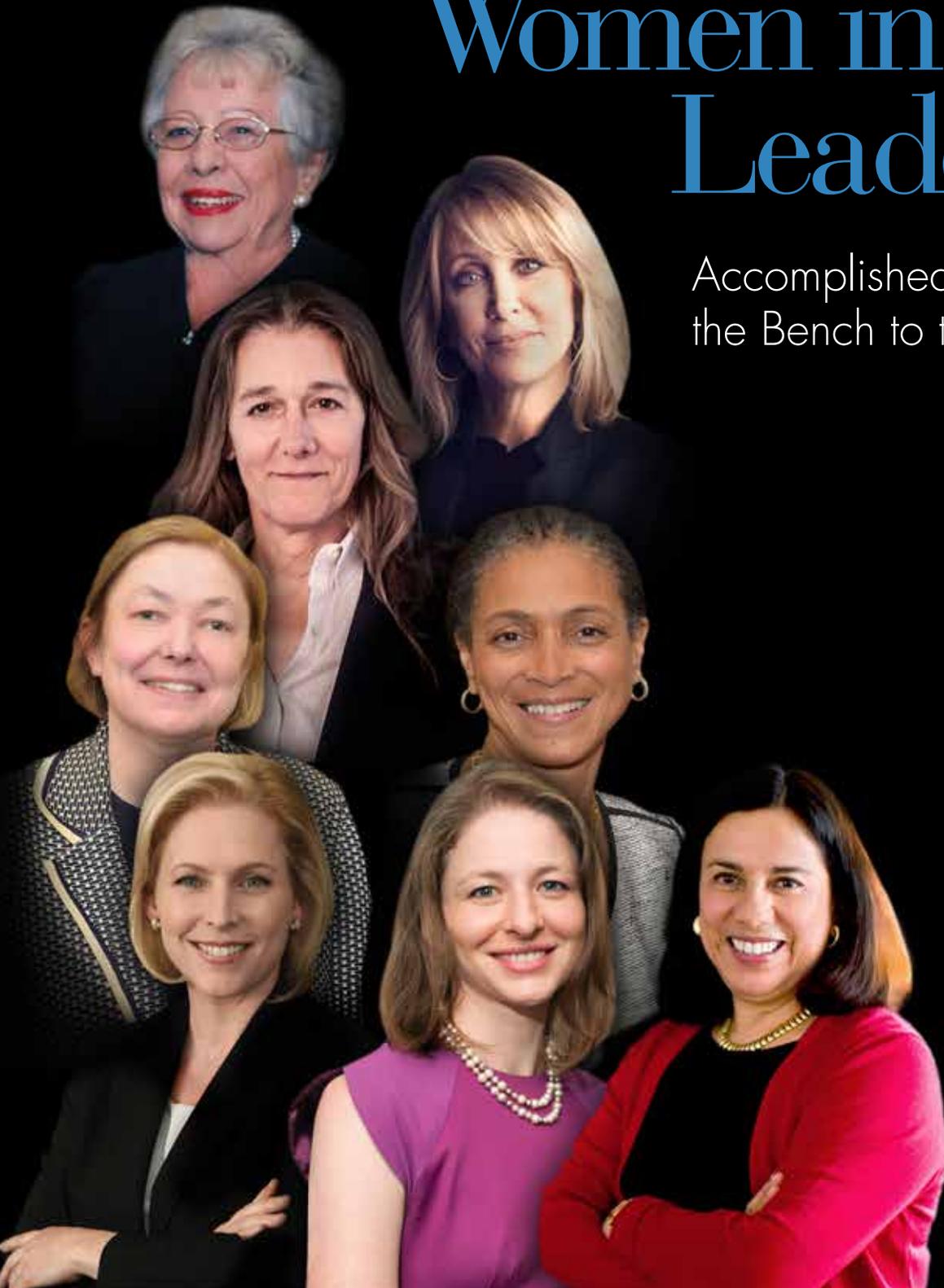


# UCLA LAW

THE MAGAZINE OF UCLA SCHOOL OF LAW

## Women in Leadership

Accomplished Alumnae, from  
the Bench to the Boardroom



# Running the



A panel featuring Karen Tse '90, Nori Gerardo Lietz '82, Antonia Hernandez '74, Marcy Morris '81, Nadia Sager '96 at the UCLA Law Women LEAD Summit.

