

This Buchalter Attorney's Podcast Seeks to 'Nudge' Women to Consider Judgeships

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By ALM Staff



Buchalter shareholder Mary-Christine "M.C." Sungaila is nominated for the California Legal Awards' Innovation in Diversity and Inclusion Award for her podcast highlighting women on the appellate bench.

Sungaila, who is based in the firm's Orange County and San Diego offices, told The Recorder how her podcast project helps illuminate the various pathways in the legal profession.

Please tell us about your diversity and inclusion initiative and the underlying problem that sparked the initiative.

The Portia Project® podcast was born out of twin desires to highlight women on the appellate bench and to encourage more women to apply to serve on the appellate courts by sharing the many varied paths women have taken to get there.

There are disproportionately fewer women state Supreme Court justices. And many women who have joined the bench have said they were specifically encouraged to apply by a judicial or other mentor.



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The hope was that the podcast would be that “nudge” for women to consider the bench, and would expand the impact of judicial mentoring initiatives both the California courts and the governor’s office have put in place.

Once launched, the podcast’s mission broadened to highlighting the many other areas women with law degrees are leading inside and outside the law, with a goal of inspiring girls and young women to consider law school.

Over 75 state and federal judges nationwide have shared or will be sharing their career stories —a first for any podcast— alongside chief legal officers, law firm managing partners, law professors and deans, legal nonprofit leaders, and those leading outside the law with their law degrees as legal tech founders, fiction writers, and museum executives.

What are the measurable outcomes of the initiative?

The podcast website has nearly 2,000 visitors each month, and the podcast itself has nearly 12,000 downloads to-date.

It has been ranked among the Top 20 women in the law podcasts globally by Feedspot and awarded a 2022 IMPACT award for Best Podcast by the Internet Marketing Association.

Podcasts create community and amplify the good work of community organizations. The podcast has already amplified the work of Girls Inc.® Orange County in educating high school girls in an externship training program by presenting a panel of local women judges and lawyers to the 100 girls in the program, which was recorded and later broadcast on the podcast- both amplifying Girls Inc.® and its work and getting the wisdom of the panel out beyond the 100 girls in that room.

What advice do you have for members of the legal industry looking to launch similar initiatives?

Podcasts are exploding in popularity. But legal podcasts hosted by practicing lawyers (rather than journalists) are still relatively rare.

A few of us are changing that. We are using legal storytelling in the podcast format to educate the public about the law and to celebrate the contributions of women and diverse lawyers across the profession, including on the bench.

Join us. And when you do, consider ways to build community offline too, and amplify the already existing good work of nonprofits like Girls Inc.