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**WOMEN IN
INVESTIGATIONS**

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There has certainly been a shift in subject-matter focus. When I started practising in 2010, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, there was an understandable emphasis on mortgage-backed securities, with Libor and forex manipulation following shortly thereafter, and a strong focus on financial institutions. We now see a wide range of investigations, spanning many industries and subject areas – antitrust and fraud investigations remain prominent – but we are also seeing a lot of activity in the FCPA and sanctions space, as well as a growing focus on privacy and cybersecurity. More broadly, and perhaps most consequentially, investigations have become increasingly globalised. As businesses have become even more global over the past ten years, investigations have evolved correspondingly: multiple regulatory regimes are often at play, and regulators frequently cooperate and coordinate with one another. Indeed, it is now a rarity that an investigation does not involve multiple geographies, foreign laws, and cross-jurisdictional cooperation and coordination, all of which have become an integral part of our work.

I am never more proud and never feel more accomplished, than when younger lawyers share that they view me as a mentor and an example. It is incredibly humbling and inspiring, and gives me the confidence that, no matter the challenges, I have done something right.

I feel fortunate to be working on complex and intellectually stimulating, high-stakes matters with exceptionally smart people. My colleagues, our clients and the government actors we work across from each bring insight and skill to the table that invariably makes the work interesting and teaches me something new every day. I can confidently say I never feel bored.

A career in law, and particularly in the investigations space, is not necessarily an obvious choice for someone with my background. I was born and raised in Bulgaria, moved to the US as a student, and did not necessarily easily blend in any meeting, phone call or courtroom. Of course, a multicultural background also has tremendous advantages,

especially in our increasingly globalised practice. It is a delicate, daily balancing act between fitting in enough to be taken seriously, but also harnessing the unique skills and perspective that come with being a little different. Learning how to strike that balance has been a challenge, but also an invaluable learning opportunity in how to be an effective advocate.

Now that meeting by video has become common practice, I tend to have more face-to-face time with my clients – albeit digital – than I would before the pandemic. Video calls certainly cannot replace meeting in person but have been a pleasantly surprising way to stay – or become – closer with clients or colleagues that we might otherwise meet only by phone.

There is no denying that the investigations field – like many others – needs a more diverse set of voices around the table. There has been amazing effort, and progress, in that regard over the recent years, but more work remains to be done. Allyship is an integral part of it, as is critical thinking about our own and others' behavioural and thought patterns. For example, one very simple thing we all could do is to be cognisant of potentially unhelpful gender-specific behavioural patterns that we are all prone to fall into, largely thanks to mere inertia. For example, as a supervisor, do you see the same person on your team perform the same thankless tasks that inure to the collective benefit, either because they volunteer when no one else does or because they are specifically asked to do them? These could be as simple as organising meeting logistics, taking notes or coordinating everyone's schedules. If yes, make the effort to proactively manage workflow to allocate such assignments more evenly. Similarly, it is critically important to encourage a diverse set of professionals to speak up, but encouragement only gets us halfway there. That is why allyship is so important. If those who are used to speaking up occasionally take a step back, or even to the side, to create space for those that do not normally have the chance to do so, we will realise the benefits of the diversity of voices already around the table.

I have definitely had many occasions where the solution to a thorny issue has struck me at the unlikeliest of times and places, including sometimes in my sleep!

In recent years, whistleblowing has emerged as an increasingly important trigger for and integral part of investigations. In the US, in particular, there are various regulatory regimes designed to encourage and reward whistleblowing, and recent enforcement activity suggests that those efforts are bearing fruit. Paired with the current broader societal impetus to speak up in the face of potential wrongdoing – as well as the recent efforts to institute formal environmental, social and governance (ESG) disclosure requirements for public companies – in the next few years, we will likely see increased, and increasingly high-profile, whistleblowing on a very diverse set of topics in the investigations space.