# Show

## UCLA Law Women: A Legacy of Leadership



UCLA School of Law still occupied a set of Quonset huts behind Royce Hall when Dorothy Wright Nelson began her studies in 1950. One of just four women in the school's second class, she arrived already a big woman on campus. She was accustomed to getting good grades, and as vice president of UCLA's undergraduate student body, she had been one of the signatories on the contract that brought John Wooden to UCLA.

But law school was different. Nelson still recalls getting rough treatment from her torts professor, and her first set of exams resulted in a number of disappointing marks.

“I was going down the hall to say, ‘I think I’ll drop out for a while,’ and down comes Roscoe,” says Nelson ’53, fondly referring to Roscoe Pound, who had joined UCLA Law following his distinguished tenure as dean of Harvard Law School. “You read Corbin, you read Williston,” her mentor told her. “But you didn’t answer the question! All they want to know is: Should A recover from B?”



#### ANTONIA HERNANDEZ '74

President and CEO of the California Community Foundation

*Hernandez has overseen the California Community Foundation, a philanthropic organization with assets of more than \$1.5 billion,*

*since 2004. For two decades, Hernandez led the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and previously was counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee.*

**A sense of place.** In the early 1970s, “UCLA tried very, very hard to really set itself apart and say, ‘We’re an L.A.-based institution and we want to reflect the diversity of the place we’re in.’”

**Tough enough.** “Know yourself, know your strengths and know your weaknesses. I got to where I got because I worked my tail off; nobody’s going to give you anything. And you’ve got to be able to fight for what you believe in. That doesn’t mean you have to be obnoxious. A smile will get you so much more.”

**Bringing balance.** “Women bring a sense of compassion — as mothers, as daughters, as wives. I think that makes for a better, more holistic decision-making process. Not that women have all the answers. But we women need to embrace what we bring to the table.”

*Okay, she thought, I can do this.*

That determination has echoed throughout Nelson’s career — from USC, where she rose from the faculty to become the first female dean of a major American law school, to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, where she has served as a judge since 1979.

Nelson is hardly alone among UCLA Law alumnae in her determination to succeed. Today, alumnae run movie studios, law firms and technology companies. They are members of Congress and the U.S. Senate. They are advocates fighting the day’s fiercest policy battles. At UCLA Law, they found an environment that encouraged scholarship and leadership from the very start.

#### ‘THIS WAS NOT TOKENISM’

The school’s very first group of graduates included five women, led by Laverne Sagmaster, who finished at the top of the Class of 1952. Sixteen years later, Barbara Brudno (see remembrance on page 90) became UCLA Law’s first female faculty member at a time when women professors were rare at law schools. Then in 1972, Susan Westerberg Prager ’71, who had been one of Brudno’s students, joined the faculty alongside Alison Grey Anderson and Carole E. Goldberg, the nation’s preeminent scholar in Native American law.

“Most of the major law schools hired one woman that year, and we hired three, which showed that this was not tokenism, it was for real,” recalls professor emerita Anderson, who chose to join UCLA Law over Harvard and Yale, among other law schools. “The institution appealed to me instantly. People were genuinely interested in creating a very good place to be a woman faculty member.”

Soon thereafter, professors Grace Ganz Blumberg, Christine A. Littleton and Frances Elisabeth Olsen made the school a hub of scholarship in feminist legal theory and family law. And in the decades since, women professors have continued to reach the pinnacle of legal scholarship in philosophy, critical race studies, criminal law, employment, evidence, environmental law, and human rights, among many other fields.

And leadership. Prager went on to become dean of UCLA Law, serving for 16 years. She was the first of three women to have served in that role. Rachel F. Moran was dean from 2010 to 2015. Current dean Jennifer L. Mnookin succeeded Moran. No other top law school has had as many female deans, and several have never had a single one.

