio, Hemet, and Riverside. Judge Asberry now presides over civil matters in the downtown Historic Courthouse.

Judge Asberry has been actively involved in court-related programs. She was elected by her colleagues on



Judge John Pacheco presented the Saint Thomas More Award to Judge Irma Poole Asberry.



Jacqueline Carey-Wilson and Judge Irma Poole Asberry

the bench as a trustee of the Riverside County Law Library. Chief Justice Ronald M. George selected her to serve on the Elkins Family Law Task Force. Judge Asberry was also appointed by the Judicial Counsel to serve on the Workload Assessment Advisory Committee and Funding Allocation Joint Subcommittee. She was a faculty member and would assist in the development of curriculum for judicial education programs through the Administrative Office of the Courts for the 2010 Domestic Violence Institute, 2010 Regional Program on Children's Voices in the Court, 2011 Family Law Institute, and the 2011 Course on Handling Cases with Self-Represented Litigants for the Los Angeles Superior Court. In addition, she was a volunteer judge for the Riverside County Youth Court. By her work in the courts, Judge Asberry has shown her commitment to educate, provide access to the court, and to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable groups.

Judge Asberry has a long history of active involvement in the legal community. She was elected to the Board of Directors of the Riverside County Bar Association (RCBA) and became the first African-American president of the association in 1997. Judge Asberry volunteered many hours to the Public Service Law Corporation by providing pro bono representation to individuals with limited income. She was also a member and chair of the Family Law PSLC Section, active in the Barristers, a panelist for Law Day

Panel, would participate in the bar association's Judicial Evaluation Committee, and an active speaker for bar events.

In addition to her work with the courts and legal community, Judge Asberry has been very involved with her church. Judge Asberry takes a week off each summer to assist with summer camp at the church. "I am truly grateful to God for a wonderful life and legal career. I pray for many more years to share with my family and serve my community," said Judge Asberry.

Judge Asberry exemplifies the highest ideals of the legal profession and has lived her faith in word and deed. Accordingly, the Red Mass Steering Committee was honored to present Judge Asberry with the Saint Thomas More Award for her extraordinary service and devotion to church, community, and justice.

Jacqueline Carey-Wilson is a deputy county counsel with San Bernardino County, co-chair of the Red Mass Steering Committee, editor of the Riverside Lawyer, and past president of the Riverside County Bar Association and the Inland Empire Chapter of the Federal Bar Association.

Photos courtesy of Jacqueline Carey-Wilson



The Inland Empire legal community gathered together for dinner following the Red Mass and presentation of the awards.



James Heiting, and San Bernardino County Superior Court Judges Wilfred Schneider, John Vander Feer, John Pacheco, and Tony Raphael



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AN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE OBSTACLES FACED BY FEMALES IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

by Sarah Sons Sanchez

A Google search for “challenges faced by females in the legal profession” returns over two billion results. Yes, there are two billion stories and websites that are dedicated to this issue. That alone shows the amount of work there is to be done in this arena.

In the past century, there have been great strides made for women’s equality. In 1920, one hundred years ago, women were given the right to vote. Then, almost fifty years ago, Title IX was established prohibiting gender discrimination in educational programs.¹ Just this year, we see a record 131 women serving in Congress.² While these are great strides for women, there are still steps to be made in our daily lives. Day to day discrimination often appears largely undetected, in the form of microaggressions, typically subtle, or not so subtle, unwarranted comments.

As an undergraduate student with the goal of entering the legal profession, there are many obstacles that you must navigate. Building a resume, law school applications, and tackling the LSAT are just a few examples. But as a young woman wanting to enter this male-dominated profession, it has become quite apparent to me that I have *additional* obstacles to navigate. While I have had an amazing experience in my undergraduate studies, my gender has played a role in my educational endeavors. I have noticed that in a classroom setting where the professor is male or in discussions with male classmates, female students often find it difficult to speak up or exude confidence. At times, I have found male faculty and peers to be more comfortable with female students who are conforming to a passive and “quiet” role in the classroom. Personally, I have a very strong personality and tend to gravitate to leadership roles. I am not afraid to speak up to male faculty and peers. It is apparent that my confidence and leadership traits have taken some male faculty and peers by surprise, as if it is not expected of me to be able to speak up. Through these experiences, I have encountered unwarranted comments, “microaggressions,” about my drive and career aspirations. I have been told to simply, “marry rich and not work so hard.” When is the last time someone told an ambitious male student to marry rich instead of working hard to pursue his passion? In response to that question, you would likely be told that it was “just a joke.” Needless to say, I do not laugh.

