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TOP 100 2021

DEBRA WONG YANG

GIBSON, DUNN & CRUTCHER LLP
LOS ANGELES
CRISIS MANAGEMENT
LITIGATION

— TOP 100 —



Yang co-chairs her firm's crisis management group, which means she handles every sort of critical matter from internal investigations to civil litigation to white-collar defense. Her practice is expansive, she said, "but tailored to highly critical challenges."

Last year she completed investigations for Los Angeles Opera into alle-

gations of sexual harassment against Plácido Domingo and for Johnson & Johnson into its handling of talcum powder litigation.

She is also defending a founder of a pharmaceutical company on insider trading charges. *Securities and Exchange Commission v. Sarshar*, 1:20-cv-06865 (S.D. N.Y., filed Aug. 25, 2020).

She represents UCLA in litigation accusing one of its gynecologists of sexual assault. *AB v. The Regents of the University of California*, 2:20-cv-09555 (C.D. Cal., filed Oct. 19, 2020).

And she is serving as crisis counsel in trade secrets litigation defending a company that is developing an electric vertical-takeoff-and-landing aircraft for commercial use. *Wisk Aero LLC v. Archer Aviation Inc.*, 3:21-cv-02450 (N.D. Cal., filed April 6, 2021)

But she also has taken on a very different crisis. This spring, Yang developed a national pro bono initiative to match high-quality attorneys with people subjected to acts of anti-Asian hate and violence.

Named The Alliance for Asian American Justice, the organization provides victims with pro bono attorneys to sue perpetrators and to aid and encourage criminal investigations, where appropri-

ate. Yang and her co-chairs signed up 90 top law firms and 21 top corporate law departments willing to take cases.

Her main role now is to take in reports of incidents and send them on to volunteer lawyers. She gets referrals from several Asian-American bar groups, but she also works from informal reports. "Sometimes all people send to me is a screenshot of something they've captured," she said.

Sadly, Yang said, business has been brisk. Just within its first two months, the Alliance referred on about 35 cases ranging from "horrific homicides to everyday acts of hate."

The group worked with Alston & Bird LLP partner Byung J. Pak, the former U.S. attorney in Atlanta, to ensure that last year's spa murders were charged as hate crimes. It also found counsel for families after four Sikh employees were fatally shot at a FedEx location in Indianapolis.

"It's so important that the Asian-American community galvanize and support each other and that the victims know that they're not alone" and have excellent lawyers willing to represent them, she said.

— Don DeBenedictis