“People were genuinely interested in creating a very good place to be a woman faculty member.”

— ALISON GREY ANDERSON

“I benefitted tremendously from having had faculty members at UCLA law school who were women,” says Martine Rothblatt ’81, founder of SiriusXM Satellite Radio and the biotech company United Therapeutics. “That is like a beacon of light to other women, to see that it is possible for women to achieve these high-prestige positions.”

Antonia Hernandez, the president and CEO of the California Community Foundation, says, “UCLA law school gave me the tools to be an effective person in trying to achieve social change.” Before joining the foundation, Hernandez was counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee, working with Sen. Ted Kennedy and then-committee counsel Stephen Breyer,



**MARTINE ROTHBLATT '81**

Chairman and CEO of United Therapeutics

*Rothblatt went from doing regulatory work in communications as a practicing attorney to founding Sirius XM Satellite Radio. Now the founder and leader of United*

*Therapeutics, she makes life-saving lung and heart drugs and has ranked as the nation's highest-paid female CEO.*

**The UCLA way.** “I work my butt off for the people who feel that they are working for me or my organization. I really learned that philosophy at UCLA. It struck me how the entire faculty at UCLA Law seemed to be working for the students.”

**Exclusionary rule.** Rothblatt transitioned to female in the 1990s. “When I presented as a man, I could tell people automatically assumed that I was in charge. When I go into a group of people who don’t know me or my background and they see a woman, you can feel it. There’s male-male bonding going on, and you get kind of excluded.”

**A new view.** Being a woman in the male-dominated business world allows Rothblatt “to see things, often, from an outsider’s perspective, and that is key to business success. Great business ideas arise from seeing the things that everybody else has seen but thinking what nobody else has thought.”

**WOMEN AND UCLA LAW: A TIMELINE**

1952

UCLA Law’s first graduating class includes five women. Laverne Sagmaster finishes first in the class.

1963

Joan Dempsey Gross ’55 (later Klein) becomes the first alumna on a California court when she is named to the L.A. Municipal Court. Later, she is named to the California Court of Appeal and becomes the state’s first female presiding justice.

1968

Barbara Brudno becomes the first woman to join the UCLA Law faculty.

**STACEY SNIDER '85**

Chairman and CEO  
of Twentieth Century  
Fox Film

*Long a top Hollywood executive, Snider oversees an empire with \$8 billion in annual revenue, and recent hits including*

*Deadpool and Hidden Figures. She previously headed DreamWorks Studios, Universal Pictures and TriStar Pictures.*

**Hey, Snider.** “I have fond memories of my study group meeting in the law school courtyard. We got together first year and made it all the way to graduation. We called each other by our surnames!”

**Hard road.** “Women in business and law still have a long way to go. It’s especially difficult for women in law, since the path to partnership coincides with the path to motherhood. Frankly, that was one of the reasons I detoured out of the field.”

**Three keys.** “A successful leader has to continue to be an expert in their field. One has to keep learning. A successful leader must chart a path for the company and articulate the company’s goals and values. And a successful leader has to communicate well to the group and to individuals.”

and was the longtime head of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. “As a woman, UCLA Law forced me to hone my independence and my sense of right and wrong, and realize that I really had to get involved.”

“We were looking to create a network that provides mutual support to advance the careers of our women alumni and students.”

— NANCY L. ABELL '79

**SHARING SUCCESS**

On a cool Friday in early February 2017, more than 400 students, attorneys and business leaders met for the largest gathering of women in UCLA Law history: the inaugural UCLA Law Women *LEAD* Summit.

The event was sponsored by UCLA Law Women *LEAD*, which was launched less than three years ago by Moran and a distinguished board of alumnae, led by founding co-chairs Nancy L. Abell '79 and Michelle Banks '88.

“We were looking to create a network that provides mutual support to advance the careers of our women alumni and students,” says Abell, one of the nation’s leading

**WOMEN AND UCLA LAW: A TIMELINE****1978**

Sondra Berchin '77 becomes the first UCLA Law alumna to clerk at the U.S. Supreme Court when she is hired by Justice Thurgood Marshall.