Due to my ambitious and steadfast career aspirations, I have also been told that I am “difficult.” Interestingly, a male student being ambitious is a desirable trait, while an ambitious female student may be perceived as difficult. I have also been notified, by both male and female faculty, that I will not be able to have time for both, a family and a fulfilling career, that I must choose one or the other. Yet, male students my age are not told to plan their careers around having a family, let alone that they must choose one or the other. This commentary can come from the most well-intentioned person. I am certain that some believe that they are helping me by giving me advice. But would it even cross their mind to give the same advice to a male peer in the same position?

These stories are not unique to just me. In fact, in speaking with friends and peers, I have found that I have had some of the more pleasant experiences in the area of gender-based microaggressions.

To aid in my desire of entering the legal profession, I began my internship with the Riverside County Public Defender’s office in January of 2019. Fortunately, in the Mental Health Unit, I have been blessed with a healthy working environment at the Public Defender’s Office. I have encountered a great female presence and I have been lucky enough to learn from and create strong relationships with many of these women. Having these experiences and mentors in this industry has greatly fueled my passion for law.

The practice of law may still appear to be a male-dominated profession. That, however, does not excuse the microaggressions faced by females. Nevertheless, this career is my passion and I have decided to pursue it just as any male counterpart of mine would. Thankfully, I am surrounded by women who display that same passion and have found success. With their mentorship, I have learned why I must continue my aspirations with all the vigor I can muster. I have seen firsthand that it is more than just a novel concept to be a dominating female in the legal industry, it is accomplished daily by women just like me.

Sarah Sons Sanchez is an intern at the Law Offices of the Riverside County Public Defender and a criminal justice major at California State University, Fullerton. Sarah plans on applying to law school next year.

1 <https://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2017-01-20/timeline-the-womens-rights-movement-in-the-us>

2 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43244.pdf>



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2020: THE SIX MONTHS THAT HAVE OPENED EYES AND RAISED VOICES TO INJUSTICE

by Jessica Jerving

Does anyone even remember January? It seems like forever ago; so much has happened since then. The year 2020 deserves unnerving and hateful respect for the suffering, as well as for the growth and change it is bringing. As January began, the deadly fires consuming Australia raged. More than 30 people died and thousands of homes were destroyed or damaged as a part of the flames that ravaged the country. Protests erupted all over Australia with people in major cities demonstrating in the streets demanding action against climate change before it is too late. Although this was not the first climate change protest, the beginning of 2020 started with the recognition of what we do now will decide what quality planet they will live on and what they will someday leave to their own children.

February marked the month of the death of two women that sparked a movement bringing light to the atrocities of femicide and gendered violence in Mexico. Ingrid Escamilla, age 25, was killed in a gruesome fashion; she was stabbed, skinned, and disemboweled. Fátima Cecilia Aldrighett Antón, age 7, was abducted from school and her body was later found wrapped in a plastic bag. It was determined that she was raped and tortured. In 2019, there was recorded a 10% increase in deaths of women from 2018 and 137% over the last five years according to the Mexico's Attorney General. On March 8, International Women's Day, women poured out onto the streets in Mexico protesting a lack of action and justice. Following that, tens of thousands of women stayed home for a day from their offices, classrooms, and errands on the streets of Mexico. The absence of women in the public was intended to be a reminder of the 10 women taken at the hands of violence in Mexico every day.

Although the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the U.S. was months prior, *March* marked the recognition of the spread of the disease, sparking stay-at-home orders in many states. It killed people at rates we haven't seen in our lifetimes with over 118,500 people in the United States alone as of June 19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have published this disease has not affected all people the same. The statistics show that African Americans are being hospitalized at significantly higher rates than the general population,

with Hispanics as the next highest rate of hospitalization. The CDC has attributed the disparity in part to racial residential segregation and the over-representation of minority populations in jails, prisons, and detention centers, which have higher risk due to congregate living conditions.¹

