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TOP FORTY UNDER FORTY

Parada Ornelas

When she was just 12 years old, Ornelas' parents allowed her to leave her native Thailand to live with her aunt in northern California.

It wasn't an easy transition for Ornelas, now a senior associate at the law firm Wilson Turner Kosmo. During her first day of school in America, "I physically got sick because I was so nervous," she said.

The 36-year-old Ornelas credits her aunt for pushing her academically. "That made all the difference," she said.

Ornelas said her experience as an immigrant "makes me a more emphatic attorney... having that life experience helps me look at the bigger picture."

In her role at San Diego's largest women-owned law firm, Ornelas represents manufacturers and companies in personal injury and "lemon law matters" in state and federal courts.

During her time at the firm, Ornelas has achieved more than 150 case resolutions. Two recent successes include a verdict on behalf of a national client in a personal injury suit, and obtaining a dismissal on behalf of a car-sharing company.

Ornelas decided she wanted to be a lawyer while earning her bachelor's degree in political science at the University of California, San Diego.

She said working as an administrative assistant for a small firm "made me realize that it was something I wanted to explore as

Wilson Turner Kosmo LLP

Title: Senior Associate
Age: 36



a career, and made me realize that I enjoy working with people."

Ornelas then went on to study at California Western School of Law.

Ornelas found work at a small claims firm, but it was an area that didn't quite inspire her, she said.

"Wilson Turner was exactly what I was looking for," said Ornelas, who is celebrating her 10th year as an attorney. "I wanted to find a home for my career. I think I've

found that home and have a satisfying job."

For Ornelas, one big job perk is "the people I work with," she said. "That's what makes it more satisfying."

There's something else that drives Ornelas: Her family, which — along with her parents — includes her husband and 4-year-old son.

"They're the reasons I keep going," she said.

— Karen Weil

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