



Barrett & Farahany, LLP: Justice At Work

By Jan Jabon-Eilon

Amanda Farahany describes herself as “an originalist when it comes to the constitution,” as she explains why she has such a strong desire to change the judicial system so that juries make a larger percentage of the decisions. The managing partner of Barrett & Farahany, LLP stresses the “important role” for juries and complains about their lack of use in the judicial system.

Too often, says Farahany, “judges throw out cases at summary judgement, and the decisions are not applied in a way that allows a lawyer to know whether a case will be dismissed or not. There’s no rhyme or reason to it.”

A former clerk for The Honorable John H. Ruffin Jr. at the Georgia Court of Appeals, Farahany quite simply loves trying cases. After leaving the clerkship, she turned down several job offers and decided to start her own firm, with the help of her parents, in 1998. Her first case was a race discrimination case and her second was a crime victim case. “I went to trial on both those cases,” she recalls, pointing out that that’s how her practice areas were chosen.

She joined a partnership with Ben Barrett in 2001, who has since retired, but occasionally pitches in to help his former firm. The firm represents individuals with employment claims, including wrongful termination, Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), discrimination based on race, religion, gender, age, disability, national origin or pregnancy, as well as overtime and wages, executive compensation and sexual harassment cases. The firm’s tagline is “Justice at Work.”

The most pivotal case Farahany tried, and of which she is most proud, was the first Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act case in 2015 that won a verdict of \$2.25 million, ensuring that genetic privacy would be taken seriously by companies. “We established a new law that is now taught in law schools,” says Farahany, who is also an adjunct professor of law at the Emory University School of Law, where she teaches third-year students Advanced Trial Advocacy. In that case, “we were able to establish the value of our privacy.”

She also won the largest libel verdict for a single plaintiff in Georgia in a case in which her client was an advertising executive. In that case, her client’s employer had told an advertising publication that he had been demoted. “It took him (the client) years to get back on track and recover his reputation after the trial,” she noted.

She experiences her biggest joy when her clients “feel like their voices are heard, when they have been able to overcome what’s been in front of them.”

Farahany decided to become a lawyer when she was 14 years old. She met a guy “who traveled around the world as an international lawyer and that seemed amazing to me.” Later, she separated the passion for travel – which she now does extensively as a hobby – from her passion for “helping people where there’s an imbalance of power. I was drawn to employment law and issues that relate to women. As long as I can remember, I felt for the underdog, where

things weren’t fair or right.” In high school, she did volunteer work for women seeking asylum due to sexual assault. “That led to this area of law that I didn’t know existed until after law school.”

Despite the massive media attention on the #MeToo movement nowadays, Farahany hasn’t seen an uptick in cases. “Few have come forward, and those that have are from a long time ago, so there are statute of limitations issues,” she explains.

On the other hand, there’s been a lot of discussion about sexual harassment, she acknowledges. “It’s a big issue and the law makes it so difficult for people to bring a claim. The #MeToo movement needs to change the laws. The burden (on the women) is too high.” Farahany adds that the State of Georgia also needs laws that protect employees. “There aren’t any such laws in Georgia,” she says.

Farahany has received several awards for her legal work. She is most proud of recently being named among the top 50 women attorneys in Georgia. “I was very surprised and flattered that my peers see me that way.” She was also recently selected for inclusion in The Best Lawyers in America 2019 in the Employment Law for Individuals and the Litigation of Labor and Employment fields. Also this year she was named “Lawyer of the Year” in Atlanta in the Best Lawyers 2019 Employment Law for Individuals field, a particular distinction, since only one attorney is recognized for each specialty and location.

In addition, Farahany is listed as one of the National Advocates Top 100 Lawyers in Employment Law and has been awarded Super Lawyer and Best Employment Lawyer, as well as status as a Fellow of the National College of Advocacy by the Association of Trial Lawyers in America. Her work also brought the firm to Best Law Firm status by U.S. News & World Report.

But Farahany is by no means content to rest on the laurels that she and her team of 12 attorneys have achieved. Her goal is to grow the Atlanta firm to national status. She hopes to expand into Charlotte, N.C. in 2021, and she knows exactly what type of attorneys she will be seeking. “I will be looking for entrepreneurial lawyers who would rather work by themselves but have an organization around them.”

When Farahany is not representing her clients, paragliding, traveling to exotic places such as the Sahara Desert or Antarctica, or reading three or four books of fiction a week, she serves as the Immediate Past President to the Atlanta Bar Association Labor & Employment section. She’s active on the Public Affairs Committee and Press Advisory Board to the American Association of Justice. She is also a founding member and has worked closely with Water-Life-Hope, a non-profit organization that works to bring running water to the impoverished in Haiti. One of her mentors, Ed Buckley, involved her in that project.

In an unintentional note of irony, Farahany says she reads fiction so that she can “disconnect from the world.” Meanwhile, she’s planning this year’s travels to the Greek Islands, Egypt and Ireland.