The economic crisis followed in the wake of the pandemic, with millions of people losing their jobs in the United States, with *April* showing a drastic spike in unemployment rates. When governors made orders to shut down business and schools and require self-quarantine, the economic impact was swift and immediate. Unlike other recessions or economic downturns, this economic crisis' immediate target was female dominated industries, like leisure and hospitality, including waitressing, hotels and travel industries, nail salons, hair salons, and massage therapists. This pandemic turned thriving businesses into closed doors. The unemployment rate illustrates the disparate impact on women versus men, as well as the disparate impact on the African American community. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, the unemployment rates for men age 20 and over jumped from 4% in March, to 13% in April, then 11.6% in May. In the same category of all women in the same time period, the unemployment rate rose from 4% to 15.5% then 13.9%. In comparison with men of all races, African American male unemployment rates are significantly higher with 7% in March, 16.1% in April, and 15.5% in May. African American women end up with the highest unemployment rates in May, which did not see a decline like all others, with 5.2% in March, 16.4% in April and 16.5% in May.² Illuminating once again the institutional and systematic racism that has led to residential segregation and a lack of equal access to quality education.

As *May* arrives with most people still quarantining, because of the pandemic, our country was reminded of yet another crisis/virus, this one not novel like COVID-19. This one has plagued us for generations with untold numbers of lives lost due to hate. Not long after the news of the death of one man, George Floyd on May 25,

1 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>

2 <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t02.htm>

protests erupted in Minneapolis, Minnesota and have spread across the world. With the words of his daughter, "My daddy changed the world." When George Floyd was on the ground with a police officer who knelt on his neck being suffocated for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, our country could breathe no more. The streets swelled with discontent and, to this date, Juneteenth, the protests continue with the hopes of meaningful change. There are cries for justice for the people murdered and reform of the criminal justice system and institutional systematic oppression, which has destroyed African American communities.

June is "Pride month," which is supposed to celebrate our LGBTQ+ community and equality of sexual orientation and gender identification. Yet, our national government decides to announce during this month that the Department of Health and Human Services is rolling-back protections of the LGBTQ+ community. It means the federal government will no longer recognize gender identity as sexual discrimination in health care. Moments later, the United States Supreme Court held that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits work-place discrimination based on sex, does includes gay and transgender employees. This illuminates

the fight for equality based on sexual orientation and gender identity is far from over. Finally, the Supreme Court comes through, again, in June to show us there is one more community that dares not to be ignored: our immigrant community. The Supreme Court, in their decision, blocked the government's attempts to terminate the DACA program. Although not intended as such, perhaps this is a reminder for us not to forget the children forcefully taken from their families and caged at the border in detention centers.

Previous movements have seen impactful change at different periods over time. However, there is something about 2020 that feels different. It is as though many groups of people have raised a powerful voice in the fight for equality in such a short time span. As horrible as 2020 has been so far, all gratitude and thanks for opening our eyes and raising our voices for love, peace, and equality.

Jessica Jerving is a deputy public defender with Riverside County where she represents youth in Delinquency Court in the Southwest Division. Jessica is also an adjunct professor at Azusa Pacific University where she teaches "Gender and Crime" and the proud mother of two sweet little boys. The views in the article are held by the author.



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JUDICIAL PROFILE: HONORABLE SAMAH SHOUKA

by Betty Fracisco

Did you know that Riverside County is the home of the first Circassian judge in the world? The Circassians are a small ethnic group that lived on the Russian side of the Black Sea, but left Russia in the early 1900s. In fact, the great-grandparents of this judge were born in Russia, but fled. Her own parents grew up in Syria, and she is fluent in the Circassian language because it was the language spoken in her home.

Our celebrated judge is the Honorable Samah Shouka (pronounced Shoga), currently handling a challenging juvenile law assignment in Riverside. She was born in Damascus, Syria, the youngest of nine children of Adibe and Deya, and came to the United States at the age of two, as part of a refugee program. The family settled in New Jersey where she had a nice childhood with a big family and lots of cousins. Because her parents never learned to speak English, she acted as their translator from the age of five. Judge Shouka graduated from the local high school, but she did not participate in activities and sports because she was working in retail to save money. Two weeks before she began her freshman year of college, she finally told her parents that she was going to go to college, the first in her family to do so. Judge Shouka attended the College of New Jersey, putting herself through with a combination of loans and a waitressing job at a casual restaurant on the Delaware River. She graduated in 1996 with a degree in history and secondary education.

