

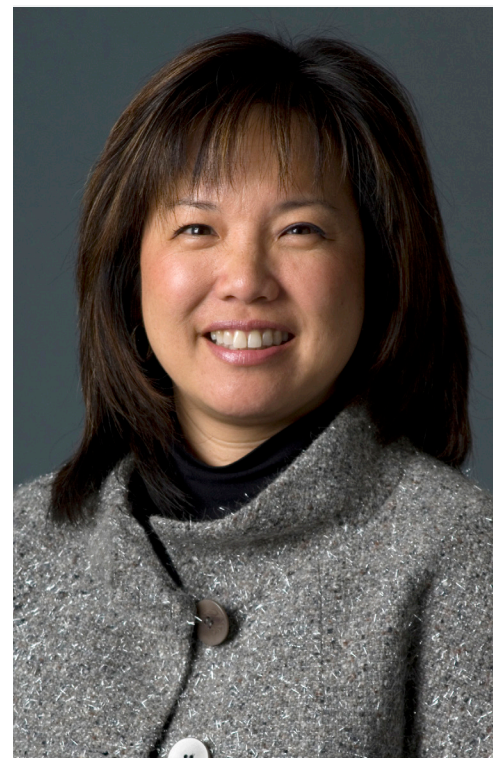
Daily Journal

MAY 19, 2021

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TOP WOMEN Lawyers 2021

Debra Wong Yang



As a former U.S. attorney and Superior Court judge, Yang has the skills to manage crises. She is, in fact, the co-chair of Gibson Dunn’s crisis management group.

Many matters she has handled are heavy with crises, complexities and risks to reputations, including several concerning sexual assault or harassment.

She has investigated such allegations for the Los Angeles Opera against Plácido Domingo and for the University of Southern California against its former medical school dean.

She represented the University of California in litigation over a UCLA gynecologist that resulted in a \$73 million class action settlement, preliminarily approved in January. *AB v. The Regents of the University of California*, 2:20-cv-09555 (C.D. Cal., filed July 30, 2019).

In a different vein, Yang spent about two years conducting a wholesale review of how Johnson & Johnson has handled litigation against it over talcum powder. She delivered her 300-page final report to the company’s board last year.

Her most significant piece of litigation last year had political overtones. Yang and a team of other attorneys represented

20 western colleges and universities that sued the federal Department of Homeland Security objecting to a surprise change in policy that would have prohibited international students from studying at U.S. schools during the pandemic unless they were taking in-person classes. *University of Oregon v. the Department of Homeland Security*, 6:20-cv-01127 (D. Ore., filed July 13, 2020).

“We basically pulled our papers together over the weekend,” she said.

Other schools and states filed similar cases across the country, and the Trump Administration retracted the policy change.

Yang announced an entirely new project last month that is especially important to her. She and three colleagues launched a pro bono initiative, The Alliance for Asian American Justice, to combat anti-Asian violence and hate crimes. It will receive reports of incidents and forward them on to the 40 major law firms and top corporations that have agreed to donate pro bono services to evaluate or work up.

“I’m at the point now in my career where I’ve done a lot of things,” Yang said. “I really care about impactful things now.”

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CRUTCHER LLP**
LOS ANGELES

Practice Type:
Crisis Management, Litigation

— Don DeBenedictis