

# Sigrid McCawley Is Boies Schiller's Latest Breakout Star

She defies the stereotype of the brash, hard-knuckled litigator. She comes off as friendly and relatable—someone who could be your old pal from college.

By Vivia Chen  
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It can't be easy to work with David Boies and not be eclipsed, but **Sigrid McCawley** is holding her own. Actually, McCawley, a litigation partner at Boies Schiller Flexner, is doing more than that. She's having a banner year.

McCawley made the finalist list for The American Lawyer's 2019 litigator of the year. She didn't win, but her competition was formidable, including Ted Boutros (who won), Evan Chesler, Shay Dvoretzky, Roberta Kaplan, David Lender, Sharon Nelles and Rob Saunders.

Now, McCawley has achieved another milestone: elevation to equity partnership. "She's a very accomplished trial lawyer," says Boies. "It's a big step for someone in Florida," noting that there are only a handful of equity partners in its offices in that region.

So how did McCawley break out of the ranks and become a force in her own right? She might want to thank pedophile Jeffrey Epstein.

For the last 5½ years, she's been waging a war against Epstein and his various allies, emerging as one of the go-to lawyers for the victims. To date, she represents eight women and serves as co-counsel for three others—all pro bono. She first got involved when Boies tapped her to join him in representing Virginia Roberts Giuffre, who's accused Alan Dershowitz and Prince Andrew of sexually abusing her as a minor when she worked for Epstein. (Both deny it.)

Boies Schiller was not the first law firm to represent Epstein's victims, but McCawley initiated a defamation lawsuit against Epstein pal Ghislaine



(Photo: J. Albert Diaz/ALM)

Sigrid McCawley

Maxwell (she allegedly recruited minors and young women for sex) that changed the landscape. Because the statute of limitations for sexual abuse had expired in Giuffre's case, the Boies Schiller team decided to sue for defamation to get redress. The suit triggered a reexamination of Epstein's lenient sentencing in 2008 for the prostitution of minors and the Southern District of New York to charge him with sex trafficking.

"It was a vanguard litigation that exposed the underlying sex trafficking for the first time," says McCawley. After doing research, she concluded that New York law would support the defamation claim, though, she adds, it was somewhat risky because "we were facing some competing decisions on defamation including the Cosby line of cases." Ultimately, however, the gamble paid off: "Judge Sweet wrote a well-reasoned opinion denying Maxwell's efforts to dismiss the

defamation claim,” thereby “allowing us to get out of the gate.”

The Maxwell suit ended in settlement, but it was extremely hard-fought, says McCawley. “They were well-funded, and we argued over 50 motions. We were in court practically every week. It consumed my life, but it was the most meaningful work I’ve done in my 20 years of practice.”

Though Boies still gets top billing as the victims’ lawyer in the press, he says McCawley is the one doing the heavy-lifting. “She’s done more than anyone else and more than anyone else combined,” Boies says.

Singing her praise is another heavy-hitter, **Charles Cooper**, who calls McCawley, “an extraordinary talent.” Cooper recently replaced Boies Schiller for conflicts reasons in Giuffre’s defamation lawsuit against Dershowitz (the Harvard Law School professor called Giuffre a “serial liar,” “prostitute” and “bad mother”). Cooper calls the case “complex,” adding that McCawley’s “grasp of the issues is sweeping.”

McCawley’s fan club also includes London-based **Natasha Harrison**, Boies Schiller’s newly nominated co-managing partner (her cohort is New York-based **Nicholas Gravante**). Harrison says McCawley “sets a standard of excellence”—one that comes from “extraordinary preparation,” adding, “she does it with ease and grace.”

By now, you’re probably saying enough with the praise—but there’s more. To the Epstein victims, McCawley is a combination of Mother Teresa and sorority sister.

“She’s a bad-ass with a good heart,” says Giuffre. “She believed in me when others didn’t.” Giuffre, who says that she’s been through a series of lawyers (“I’ve had so many lawyers, it’s not funny”), adds, “I was blown away by her personality. Other lawyers cared, but she took it to another level.”

That sentiment is echoed by Teresa Helm, who says she was sexually assaulted by Epstein 17 years ago—something she repressed until she learned about Epstein’s arrest this year. “Sigrid’s strength enabled me to get grounded. She has my heart.”

Another Epstein victim Juliette Bryant switched to McCawley after being represented briefly by Lisa

Bloom. Bryant says, “I feel so inspired by her. She’s professional and kind and beautiful.”

Indeed, McCawley defies the stereotype of the brash, hard-knuckled litigator. She comes off as friendly and relatable—someone who could be your old pal from college.

Yet, she’s also a tough litigator. Besides the Epstein matters, which she says “consumed virtually all of my time” from 2015 -2018, she carries her share of commercial cases. Currently, she’s lead counsel for Trividia Health in its dispute against a Japanese Company in a high stakes arbitration.

Tough, kindhearted, smart, relatable. And oh, did we mention she’s tall and comely—sort of Nicole Kidmanish? On top of it all, she’s got four kids! She seems to have it (and does it) all.

Surely, she can’t be that perfect. Surely, someone must have something critical to say about this woman.

To that, I turned to Alan Dershowitz, who’s been battling with her and the Boies firm about Giuffre for years. He responds, “She typifies the ethics of the Boies firm.” And what does he mean, I pressed? His response: “Think Theranos, Black Cube, Emma Klein and all the other ethically questionable actions engaged in by BSF.”

Well, that sounds like guilt by association. If that’s the worst that he can come up about McCawley, it’s fairly mild.

Indeed, it was hard to find someone who didn’t say nice things about her. Normally, I’d be suspicious of someone who comes off so well.

Trouble is, she’s so likable, you can’t even resent her for it.

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