During her college years, Judge Shouka attended a family wedding at which she met her husband, who is also Circassian (his great-grandparents had also been born in Russia) and was visiting from California. They carried on a long distance relationship for two years, eventually marrying in New Jersey after she graduated. Then it was off to Orange County California, where her new husband was getting established in his profession. Her first California job interview resulted in a teaching position at a high school on the campus of Cal Poly Pomona. She taught there for one year.

Then it was time for Judge Shouka's "Plan B." Since high school, she had loved law-related issues, so she decided to take advantage of Whittier Law School's four-year evening program. To finance this adventure, she worked



Honorable Samah Shouka

as a paid law clerk for the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office in the Major Crimes Unit for four years. She had the opportunity to watch top attorneys and pick up their best practices. In Judge Shouka's position with the DA, she organized exhibits, wrote memorandums, sat in on witness interviews, and once she even flew to New York with some assistant district attorneys and sat in on a death penalty case. She took the train to LA every day, which gave her the time she needed to read her cases for school. After she graduated from Whittier and passed the

Bar, she found that the Los Angeles DA's Office was having a hiring freeze, so she applied for a job with the Riverside County District Attorney's Office and was hired.

Judge Shouka began as a deputy district attorney in 2003 doing misdemeanor trials. She also had her first child that year and considered it one of her most difficult years, because FMLA only allowed her three months off after the baby was born, and she was trying to prove herself in her new occupation. During this time, her sister and her husband's sister helped with infant/toddler care, as they did four years later when she had her second child. After that first maternity leave, she moved quickly through the District Attorney's protocol, doing felony trials after her first year, and a death penalty trial in her fifth year. In 2013, Judge Shouka became a Senior Deputy District Attorney in the Homicide Unit. In 2016, she received the District Attorney's Achievement/Leadership Award, most likely as the result of receiving a guilty verdict mid trial in a 23 year old cold case murder trial.

Many judges will say they always dreamed of being a judge or always wanted to be a judge. Judge Shouka, however, said she was never dreaming that big. She was not active in legal activities; her life consisted of her kids, her commute, and her job. But one day Judge Becky Dugan approached her and put the bug in her ear. At the time, she didn't even know anything about the JNE Commission. Judge Shouka learned that she would need support not only from judges, but also from both plaintiff and defense attorneys. After that, Judge Jean Leonard wrote a letter on her behalf and several other judges said they would support her if she wanted to make the effort. The next two years were spent with the questionnaires,

the interview, and waiting. Governor Brown named her to the bench in 2018 and she was sworn in on January 4, 2019.

In a stroke of luck, Riverside County Superior Court gave the new Judge Shouka a criminal trials calendar, but it was in Banning, giving her a 65 mile drive to work. She presided over 20 jury trials, half from the Banning area and half from Indio. Then in January 2020 she was reassigned to Juvenile Court in Riverside, a job she loves, which satisfies all the reasons she became a judge. Judge Shouka loves the challenge of seeing young people who have made trauma induced decisions or who may have a mental illness. Her job is collaborative, with the goal of identifying what has gone wrong and giving resources to the minor and his or her family to help improve or correct the situation. Here they also have to look for possible root problems, like violence in the home or family dynamics. She loves the challenge and the ability to play a part in helping a minor possibly turn his/her life around before it's too late. From her years of practice she has seen what can happen if that opportunity is ignored.

As for her own family, Judge Shouka has now been married 24 years to her husband, who has a chiropractic practice in Orange County. Their two boys are now

teenagers, and they have a large extended family, which includes 75 cousins. Both Judge Shouka and her husband have made their families proud.

Betty Fracisco is an attorney at Garrett & Jensen in Riverside and a member of the RCBA Bar Publications committee.



