

2015's **TOP 100** Lawyers in California

LITIGATION

DEBRA WONG YANG

GIBSON, DUNN & CRUTCHER LLP | LOS ANGELES

STRATEGIC COUNSELING AND WHITE COLLAR

Yang, a former U.S. attorney and superior court judge, didn't grow up thinking she would be a lawyer. But by the time she became the first Asian-American woman to serve as a federal prosecutor, she found her purpose — to give voice to the voiceless.

"When you come from Chinatown, it's not like you think big thoughts when you are coming up. You only see what is on the path right in front of you," Yang said. "It really is different to be a lawyer when you are doing it to help."

Today, she practices strategic counseling and risk management with high-profile clients that have included New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie in the aftermath of the George Washington Bridge scandal and Hoboken Mayor Dawn Zimmer's allegations concerning Hurricane Sandy aid allocations.

Additionally, Yang counsels U.S. companies that go abroad to help them comply with U.S. laws while doing business in foreign countries.

Yang is currently working on a sensitive

case involving a semiconductor company under federal investigation for wrongful conduct. She said the issue began after 90 federal agents came down on the company with broadly drafted search warrants that put the company in a tailspin.

For her, working with sensitive clients on strategic counseling and crisis management is a way to test where the law is, push it forward, or to get a judge or the public to see the value of that particular business, she said.

"I really enjoying peeling back the onion and figuring out 'how did we get here' and 'what's the problem,'" Yang said. "I'm a big rule follower, from my background, and I help my clients impose that on their employees."

Yang also serves on an American Bar Association committee that intends to hold the first white collar conference in China this fall.

"I'm a single mother of three children. If I'm going to spend time away from them I want to do it on something that matters," Yang said.



>> Ryan Van Velzer