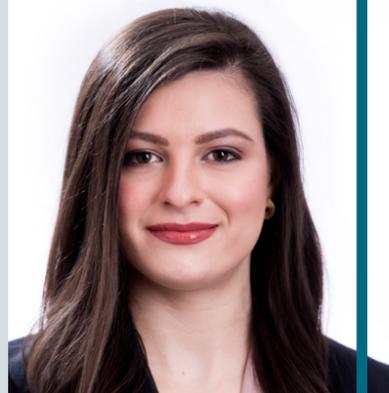


A JOURNEY INTO EMPLOYMENT LAW...

As we will learn throughout this edition, reading the stories of women in law, we unveil an array of reasons to why their field drew them in; we learn what sparked their curiosity and started the fire that fuels them throughout challenging cases.

In the below feature, we hear Silvia Stanciu's story into employment law and the hard lessons she had learnt along the way.

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Every attorney has a very specific journey into the law. Some are motivated by a “wrong” they want to make a “right.” Others simply recognize that they can become successful attorneys if they possess strong writing skills and critical thinking. My own path was dotted with professional and personal experiences that prepared me for the rewarding and demanding experience of practicing law. Growing up in Europe as the oldest daughter of two attorneys, I was certain to pick up some of my parents’ legal jargon and conviction. At the time, I believed that I would become an attorney because I could not identify any other profession that encouraged reading, writing, and defending one’s point of view on a regular

basis. Dinners became opportunities for debates, and there was a certain charm to playing “receptionist” to my mother’s eccentric clients. I always assumed I would practice law in Romania.

As a teenager, I moved to the United States, which completely changed the geographic trajectory of my career. After graduating high school, I was accepted to a college that allowed certain students to complete both their undergraduate and law degrees in six, rather than seven, years. I was thrilled to have a plan. Once in law school, I saw each class as an opportunity to consider, or rule out, potential fields of law. Ultimately, my career was shaped by my first summer internship for an

employment law firm that exclusively represented employees. That summer, I worked on cases from inception alongside the managing partner and the associates, and it was a game changer. Although I considered other legal fields by working in law firms throughout law school, I decisively returned to employment law after graduation.

Since then, I have been working on employment discrimination cases in federal and state court in New York and New Jersey. For each one of my cases, the first step is getting to the core of the potential legal claims, drafting complaints that are detailed and compelling, and ensuring that my clients are aware of their options moving forward. I have argued motions

before judges and arbitrators. I have settled cases in private mediations and court settlement conferences. Most importantly, I got my wish of advocating on behalf of my clients, and helping secure better outlooks for those who were wronged. Along the way, I learned many difficult lessons about interacting with clients. The most important

movement, I have been representing employees who endured sexual harassment in the workplace. The #metoo movement brought a sense of reckoning, and surprise, to those who did not realize the breadth of sexual harassment across all industries, regardless of the existence of a Human Resources department or an Employee

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lesson thus far was that tailoring my representation to the client is crucial when you are exclusively representing individuals. There is a range of emotions, motivations, and hurdles that have to be taken into account with every employment case. To that end, developing strong and empathetic listening skills has enabled me to pinpoint important facts, and mitigate legal hurdles before they arise.

All my clients experience the same internal conflict—standing up for their rights, at the risk of losing their livelihood. Some clients are afraid of exposing their claims, and their lives, in a public lawsuit, so most of my work will occur pre-suit, i.e. behind the scenes. I have worked on difficult wage and hour cases, where employers still woefully and illegally underpay their employees, taking advantage of their vulnerability or language barrier. But, representing victims of sexual harassment has been the most difficult, and nuanced, aspect of my practice. Even before the rise of the #metoo

Hotline. In New York, victims of sexual harassment may have a viable cause of action for sex discrimination or sexual harassment regardless of the size of the employer. Practically speaking, even employers that are too small to have a Human Resources department are not exempt from liability.

In the most emotional of cases, it is not about compensation or vindication—most people come to an attorney because they need someone in their corner as they navigate a difficult situation at work. In a sense, an attorney can be the only support system left for employees who feel like they are stuck between “a rock and a hard place.” As a woman, I am horrified at some of the verbal and physical harassment my clients endure on a regular basis. As an advocate, I am determined to make “right” by them, and push as far as the ever-changing employment laws are willing to bend. In the end, I learned that employment law is so much more than writing and critical thinking skills— it is a “people” practice.