

**Mentor, marathoner, lawyer and community servant: Meet Marisa Rodriguez, a senior deputy city attorney for the city of North Las Vegas. Rodriguez entered law school later than some after having a successful career in banking for several years. But, since her graduation from the William S. Boyd School of Law in 2013, she has made every second count.**

Rodriguez's efforts during the past seven years have garnered widespread recognition. Most recently, she was named the 2020 William S. Boyd School of Law's Alum of the Year. Last year, U.S. Senator Catherine Cortez-Masto appointed Rodriguez to the Bipartisan Judicial Selection Commission in Southern Nevada, which evaluates potential nominees to the District Court for the District of Nevada and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

"When Senator Jacky Rosen and I formed bipartisan judicial commissions to help us put forward qualified Nevadans to the federal bench, it was Marisa's service to her community and her commitment to excellence that made her a perfect fit to serve on the Southern Nevada Commission," Sen. Cortez-Masto said. "These commissions have a significant responsibility, and our selection of Marisa speaks volumes to her character, reputation, and judgment."

Rodriguez was also selected to serve on the advisory board for the Justice Michael L. Douglas Fellowship Program and was named as one of the top "40 Under 40" attorneys by the National Hispanic Bar Association.

Rodriguez began her legal career as a judicial law clerk to the late Honorable Susan W. Scann in the Eighth Judicial District Court,

# Exemplary Mentor and Volunteer: Marisa Rodriguez

BY MARY BACON, ESQ.

where she assisted Judge Scann with her busy business court docket. Following her clerkship, Rodriguez spent the next six years at Weinberg, Wheeler, Hudgins, Gunn & Dial, first as an associate, and then as an equity member. There, her practice focused on high-stakes complex civil litigation in Nevada and California.

Throughout these years of law practice, which for many stretches included travelling to and from California multiple times a week for depositions and hearings, Rodriguez's passion for mentoring and community service never wavered. To understand from where this passion derives, it is important to consider her background.

Rodriguez grew up in rural Mexico and moved to North Las Vegas when she was 12. At that time, Rodriguez, the oldest of four siblings, did not speak any English. Her family had modest financial resources and she would eventually become the first person in her family to graduate high school. Yet, instead of viewing these circumstances as barriers or challenges, she viewed them as a chance for change. At a young age, her parents taught her that education could take her where she wanted to go. To accomplish her goals, she set and executed a plan that eventually resulted in her obtaining her bachelor's degree from UNLV and becoming a lawyer. Since then, Rodriguez has devoted thousands of hours to helping others navigate challenges similar to hers and traverse the path she once did.

Since graduating from Boyd, Rodriguez has served as a mentor and volunteer with Huellas, a nationally recognized multi-tier mentoring program organized by La Voz, the law school's Hispanic student organization. Huellas is the Spanish word for footprint. The program matches a practicing attorney, law student, college student and high school student as a group for the purpose of mentoring and support. Through this program, Rodriguez has mentored numerous individuals, arranging weekly outings and learning experiences. She has arranged hikes, bowling trips and even a lunch with her colleagues so her mentees could discuss the practice of law with multiple attorneys and see how the inside of a law firm operates.





Latino Bar Association board members are Judge Cristina Silva (bottom row, from left), Andrea Gandara, Marisa Rodriguez, Martha Menendez, Briana Martinez, Mayra Salinas-Menjivar, Ed Carranza, Romeo Perez, Enrique Acuña (top, from left) and Claudia Aguayo.



Laura Barrera (from left), Marisa Rodriguez and Mayra Salinas-Menjivar at Boyd School of Law's 20th Anniversary Gala.



Deputy Attorney General and fellow Boyd graduate Jessica Perlick (left) and Marisa Rodriguez after finishing her 16th marathon.

Beyond that, Rodriguez helps her mentees with concerns that many fail to recognize. For example, she arranged for one of her high school mentees to shadow a public defender after the mentee expressed interest in becoming a public defender – but had no idea who to talk to or the path to take to make that happen. In addition, Rodriguez often encourages and counsels her extremely talented mentees on ways to overcome imposter syndrome and chase their dream jobs—and then she assists them in preparing for their interviews and negotiating their salaries. It is no surprise that when asked, Rodriguez’s mentees are quick to sing her praises and refer to her as their “lifeline.”

In addition to mentoring, in 2019 Rodriguez served as president of the Las

Vegas Latino Bar Association. Within that role, she led many initiatives, but none more notable than founding the ¡Andale! 5K, a fun run/walk that raised scholarship funds for LSAT preparation courses and LSAT registration fees for Latino undergraduate students aspiring to attend law school. The inaugural ¡Andale! 5K took place in September 2019. The event was a healthy community event, which raised more than \$40,000 with hundreds of participants. The proceeds funded scholarships for 17 prospective law students.

Throughout her time as a lawyer, Rodriguez has consistently worked on pro bono matters. Most notably, she helped two minors who fled horrific conditions in Honduras obtain asylum. She has also advocated on behalf of children through the Children’s Advocacy Project, represented several clients who wished to change their name to comport with their gender identity and represented clients in guardianship matters.

In her free time, Rodriguez runs marathons and climbs mountains. A few years ago, she embarked upon the goal to run a marathon in all 50 states. She has now completed marathons in 23 states in addition to running the “authentic marathon” in Greece, which, according to legend, traces the steps the Greek

messenger Pheidippides is said to have run from Marathon to Athens to deliver news of the victory of the Battle of Marathon. As for mountains, Rodriguez recently set the goal to climb all the “fourteeners”—for the non-climbers amongst us, this means a mountain peak with an elevation of at least 14,000 feet—in Colorado, of which there are about 60. While she has only reached two summits thus far, given her track record, that will likely not be the case for long.

**MARY BACON** is a full-service business litigation attorney. She prosecutes and defends claims on behalf of business entities in a host of industries in courts and arbitrations in cases involving difficult and complicated business matters. Bacon’s litigation practice is focused on complex civil litigation in both state and federal court involving construction disputes, breach of contract actions and defending financial institutions.

