

Daily Journal

COVER STORY

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Do Women Need a **List of Their Own?**

TOP 75 WOMEN LITIGATORS

Editor's Note

This week, we celebrate the achievements of some of the state's top women litigators. Two years ago, we honored 30. Last year, we honored 50. This year, we're honoring 75 lawyers whose courtroom prowess would distinguish them in any crowd.

Litigators are considered the toughest among lawyers. For now, it seems worth-while and necessary to highlight that women litigators can be every bit as aggressive, savvy and accomplished as their male colleagues.

But it won't be long before we look back on this list as the expression of an antiquated stage in the development of the legal profession and our society.

These lawyers' achievements speak for themselves. But how did they learn the skills and determination they bring to their clients and into the courtroom?

We asked our honorees about their mentors. They told us about lawyers and judges, male and female, their fathers and mothers, their French teachers, who guided them, offering encouragement, criticism and practical counsel.

In the course of our reporting, we discovered what rich, diverse experiences these lawyers bring from the world outside into the courtroom. Among the 75 lawyers is a former rocket scientist and a former punk rock band manager. The group includes a former opera singer, a Napa Valley restaurant owner and a magazine editor.

But it was the practice of law that eventually drew their passion and their intellects.

When they turned to the law, they often found powerful mentors to help guide them through a profession that hasn't been the most encouraging place for women.

In Homer's "The Odyssey," Mentor is the name of the old man who serves as a trusted adviser to Odysseus. But the key mentoring role in "The Odyssey" is played by Athena, the female goddess of justice, war and the arts. She appears in disguise as the old man in order that Odysseus and his son will accept her advice.

We are delighted to offer our readers this comprehensive portrait of the state's most prominent women litigators. These women don't have to don any disguises to get their wise counsel taken seriously.

Cristina C. Arguedas
Emeryville

Place of birth:
Evanston, Ill.

Law school: Rutgers
Law School

Law firm: Arguedas,
Cassman & Headley

Practice area:
White-collar criminal defense

Recent big case: Arguedas' successes this year includes the representation of a chief financial officer for a high-tech company who avoided federal prosecution



because she proved the executive's actions showed no intent of fraud.

People would be surprised to know that: "I spend at least a week every summer at a Zen yoga retreat, Tassajara Zen Center, where there is no electricity and no cell service. I practice Zen and yoga throughout the year; the life of a trial lawyer needs as much calmness as you can possibly import to it."

Mentor: Susan Jordan "took me under her wing when I was a law student and showed me what it was to obsess about a case until it was perfectly prepared for trial."

Mentoring: Arguedas teaches criminal trial practice at Boalt Hall and participates in bar association programs and other groups that involve young lawyers who want to practice criminal defense.

"I tell my students being a criminal defense lawyer, at the highest level, requires being honest, thorough and brave. You have to always be realistic with the client and yourself as you evaluate the case. Leave no stone unturned as you prepare the defense. And then be brave and strong enough to face down the government all the way through trial if that's what the case requires."

— Amy K. Spees