



Up & Coming Lawyers

SHIRLEY XIAO LI CANTIN

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PHOTO BY MERRILL SHEA

A firm believer in the power of teamwork, Shirley Xiao Li Cantin's "challenging, exciting and fun" practice focuses on intellectual property litigation and complex commercial disputes, representing clients in high-stakes litigation in federal court and before the U.S. International Trade Commission and the Patent Trial and Appeal Board.

Committed to work-life balance and encouraging younger lawyers that it is possible, Cantin also gives back through pro bono work with the Massachusetts Volunteer Lawyers Project and the ACLU.

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Q. What do you consider your biggest achievement as a lawyer to date?

A. The pro bono work I've done. I will always treasure the time I served as a special assistant district attorney at the Middlesex DA's Office, where I represented the commonwealth in multiple appeals. I found it incredibly rewarding that I was able to stand up for those who did not have a voice. At the firm, I felt great pride when I helped a Mandarin-speaking tenant keep his housing in a landlord-tenant dispute.

Q. What is the best piece of professional advice you ever received?

A. Treat everyone with respect and courtesy. This is true in life and also in our profession.

Q. What advice would you offer new law school graduates?

A. Three pieces of advice: First, keep an open mind on the type of law you'd like to practice. Second, every assignment — no matter how small — presents opportunities. You have a real chance to shine on those smaller tasks and your good work, sound judgment and creativity on those smaller tasks will pave the way for greater opportunities. Third, no one cares about your career more than you do. You need to take charge of your own career — what experiences do you want, where would you like to be in five years, etc. You don't need to know all the answers now, but it's a reminder to be intentional as you navigate through your firm or organization. And while it may be uncomfortable, don't be shy about asking for help.

Q. What's the toughest part of your job?

A. Honestly, to balance the demands of our profession with my family life. I pride myself in giving my all to our clients and am deeply appreciative of the support they, my family and my colleagues have provided to ensure that I can pursue a career that I love while also being present for my family.

Q. What's one thing about you that might surprise people?

A. My husband might disagree, but I'm actually pretty funny.

Selected for 2018-2019 class of Massachusetts Bar Association Leadership Academy; member of Asian American Lawyers Association of Massachusetts; co-taught Harvard Law School patent trial advocacy course; member of firm's Diversity Committee