

Women Leaders, Junior Attys On Gender Equity Battles Ahead

By **Aebra Coe**

Law360 (March 8, 2021, 4:17 PM EST) -- With the arrival of International Women's Day, Law360 Pulse posed to women just starting out in BigLaw careers and those who have risen to the top of their firms a single question: What opportunities and limitations are there for women in today's legal industry?

One theme came up again and again from both junior attorneys and the women leading large law firms — the march toward a fully equal legal profession has been slow, but progress is being made and the hard work must continue.

Here, in the words of both junior and senior women attorneys, a celebration of the triumphs and a commitment to further change toward the goal of creating a profession where equity is woven into the fabric of the culture.

These interviews have been edited for length and clarity.

Kalpana Srinivasan

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We are on the precipice of fundamental, and I hope, long-lasting change. Doors are opening for women, and there is a heightened recognition of the need for diversifying the profession — top to bottom.

Women have made up more than half of law school graduates for some time, and their entrance into the legal world has become widely accepted. But women need to occupy every level of the law — both because they belong there and to demonstrate the pathways for getting there. As we see women increasingly advance to the general counsel's office to corporate boards to law firm leadership and to the bench, the road ahead crystallizes — giving women assurances they can have a long and fulfilling legal career.



Structural reform does not happen overnight. Women still need meaningful opportunities to showcase their skills and be visible: in court, at trial, in client pitches, in the boardroom and in leading teams. These are critical steppingstones to advancing; yet women remain underrepresented in key roles in big-ticket commercial litigation and other decision-making positions.

Law firms need to focus not just on recruitment of women or overall numbers but on where they want their women lawyers to be in the next five years or 10 years. That means including women in building client relationships, in courtroom activity, in business development and in management. With that commitment, we can cement the hard-fought gains to reshape our profession at all levels.

--Editing by Orlando Lorenzo.

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