

An INCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



with Kim Nguyen, Esq.



The mission of the State Bar of New Mexico's Equity in Justice Program is to cultivate and grow a legal profession in New Mexico that is representative of and reflective of the people of New Mexico. As part of that mission, we bring you the series "Inclusive Interviews." We call these *inclusive* interviews both as a play on words and as a contrast to the term "Exclusive Interview."

Because legal employers with inclusive hiring and employment practices have a bigger talent pool from which to hire and access to a larger client base, these interviews serve to amplify that growing and cultivating inclusivity in our profession is beneficial to all legal employers, be they private firms, government entities or nonprofits.

This *Inclusive Interview* is Kim Nguyen, Esq. Kim has been practicing law since 2022 and is currently an Associate Attorney at Ray Peña McChristian.

Q: What is your background?

A: I was born in a small town in southern Vietnam. My family and I traded in the life that we had in our home country to be low-income Americans in California. I attended college in California where I graduated magna cum laude with a BA in journalism and public relations and awarded the overall graduate in my department from Chico State. Right after graduation, I started my legal education at Washington and Lee University where I developed an interest in helping indigent communities from my summer internship at Contra Costa Public Defenders and my school's Criminal Justice Clinic. After law school, I moved to New Mexico with my pug and began practicing criminal defense at the Law Offices of the Public Defender. After two years at LOPD, I transitioned to civil defense.

Q: What made you want to become a lawyer?

A: A big part of being a lawyer is the constant learning that takes place, which matches my view that learning does not stop after graduation. My love for learning was cultivated from the stories that my mom told me growing up. My mom's childhood was war-torn, so she had limited educational opportunities. From her stories, I began placing great value in education which lead me to develop a love for learning.

Q: Who is your hero in the legal profession? Who's career or work do you wish to emulate?

A: Sonia Sotomayor. It is so inspirational that Sotomayor came from the Bronx housing projects to a Supreme Court Justice who champions the rights of marginalized communities and emphasize the importance of empathy and understanding in the context of the legal system.



Q: What has been your greatest accomplishment in your legal career or of what in your legal career are you the most proud?

A: The day I became a lawyer. I was working as a limited practitioner at the Public Defender's Office when I found out I passed the bar. It was a huge wave of relief because not passing meant I'd move back to California. My parents flew out from California for the swearing in ceremony and they were so happy to have the first lawyer in the family.

Q: What has been the biggest challenge you have had in your legal career?

A: The biggest challenge was overcoming the feeling of inadequacy within my legal career and develop confidence.

Q: What is your advice for new lawyers who are from diverse backgrounds? What do you wish someone had told you when you were starting your legal career?

A: My advice is to have confidence in your abilities and knowledge because you are going to do great.

Q: What advice would you give for overcoming these feelings of inadequacy and believing oneself can be great?

A: I think overcoming impostor syndrome is an individual journey, there's no one size fits all. For me, I had to really work on my confidence and deal with my personal insecurities. I focused on my physical and mental health. Moreover, I felt more confident when I felt more prepared. My biggest advice is to focus on your physical and mental health.

Q: What is your favorite part of your current position?

A: I really enjoy writing, and a big part of my current position requires writing motions.

Q: If you could have one superpower, what would it be, and why?

A: I'd like to be able to teleport because I'd save so much money on travel.

Q: What is something the legal profession in New Mexico can do to be more inclusive?

A: New Mexico can offer more volunteering programs and opportunities that includes training into the relevant area of law. I think volunteering create a more inclusive community and it is also a great opportunity to get experience in a less familiar field of law.

Interested in being the subject of an Inclusive Interview?

Contact SBNM Equity in Justice Attorney Abby Lewis at abby.lewis@sbnm.org.