**1982**

Susan Westerberg Prager '71 becomes the first female dean of UCLA Law and goes on to serve for 16 years.

**1985**

Basketball star Val Ackerman earns her J.D. Later, she becomes the founding president of the WNBA and the first woman to head USA Basketball and the Big East Conference.



**DOROTHY WRIGHT NELSON '53**

Senior Circuit Judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

*In 1967, Nelson became dean of USC's law school, making her the first woman to be dean at a major American law school. In 1979, President Carter named her, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and eight others to be among the first women to serve on the federal courts of appeals.*

**Finding purpose.** UCLA Law introduced Nelson to the Baha'i Faith, which inspired her to be a trailblazer in alternative dispute resolution. An observation from her mentor, Roscoe Pound, has colored her career: "It doesn't matter what the law is if the access to justice isn't there.' That's why I became interested in mediation, as a way to justice. The adversary system, I really found in law school, is too costly, too painful, too inefficient, really, for a civilized society."

**A successful leader has...** "Empathy. It's just being a human being who cares about other people and looks for how they can serve humanity. As opposed to: 'How can I get myself ahead on the ladder? How can I make more money?'"



**JESSIE KORNBERG '07**

President and CEO of Bet Tzedek

*Kornberg was editor-in-chief of the Women's Law Journal at UCLA Law, and since leaving has distinguished herself as a driving force for law in the public interest. She served as the inaugural executive director of Ms. JD and now heads L.A.'s leading non-profit law firm, Bet Tzedek, which offers free legal aid to people across Southern California.*

**The UCLA Law difference.** "UCLA has been home to female leaders for longer than any other law school in history. Our campus opened its doors with a goal of gender inclusion and has practiced what it preached ever since. The first female deans in the country, some of the first female professors in the country in each of their respective fields... I had female professors throughout my 1L curriculum."

**Lean in.** A key idea comes from her grandfather: "Be bold. Because it is an incredible privilege to get to do in your job something that is interesting. And most people never get that privilege."

1986

Professor Kimberlé W. Crenshaw joins the faculty. She is the first African-American woman to receive tenure at UCLA Law.

1994

Laura E. Gómez becomes the first Latina faculty member at UCLA Law, and later the first Latina to receive tenure. In 1995, women are a majority (51%) of the entering class for the first time.

1998

Mari Matsuda becomes the first Asian-American woman to receive tenure as a law professor in the U.S.

employment attorneys and a partner at Paul Hastings. She remembers the support she received when she was eight months pregnant and going on the road as a member of UCLA Law's national moot court team: "That was big, back in 1978 — I think a lot of schools would have said, 'You're not traveling, let alone doing this.'"

Through packed-house presentations and panels featuring the likes of California Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye and former U.S. Labor Secretary Alexis Herman, the *LEAD* Summit addressed everything from the expectations placed on mid-level law firm associates to how to obtain a judicial clerkship to tips for breaking the still-present gender barriers in corporate boardrooms.

In conversation with Mnookin, Cantil-Sakauye described the challenge that continues to face women in the law. Early in her career, she said, she had been denied opportunities because people said she "looked like she couldn't stand up in a court," "would be weak in arguing" and "was too pretty." Even today, she added, "people are surprised to see a woman as chief. ... We have many, many ... more steps to go to be at the top of our profession."

Herman, the day's keynote speaker, implored the assembled women to take risks, expand their reach and "stay engaged," especially in times when social and political debates are increasingly fierce and fraught. "The role of women will become even more important," she said. "We need you."



#### SANDRA SEVILLE-JONES '86

Co-Managing Partner of  
Munger, Tolles & Olson

*Since 2009, Seville-Jones has served as co-managing partner of L.A.'s 200-lawyer Munger, Tolles & Olson, noted for its representation of women in partnership, financial strength*

*and pro bono work. She focused on corporate work before taking on her leadership role in the firm.*

**Role models.** "At the time I was at the school, Susan Prager was the dean and the dean of students was Barbara Varat. The fact that there were two strong women leaders set UCLA apart from other law schools at the time. The diversity of the student population also helped to lay the foundation for working in an environment where there are lots of different voices."

