

AAPI SPOTLIGHT – AN NGUYEN RUDA, OF BARTKO PAVIA LLP

From East San Jose to the Helm of a National Law Firm: The Inspiring Journey of An Nguyen Ruda



An Nguyen Ruda’s story is one of perseverance, purpose, and the power of never forgetting where you came from. Her journey didn’t begin in a boardroom- it began on a boat.

An immigrated to the United States from Vietnam as a child, arriving by sea like so many others fleeing war and seeking hope. Her family eventually settled in East San Jose, one of the most economically underserved communities in the Bay Area, where more than 20% of families live below the poverty line. It was in this working-class neighborhood that An’s grit and character were forged.

From a young age, An was no stranger to hardship. She worked daily at her family’s food truck a humble “roach coach” waking before dawn to help prepare meals, clean, and serve. Even during law school, she returned home regularly to work long shifts in the family restaurant. Her path was not paved with privilege or shortcuts, but with relentless dedication, early mornings, and a deep sense of responsibility.

These humble beginnings gave An more than a work ethic, they gave her perspective. She understands the challenges of small businesses because she grew up in one. She connects with people, from kitchen workers to CEOs, because she’s been both the helping hand and the decision-maker. That real-life experience is at the core of her approach to problem-solving: always practical, always human.

Despite the systemic barriers she faced as an immigrant and as an Asian woman of color in a predominantly white, male-dominated legal field, An defied expectations at every turn. Her rise is not just remarkable...it’s historic!

Today, An Nguyen Ruda is the CEO and Co-Managing Partner of Bartko Pavia LLP, a nationally respected litigation boutique. Since assuming leadership in January 2023, she has overseen the firm’s expansion from San Francisco into Los Angeles and New York City, elevating its national presence and brand.

Her Journey, Her Impact:

- Overcame cultural, economic, and gender-based barriers as an immigrant Asian woman in the legal field.
- CEO & Co-Managing Partner of Bartko Pavia LLP, leading strategic national expansion.
- Trusted advisor to businesses ranging from mom-and-pop shops to Fortune 500 companies.
- Known for litigation avoidance strategies that save clients significant time and cost.
- Nationally recognized labor negotiator, handling major union contracts across industries like healthcare, media, and manufacturing.
- Served as Special Labor Counsel in one of the largest healthcare bankruptcies in the U.S., renegotiating seven collective bargaining agreements in 70 days.
- Featured in Above the Law, speaking on authentic leadership and firm management.
- Committed mentor and role model for young lawyers, especially women and attorneys of color.

An’s presence at the helm of a major law firm is symbolic and transformational. She is a role model for the next generation of leaders who see in her not just success, but a shared struggle and a clear path forward.

Beyond her impressive legal acumen, An is deeply committed to mentoring the next generation. She’s an outspoken advocate for authenticity in leadership, especially for women and attorneys of color navigating traditionally exclusive spaces.

An Nguyen Ruda’s journey, from scrubbing dishes on a food truck to leading a national law firm, isn’t just inspiring. It’s proof that humble beginnings don’t limit how high one can rise.