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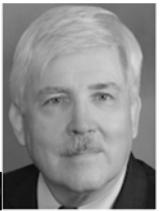
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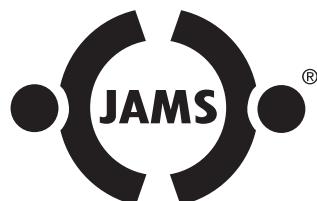
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OPPOSING COUNSEL: LILIA CENTENO-WILKERSON

by L. Alexandra Fong

Girl on Fire

Lilia Centeno-Wilkerson was born and raised in Los Angeles, California, the eldest daughter of six children to second generation Mexican-American parents. The embers of her fiery spirit were stoked by watching her grandmother feed the homeless from her home in East Los Angeles, help the poor across the border, and support the community through the Salvation Army before it was a popular thing to do. At the age of five, she convinced her parents to let her reside with her grandparents, so she could have all the attention of her favorite grandmother. Fortunately, her grandparents only lived a block away from her parents and siblings, whom she continued to see daily. She returned to the family home at the age of eight years when her grandmother passed away.

After graduating from Bassett High School in La Puente, she attended the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). As an eighteen-year-old from a low income Hispanic community, UCLA was an amazing adventure that opened the world to Lilia. In order to fund her education, she worked several jobs, which ranged from secretarial work for an architectural firm in Santa Monica to retail in local stores in Westwood, like Casual Corner. Even juggling multiple jobs, she still found time to volunteer with several UCLA clubs that gave back to the community: Project Motivation and Angel Flight.

Lilia graduated from UCLA in 1983 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish, with the intent to become a teacher or interpreter. She became the first person in her family to graduate from college and pursue higher education. Growing up in traditional Hispanic culture, Lilia was taught that women did not need to go to college, but she did not agree with such ideas and encouraged her sisters to go to college as well. Although all of her siblings went to college, four of her five siblings graduated. Her parents were both proud that their six children went to college and five graduated from college. As there was not enough money for law school, she worked almost six years to save money to go to law school. It was difficult, but her dream did not dissipate. The flame of desire to go to law school grew with each year.

She attended Western State University College of Law in Fullerton, California and became licensed to practice law in June 1991. By the end of that same year, she became licensed to practice law in all federal districts



Lilia and her children

in the State of California and the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

While attending law school, Lilia interned for two years as a law clerk at the Orange County Counsel's Office, which laid the foundation for the demands of civil litigation and trial work. She was assigned to work with the Assessor's Office and learned a lot about property tax law. Although she originally intended to remain with the County Counsel's office, an incredible opportunity to work at Lynberg & Watkins arose and she seized it with both hands.

Lynberg & Watkins is a Los Angeles County based law firm which represents public entities, insurance companies and their insureds, private corporations and individuals on a national, regional, and local level. At the time, the law firm had 150 attorneys with offices in Orange County and San Diego. She appeared in both federal and state courts and developed invaluable skills in discovery, trial preparation, and client management that would later assist her to do daily dependency trial work. After several years at the law firm, where she gained significant experience and training at this diverse private law firm, she left to concentrate on her growing family.

When the time was right for her family, Lilia re-entered the workplace and took a position with the Riverside County Counsel's Office in 1994 with the Child Welfare Division, focusing on dependency law. The office provided a work-life balance that assisted her in raising her three children (Tyler, Kyle, and Kendall), although as with all working women, sacrifices such as missing various extracurricular activities were made. Her fiery spirit, strength, and determination are evident in her tireless advocacy representing DPSS in protecting children from abuse or neglect.

The Child Welfare Division handles matters for the Child Protective Services (CPS) division of Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). DPSS protects children and youth from abuse and neglect, and partners with families, young adults, and communities to build safety, permanency, and well-being. DPSS handles matters associated with approximately 5,425 cases in the CPS programs, receiving an average of 2,477 referrals per month. DPSS has offices located throughout the Riverside County in Blythe, Indio, Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, Banning, Hemet, Perris, Temecula, Lake Elsinore, Norco, Arlington, Moreno Valley, and Riverside.

At the time that Lilia began working in the Child Welfare Division, the main satellite office handling the majority of juvenile dependency matters was based in the Riverside Juvenile Courthouse. Attorneys were sent from the Riverside office to Indio once a week to handle a few dependency matters. Eventually, the Child Welfare Division expanded into three satellite offices: County Farm, Indio, and Southwest (Murrieta).

In 2015, Lilia was promoted to supervising deputy county counsel in juvenile dependency, a position she retains today. During her lengthy career with the office, she has supervised attorneys in all three regions of the County Counsel's satellite offices and is currently working at the County Farm office.

