

AV-Rated Women-Owned Firm

Dedicated To Service, Integrity, And Excellence



Yolanda E. Lopez, Lea Patricia L. Francisco, Katharine L. Spaniac, Lawya L. Rangel, and Erin A. Halas

Q: What does inclusive leadership mean to you? Katharine Spaniac: Our team at CSA represents a heterogeneous group of people. However, we are similar in what counts: basic human values, including a commitment to character, ethics, trustworthiness, responsibility, and work excellence. Our differences allow us to bring different, unique perspectives that ultimately benefit our clients and the firm. We are united as a team, we collaborate as a team, and we all have in common what really matters. So, to me, inclusive leadership means providing everyone with the same opportunity, support, and resources to get the job done.

Q: How does the ClouseSpaniac team reflect its commitment to diversity, inclusion, and excellence? Lawya Rangel: Acknowledging the unique insights, identities, and beliefs inherent to varying backgrounds and cultural experiences enables us to approach problems and situations from other perspectives. I feel incredibly fortunate

to have the opportunity to work in an environment that encourages collaboration and recognizes that diverse viewpoints are an invaluable asset in the ever-changing litigation landscape. The attorneys and staff members of CSA are reflective of the firm's dedication to diversity and inclusion. Our firm's makeup proudly represents multiple cultural backgrounds and life experiences. This allows us to approach the needs of clients who themselves serve ethnically, culturally, and socio-economically diverse communities from an informed perspective.

Q: What do you find most rewarding about practicing law? Lea Francisco: The most rewarding aspects of civil litigation have never been about a particular case, argument, win, or financial gain. For me, they have been about the inspirational and brilliant people I have met, worked with, and serve. I find the ability to help people navigate through difficult and stressful problems rewarding. Practicing in the area of employment law has been particularly rewarding as the meaning, importance, and dignity of work connect most of us, our society, and our communities. More personally, I feel immense privilege, fulfillment, and intangible reward by the opportunities and ability to be a lawyer and a mom, for which I am grateful to the women, allies, and supporters who have made that possible.

Q: How has practicing at ClouseSpaniac helped your law career? Erin Halas: Working at CSA has provided me with the opportunity to work with a diverse team of individuals with varying personal and professional backgrounds. In turn, this has helped my law career as it has provided me with the ability to apply a multi-faceted approach in representing and serving our clients.

Q: Why is diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competency important to you in the practice of law? Yolanda Lopez: Diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competence play a vital role in practicing law. Although these values are not commonly prioritized in the law school classroom, it is because of them that landmark cases addressing issues that affect our everyday lives, like gender and racial equality, have impacted the evolution of our laws. These values will continue to shape the legal spectrum. The impact starts with the individual and in the firm. A firm that embraces these values contributes to making a difference in the practice of law and offers young, hopeful attorneys a platform to grow and immerse themselves in the ever-changing practice of law.

Q: How have you seen the legal field change during your career? Justin Clark: Women were first admitted to the American Bar Association more than a century ago, yet are still met with sexism in their personal lives and in the legal field. When I entered law school more than 15 years ago, there was about an equal number of female and male law students. Yet, the options available to men and women continued to differ. Equality continues to be an issue today. The struggles are further compounded by race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and disabilities. Nevertheless, we not only see more women entering the practice of law, but the perspectives of their male counterparts evolving as well. I am proud to work in a women-owned firm in which each of its attorneys brings their own unique perspective to the practice of law.

Q: How have you found unity in a traditionally divisive landscape and adversarial practice?

Richard Clouse: I have been practicing law, primarily civil litigation, for 41 years. The nature of the practice has grown more complex in some ways and simpler in others. However, the advocate's role in taking on the client's problems and presenting and arguing the client's case to the best of his or her ability has not changed. Fortunately, I have seen the practice open to persons who may not have traditionally fit the "lawyer" stereotype as we have worked hard to shed artificial impediments and divisive walls based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or what-have-you. It is my privilege to practice with some fantastic people. Most of them happen to be women. Like me, my colleagues come from modest backgrounds, and our commitment to hard work, dedication, and character unites us as a team. Those are the qualities that we bring to our cases for our clients.



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