



## NEVADA TRAILBLAZERS

# Meet Claudia Aguayo:

## Despite Personal Tragedy, She Persisted

**BY RYAN GORMLEY (WEINBERG, WHEELER, HUDGINS, GUNN & DIAL, LLC); MARY BACON (SPENCER FANE LLP); AND MARISA RODRIGUEZ (CITY OF NORTH LAS VEGAS)**

In speaking with Claudia Aguayo, it does not take long to recognize her passion for public service—it's contagious. **As the assistant city attorney for the city of North Las Vegas, Aguayo is passionate about both her work and the people she serves.** In the city's residents, she sees her mom, her dad, her siblings, and herself. She understands their struggles and hears their concerns, and she is determined to provide them with the level of service they deserve—the best.

Although Aguayo's passion rings of optimism, it arose out of turmoil. She was born in East Los Angeles and raised in downtown Las Vegas. At the age of 15, a drive-by shooting left her house riddled with bullet holes and shattered her sense of security. A year later, she lost her 18-year-old brother to gun violence. No one was held accountable for either senseless act of violence.

Despite this trauma and failing by the system, Aguayo persevered. She wanted to put herself in a position to make others feel seen, cared for, and protected. Formerly an average student, she turned into an "A" student and went on to attend and graduate from the University of Nevada, Reno.

At the University of Nevada, Aguayo studied journalism and criminal justice, areas in which she felt she could have an impact. While going to school full-time, she worked four different jobs to make ends meet.

Law school was not on her radar until one of her jobs as a videographer at a local television station took her inside a courtroom. There, she saw the legal system at work and realized she could be a part of it. She took the LSAT, earned scholarships, and was admitted to the University of California, Davis, King Hall School of Law, graduating in 2002.

As a newly minted attorney, Aguayo served as a deputy district attorney for Sacramento County, then moved into private practice in California, focusing on civil rights and constitutional law, before moving back home to care for her ailing father. It was then she was hired by the city of North Las Vegas. A decade and a half later, she has never looked back.

In her various roles with the city, Aguayo has done it all—prosecuted crimes, handled civil litigation, managed administrative matters, and counseled city policymakers and leaders. In her current role, she focuses on employment matters and labor negotiations. She also advises on police misconduct matters and teaches preventative education at the Southern Nevada Desert Regional Police Academy.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

# VEGAS DREAM TEAM .COM

CRIMINAL DEFENSE

De Castroverde Law Group is proud to bring you a criminal defense team with unparalleled knowledge and experience. The team is led by two former prosecutors who are universally well-liked and exceptionally respected.

**ALSO HELPING ATTORNEYS WITH ANY DISCIPLINARY MATTERS.**



## CRAIG HENDRICKS

Craig's vast experience and wealth of knowledge comes from his decades with the Clark County District Attorney's Office, culminating in his tenure as Chief of the Special Victims Unit. He supervised attorneys on the general litigation team, and specialized in cases such as rape, child abuse, and molestation. As one of the most respected trial attorneys in the community, he has spent several years volunteering to assist with mock trial programs at UNLV's William S. Boyd School of Law and at local high schools throughout Las Vegas.

## FRANK JOHAN COUMOU

Frank joins the Dream Team after serving in the United States Attorney's Violent Crimes and Strike Force Unit. Prior to that, he spent 25 years as a prosecutor in the Clark County District Attorney's Office where he rose to Chief of the Homicide Unit. He has prosecuted more than 120 felony jury trials, and has extensive experience in handling high-profile cases. Frank is also fluent in Spanish.

# 702.222.9999

**DE CASTROVERDE**  
LAW GROUP

Mayra Salinas-Menjivar (top row, from left), Judge Cristina Silva, Claudia Aguayo, Marisa Rodriguez, Laura Zapain, Briana Martinez, Sophie Salcedo, Steve Jimenez, Melissa Corral, Ellsie Lucero, Martha Menendez, Judge Monica Trujillo, David Lopez-Negrete, and Leslie Nino Piro attend the 2021 Latino Bar Association Induction Ceremony.

# Meet Claudia Aguayo



“Without a doubt, Claudia’s wealth of specialized knowledge and experience, combined with her distinct exceptional level of service, dedication, and commitment, have already made lasting contributions to the city,” said Micaela Moore, city attorney for North Las Vegas. “She goes above and beyond for what she is passionate about—helping people and providing quality services the community will benefit from. Claudia is the embodiment of the kind of leaders we want to see in government.”

Never one to forget her humble beginnings, Aguayo strives to use her role and voice to make her residents feel heard.

“One of my favorite aspects of the job is getting out into the community, going to people’s houses, speaking to them in Spanish, letting them know that their voices are heard, and that their ideas and concerns are important and being taken seriously,” she said.

Her efforts have not gone unnoticed.

“Throughout the 15 years I’ve worked alongside Claudia, her commitment and passion to our community has been unparalleled,” North Las Vegas Police Chief Pamela Ojeda said.

Outside of work, Aguayo serves her community in other ways. She volunteers as a pro bono attorney for Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada’s Children’s Attorney Project, taught courses on criminal justice as an adjunct faculty member at the College of Southern Nevada, and serves as a mentor for the UNLV Boyd School of Law’s *La Voz Huellas* mentorship program. She is also a member of Nevada Families for Effective Autism Treatment and serves as president of Nevada Latino Bar Association, formerly the Las Vegas Latino Bar Association.

Aguayo’s leadership of the Latino Bar Association has been transformative to the organization. Bringing the same zeal to which imparts on her public service, she has set out and already executed on soaring goals, including expanding the organization state-wide and creating programs to increase the number of Latino attorneys in Nevada and to help those already practicing prosper and grow.

In the years to come, Aguayo looks forward to continuing to fulfill the goal she set out to achieve all those years ago. When not serving her community, she enjoys hiking with her family, traveling, reading, and listening to her favorite band—Weezer—whom she has seen live in concert, let’s call it several (more than 100) times.



Claudia Aguayo meets with North Las Vegas Police Chief Pamela Ojeda (left) and Assistant Police Chief Jacqueline Gravatt.



Claudia Aguayo meets with U.S. District Court Judge Lloyd George.



Members of the North Las Vegas City Attorney’s Office - Andy Moore, Micaela Moore, Chris Craft, Noel Eidsmore, Dan Ivie, Deep Goswami, and Claudia Aguayo - visit the Nevada Supreme Court with Chief Justice James Hardesty (center).



Claudia Aguayo (center) meets with North Las Vegas City Council members Richard Churchio, Pamela Goynes-Brown, Mayor John Lee and Issac Barron.