In addition, Lilia has been a speaker at various Child Welfare Conferences, including the UCR Extension Juvenile Law Institute, the Annual Indian Child Welfare Act state conference at Pala Casino & Resort, and at the Riverside Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Month Prayer Breakfast. She has participated in developing protocol for the Child Welfare area by serving on a committee that created the Southern California Inter-County Transfer Protocol. Serving the community is important to her, so she participates in Riverside County's Project Graduate and the Riverside Tribal Alliance. Lastly, she assisted the court on various juvenile justice matters after taking the oath of judge pro tempore, administered by the Honorable Jacqueline Jackson.

The office of Riverside County Counsel employs twenty attorneys to handle juvenile dependency matters. Sixteen attorneys handle juvenile dependency trials in five courtrooms in three courthouses: two courtrooms in Riverside (County Farm) and Murrieta (Southwest Justice Center), and one courtroom in Indio. In addition to maintaining an active caseload, these trial attorneys also handle additional matters, involving procedures, policies, education, and



Lilia and her children

case management on behalf of DPSS. The other four attorneys are dedicated to investigations and appeals on behalf of DPSS.

In her free time, Lilia enjoys going to Disneyland, Disney's California Adventure, and Downtown Disney. She has been an annual pass holder for the past fifteen years. Her favorite rides are the mountain rides – Big Thunder Mountain Railroad, Matterhorn Bobsleds, and Space

Mountain. With every visit, she experiences something new about Disneyland. For example, despite being a long-time pass holder, she had never ridden in the horse-drawn trolley down Main Street with the Dapper Dans until two years ago.

Lilia also enjoys traveling and had planned a family trip to Europe this past summer to celebrate Kendall's graduation from the University of California, Riverside, Tyler's graduation from the Culinary Academy at Riverside City College, and Kyle's decision to pursue his college dreams. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these plans were postponed and she is anxiously waiting to determine when she can reschedule the trip.

L. Alexandra Fong is a deputy county counsel for the Riverside County Counsel's Office in its Child Welfare Division, a past-president of the Riverside County Bar Association and Leo A. Deegan Inn of Court, is the co-chair of the Juvenile Law Section of RCBA, and a member of the Publications Committee.



MEMBERSHIP

The following persons have applied for membership in the Riverside County Bar Association. If there are no objections, they will become members effective August 30, 2020.

Lucia Tanehi Diaz – Immigrant Defenders Law Center, Los Angeles

Kathy A. Johnson – CAP Forensics Plus Inc., San Bernardino

Jennifer A. Mizrahi – Stream Kim Hicks Wrage & Alfaro, Riverside

Tiffany Nocon – Disability Rights California, Los Angeles

Kathryn C. Yount – Law Offices of Kathryn C. Yount, Riverside



INTERNATIONAL SEX TRAFFICKING AND MONEY LAUNDERING RINGS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

by Opal Singleton

Imagine a sex selling ring so large that when the sex buyers call to make a date with a commercial sex provider, they reach a telemarketing center. It is real in Southern California and across the nation. There have been five sex trafficking rings ran by organized criminal enterprises discovered and several operated in the Inland Empire. Most of the victims were women. Some were beaten, raped, robbed, threatened, and moved from place to place. Most were never allowed to keep the money they earned from their forced sexual services. The women were from China and South Korea and were forced to earn at least \$800 a day or they were punished severely.

Jerry Wang from San Gabriel was sentenced to thirteen years based on eleven felony charges of conspiracy to commit human trafficking, pimping, and money laundering. Wang was the mastermind of a sex trafficking ring where hundreds of sex ads were placed online offering a variety of commercial sex services from the counties of Ventura to Riverside and San Bernardino extending to San Diego. There were twenty-eight identified victims. Wang's girlfriend, Defeng Hu, acted as the dispatcher, interacting with the male sex buyers, directing drivers to deliver the female and deciding which sex provider would be forced to provide services.

The "johns" or sex buyers thought they were calling a local girl for a quick meet up in their neighborhood. Instead, this sex trafficking ring posted the same ads in many different cities and the sex buyer would reach a centralized telemarketing center who dispatched out the closest sex provider.

The victims were in "debt bondage." Most came into the U.S. legally with work or student visas and had been brutally duped when they were recruited in China. They thought they were paying a fee for a legitimate job or a chance to go to a U.S. university. Not only did they not get to keep the money they earned selling sexual services, they were forced to pay Jerry Wang and his organized criminal enterprise for each sex ad where they were advertised, the driver who drove them to the date, and any food or hotel rooms used. At the end of each day they were deeper in debt to their captors.

