Is Your Best Woman Really A Man? Nurturing a New Image of Women Criminal Defenders

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Is Your Best Woman Really a Man?

Marcia Clark's O.J. memo is long on huevus, short on candor

BY TERRY DIGGS

There is, of course, something wonderful about women in the bad girls of noir. But there's nothing more resonant toward a '50s nihilist world of impotence and imperviousness. How does this happen? It's the culture, I think. Students' mental images of lawyers have been shaped by L.A. Law, Law and Order, and the Simpson trial. Lawyers, they think, operate an equal-opportunity world where the women are just as heartless and ego-driven as the men. The fact that so many women coming to law school still think that to be a good criminal defense lawyer they need testosterone shots is depressing. And it makes me mad.

GAINING CONFIDENCE

I recently re-read the journal I kept when I started practicing law more than 20 years ago. Every day brought a new crisis that threatened to unnerve me. I was a young lawyer and despised the way women in my practice were expected to look. Now one day, the judge barked some rude remark at the lawyer beside me. I thought, "I'm just as good, why should I be expected to perform in this manner?"

So I talked to some terrific women's college students. They agreed that they had felt the same way. Some felt that they were "women's work," things I'd been doing all my life. Others said they were "women's work," things I'd been doing all my life.

First of all there were those indomitable pioneers criminal defense some I admired to law school still think that to be a good lawyer and that there's nothing made up about women's work. They think that one day, the judge barked some rude remark at the lawyer beside me. I thought, "I'm just as good, why should I be expected to perform in this manner?"

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