

Top WOMEN LAWYERS 2020

Mira Hashmall

Hashmall heads Miller Barondess' appellate practice and also represents clients in all phases of litigation. Her clients include healthcare companies, commercial banks, government agencies and entertainment studios in cases involving First Amendment claims, insurance coverage issues, defamation and libel claims and employment disputes.

In mid-October she filed an employment discrimination suit on behalf of the lead name partner of a California labor and employment firm on claims he had been driven from his job by his partners. *Dave Carothers v. Carothers DiSante & Freudenberger LLP*, 20STCV39320 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed Oct. 13, 2020).

Hashmall called the claims "breathtaking." His former firm said Carothers "was a valued and respected partner" who resigned after a client sued him to collect an alleged debt. The complaint Hashmall drafted asserted that Carothers was constructively discharged, retaliated against and discriminated against financially after he suffered health problems in 2019.

Among the complaint's striking claims: after the May 2020 police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minn., Carothers, who is Black and was the co-chair of the firm's diversity and inclusion committee, was told by the firm's executive committee that he could not speak for the firm via a statement he'd prepared denouncing the killing for fear of alienating its white attorneys.

"He's been treated unspeakably," Hashmall said. Her complaint drew a stark contrast between the firm's claim on its website that diversity and inclusion are the "bedrock" of the firm and the other partners' alleged negative treatment of Carothers, who served as the San Diego office's managing partner and the firm's senior trial counsel.

In another headline-grabbing case, Hashmall, representing Los Angeles County, in September obtained a judicial ruling that Sheriff Alex Villanueva's attempt to reinstate former deputy Caren Carl Mandoyan was unlawful. The deputy was fired in 2016 after a fellow officer alleged he had assaulted her, tried to break into her home, sent her harassing text messages and lied about it. Villanueva took steps to bring back Mandoyan, who had served as Villanueva's chauffeur. *County of Los Angeles v. Villanueva*, 19STCP00630 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed May 4, 2019).

"It was really important to delineate the authority of the Board of Supervisors and county counsel to control litigation and hiring decisions," Hashmall said. "The sheriff took the position that he could make decisions outside of civil service rules, but the judge's decision in our favor is decisive, correct and very, very thorough. If they decide to appeal, I feel very strongly about the strength of our position here."

Earlier, Hashmall successfully defended a federal civil rights suit Mandoyan filed alleging retaliation for his political support



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Practice Type:
Litigation, Appeals

of Villanueva. *Mandoyan v. County of Los Angeles*, 2:19-cv-02537 (C.D. Cal., filed March 4, 2019).

— John Roemer