Large scale sex trafficking rings are all about money laundering. Investigators were able to trace the proceeds derived from the sex selling activity to fifty different bank accounts in nine different banks in Southern California. Mr. Wang's sister was later convicted and sentenced for money laundering as millions of dollars derived from forced sexual exploitation were used in the buying and selling of real estate.

In the case of Sophia Navas from Chino Hills, more than \$1.5 million dollars in sex trafficking proceeds were confiscated derived from illicit sex services organized by Navas and her daughter. This sex trafficking ring was operated in an upscale town house in Irvine, as well as Minnesota and North Dakota. Again, the women were in debt bondage to their captor being forced to turn over the proceeds earned through commercial sex and then charged for housing, transportation, and their own food. This sex trafficking ring was so large that investigators discovered over 20,000 sex ads placed by Navas and her daughter advertising the services of their victims. At the time of their arrest, law enforcement found two mattresses in the upscale Irvine townhome and a line of men waiting to have sex with the three women found inside the home. Ms. Navas was sentenced to twelve-and-a-half years for operating this multi-state sex trafficking ring from her home in Chino Hills.

One of the first indicators of just how organized and expansive these sex trafficking rings are started with the case of a multi-state, multi-national sex trafficking ring that recruited hundreds of poor, naïve, and vulnerable women from Thailand. These women were brought to the U.S. legally under tourist visas and believing that they could earn quick and easy money in commercial sex, pay off their debts to their recruiters, and send money back home. This sex trafficking ring generated tens of millions of dollars in income and used the "hawala-based" money laundering method to divert the funds back to Thailand. Family members and trusted individuals would carry large volumes of cash on their person, including hiding cash in clothing and dolls. Few U.S. sex buyers understood that the money they paid for

a few minutes of illicit commercial sex was funding an international sex trafficking ring headquartered in Belgium and Bangkok.

Even more surprising is to understand the magnitude of these operations taking place in our communities with funds spent by local Southern California sex buyers and the vast amount of income they can generate ends up being laundered to foreign countries. Over the past few months, another nationwide sting operation targeted illegal Asian brothels which resulted in an indictment of a Temecula woman accused of operating a telemarketing sex buyer dispatch center for a sex trafficking ring providing commercial sex services in Oregon, Washington, Vancouver, and Australia.

The dispatcher used a sophisticated computer program to schedule and track all the prostitution dates. The program had a customer database that logged more than 30,000 customer phone numbers and details of previous sex buyers. The victims were primarily from impoverished Chinese backgrounds, who spoke little or no English, and were fearful their families back home would be harmed.

Many of us are aware that sex trafficking in the U.S exists, and legislative and advocacy groups have been diligent in addressing the issues of protecting our families and children. Few people in the U.S. are aware of how organized criminal organizations are actively exploiting and profiting from forced commercial sex in Southern California. Even fewer of us can comprehend that the demand of illicit sex, even with the awareness that the victims are being horribly violated, is so great that the dates are being dispatched through a local telemarketing center operating in their own neighborhood.

The following are a few things to watch for if you believe sex trafficking is taking place in your community. Residential brothels are rental properties where large numbers of men are coming and going each day, especially at night. Illicit massage parlors are often kept locked and are open late hours even into the early morning. They are not branded with printed materials offering regular spa services, but rather individual services are negotiated on the spot. The massage service providers often do not speak English and there is a significant turnover of service providers. There may be signs individuals are living in the commercial facility. Motel/hotel operators are now required to be educated on sex trafficking as much of the sex buying and selling takes place in motels/hotels. Potential victims are often scared and withdrawn, they may not speak English and are reluctant to interact. They fear deportation, along with physical and psychological harm.

If you see a potential sex trafficking victim, call 911 immediately. Do not get personally involved as these can be dangerous situations. If you suspect there is an illicit commercial sexual activity scenario taking place in your community, you can report the situation to the national human trafficking hot line at 1-888-373-7888.

Opal Singleton is the president and chief operating officer of Million Kids, which provides outreach and training on sex trafficking, and the coordinator for the Riverside County Anti Human Trafficking Task Force.

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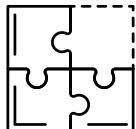




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