

Daily Journal

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TOP 40 UNDER 40

California's leading lawyers of 2019

Alexis A. Amezcua

Alexis A. Amezcua is a Morrison & Foerster LLP partner who focuses on class actions, commercial litigation and civil rights.

She represents major tech companies along with pro bono clients and takes a special interest in promoting diversity in the legal profession.

Amezcua was one of the lead attorneys in a significant pro bono win for a Sonoma County couple who sued after three police officers made a warrantless probation search of their home, searching for their son. One officer entered the home through the back door with his gun drawn; a jury ruled in November 2018 that all three had acted illegally in violating the U.S. and California constitutions prohibition on unreasonable searches. It ordered the City of Rohnert Park to pay \$75,000 to the couple and one of the officers to pay an additional \$70,000 in punitive damages. The city also agreed to pay attorney fees totaling more than \$1 million. *Barajas v. City of Rohnert Park*, 3:14-cv-05157 (N.D. Cal., filed Nov. 21, 2014).

Amezcua said her firm spent more than that on the litigation over the four years they worked on the case. "We compromised our attorney fees in order to get finality for our client and final resolution of the matter. The overall case still remains in our view a vindication of privacy rights for California residents and for citizens of Rohnert Park."

She added, "I'm able to do the work I do because I have the support of the firm. It was the first trial at which I have done voir dire and selected a jury. Also, we got punitives awarded against one officer--and that's a rare outcome. Even more important, we got an injunction mandating additional training of Rohnert Park officers on the lawful conduct of probation searches. That's important because the officers and the city were saying they didn't do anything wrong."

Amezcua is the hiring partner for Morrison & Foerster's San Francisco litigation department. She said she strives to ensure that the firm's incoming lawyers are diverse, that they are men-



**Morrison & Foerster
LLP**

San Francisco

Practice: Class actions, commercial litigation

Age: 37

tored and promoted and that the pipeline for incoming diverse lawyers improves. She is a board member of ChangeLawyers, a non-profit committed to having the State Bar reflect California's population.

As the immigration crisis heated up at the Texas-Mexico border last summer, Amezcua and others at the firm headed south. They provided legal assistance and advice and gathered donations for legal service organizations and shelters. They helped to interview detainees to establish whether individuals had "credible fear" of returning to their countries, the standard that can lead to successful asylum claims.

"I told the firm I speak Spanish and I have a law license—send me," Amezcua said. "Being down there was one of the legal experiences that left the greatest impression on me. It was terribly upsetting. In El Paso I was introduced to a father who did not know whether his daughter was dead or alive." She said she made dozens of calls to every possible source and was eventually able to reunite the pair.

"I've been at the firm for 13 years and I have never been so proud to call myself a partner at Morrison & Foerster as I have been since the firm has mobilized to get lawyers on the ground in El Paso," she said.

— John Roemer