

Daily Journal

OCTOBER 23, 2019

Top Boutiques IN CALIFORNIA 2019

LITIGATION

Andrade Gonzalez LLP

LOS ANGELES

The \$139 million global settlement in the Miramonte school litigation was arguably the largest case in history involving child abuse at an educational institution. And it was one Sean A. Andrade wishes he could have taken to trial.

More than 275 claimants alleged injuries from sexual abuse at the Los Angeles elementary school. The Andrade Gonzalez firm was defending the liability case while pursuing more than 20 insurers for abandoning policies dating back to 1976. The insurance case continues, but the liability case settled during voir dire.

“Winning is not always as black and white as winning at trial,” said Andrade. “As a lawyer, you might want to try every case and win but as lawyers you have to think about what the client’s goal is and it may not be right for trial.” There might never be a case as massive as Miramonte, but there are a lot of similar ones. A bill recently signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom opened up the statute of limitations for many of these cases, adding a new



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From left, Stephen Masterson, Sean Andrade, Arturo Padilla, Henry Gonzalez, Andre Bates and Damian Martinez of Andrade Gonzalez LLP

dimension to litigating them.

“We turned away all other clients just because we were handling such massive high profile litigation that I didn’t want anything to take away our focus,” said Andrade.

Andrade and Henry H. Gonzalez started the firm six years ago after working at Baker & Hostetler LLP and Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP, respectively. Today they are at nine lawyers and have positioned themselves as premier insurance and complex litigators.

“What makes us very different is being able to be creative and aggressive at the same time for our clients’ goals,” said Andrade.

The firm, which is connected to many nonprofit organizations,

dropped everything it was doing and filed an amicus brief in 2015 on behalf of 33 mayors nationwide regarding President Barack Obama’s executive order on immigration. The firm deployed all but one of its employees at the time to make the filing, which was in opposition to a motion for preliminary injunction over creating a legal avenue for undocumented immigrants to stay in the country.

In another employment-related case, the firm represented a Catholic organization whose employee alleged she was fired because she asked to take time off for surgery. The school said the real reason she was fired was because she took steps to start her own competing school.

“Ultimately the reasons this employee had been let go had nothing to do with her disability,” said Gonzalez.

The firm worked with its client to analyze their various insurance policies, tendered the claims under the applicable policies, and persuaded the insurer that they were obligated to cover all defense costs and any potential liability.

“That approach is one that we take in most of our cases. We don’t hide the ball,” said Gonzalez.

For now, Andrade Gonzalez is content with its size, which is small but packs a punch. “We are very lean and really do some serious damage,” said Andrade.

— Justin Kloczko