**Qualities to lead by.** "Listening is a critical part of successful leading. And saying thank you for a job well done. It is one of the most powerful ways to build camaraderie and loyalty."

**A matter of perspective.** Seville-Jones advises everyone to "keep your sense of humor. We work in environments with very high-stakes situations, so a little laughter can keep everyone moving in the right direction."

## WOMEN AND UCLA LAW: A TIMELINE

2010

Rachel F. Moran is the second woman to be appointed dean of UCLA Law — and the first Latina dean of a Top 20 law school.

2015

UCLA Law Women *LEAD* founded. Jennifer L. Mnookin is the third woman to be appointed dean of UCLA Law.

Students were invigorated by the speakers and the networking opportunities. “It was great hearing from so many women in positions of power talk about their journeys and provide their insights,” says Erin Hallagan ’18, the co-editor-in-chief of the *Women’s Law Journal* at UCLA. “I’m in awe of the impact that they have made, and I feel energized and inspired to take risks, make meaningful connections, and own my passion and strengths as I begin my legal career.”

UCLA Law Women *LEAD* is now more than 1,500 members strong, and its ongoing networking events and mentorship opportunities are deepening ties among generations of women who have entered UCLA Law’s building — or Quonset huts.

“It’s great to have knowledge, but you have to have volition, and you have to have action... For me, that all began at UCLA.”

— DOROTHY WRIGHT NELSON

### VIEW FROM THE TOP

Now a senior judge on the Ninth Circuit, Dorothy Wright Nelson reflects on the long road from those huts to her grand chambers overlooking the Arroyo Seco in Pasadena, in the same federal courthouse where three other UCLA Law alumnae — judges Kim McLane Wardlaw ’79, Sandra Ikuta ’88 and Jacqueline Nguyen ’91 — have their chambers.

Law students and graduates at a crossroads, Nelson says, have turned to her for advice and assistance on countless occasions over the decades.

“Find something you’re passionate about,” she says she tells them, “and then do something about it. It’s great to have knowledge, but you have to have volition, and you have to have action. And become involved with people who have the same passion you have. For me, that all began at UCLA.”



### KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND '91

U.S. Senator from New York

*Since she succeeded Hillary Clinton as U.S. Senator from New York in 2009, Gillibrand has led the way on an array of economic, military, healthcare and women’s rights issues. A former Davis, Polk & Wardwell litigator and member of Congress, she is often mentioned as a possible 2020 presidential candidate.*

**Listen up.** “UCLA Law taught me the importance of listening to constituents . . . that to represent someone means understanding them and empathizing with their concern or cause. It also taught me to be a passionate advocate who uses the facts and the law to make my best case.”

**Clinical education.** “I very much enjoyed working at Westside Legal Services in L.A. because it taught me how important it is for everyone, regardless of their income level, to have good counsel.”

**On perseverance.** “Believe in yourself and never give up. Others may underestimate you or count you out, but if you work hard and stay determined, you will prove them wrong.”



### DEBRA ALLIGOOD WHITE '93

Senior VP and General Counsel of Planned Parenthood Federation of America

*A former big firm partner, White is part of the leadership team at the country’s most powerful women’s health organization. She came to UCLA Law with a young daughter after working for eight years in New York City.*

**Finding her place.** “The community that I saw felt like I could instantaneously find my place as an older, black, mother student. It was a more welcoming environment than those I had seen at other law schools, and my success was all about the fact that I built a really supportive community.”

**Stand up.** “This is a totally gender-laden term, but know when to be cocky. Know when to be very confident in your position, in your knowledge, in your rightness, in your authority, and do not equivocate on that. We — women more than men, people of color more than white people — tend to apologize for being strong. But that’s something that people actually respect: My ability to stand up when people are bullying me is basically the only thing that’s gotten me through.”