

*Desde la Perspectiva ...*

## *Jennifer Trusso*

*The Sheppard Mullin partner discusses the shift in public perception of Hispanics from political scapegoats to sought-after voters*

*as told to Becky May*

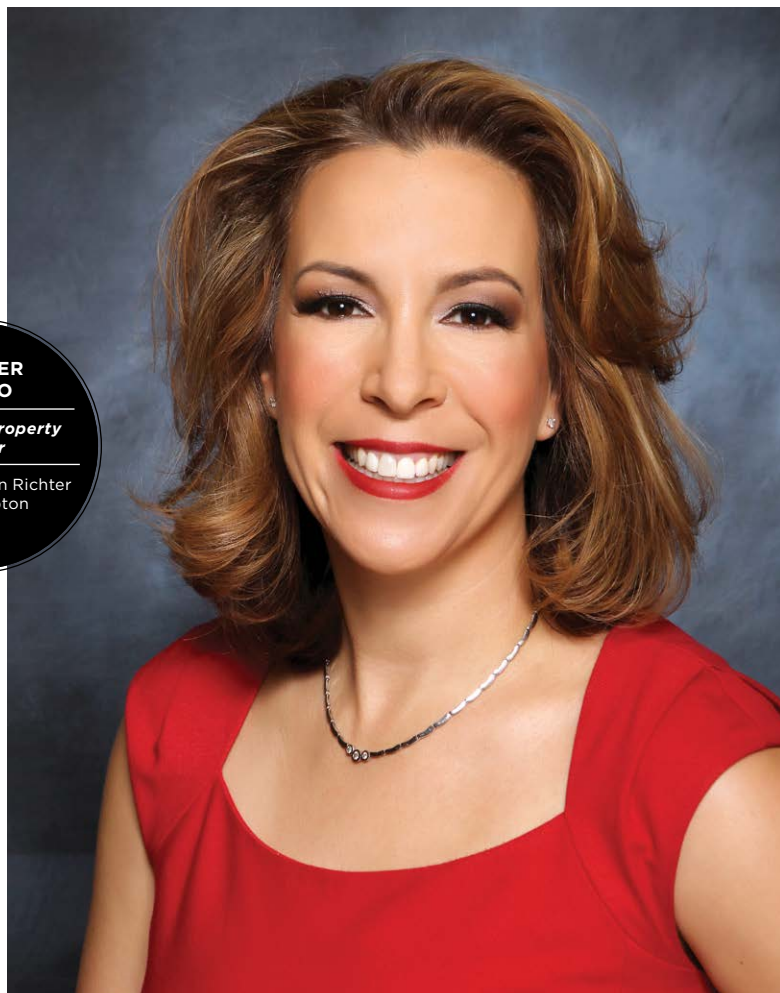
“**P**roposition 187 passed in California while I was pursuing my undergraduate degree at San Diego State University. It barred illegal immigrants from public services including health care and education, and made my blood boil. Despite what Save Our State propaganda claimed, immigrants were not “sucking our state dry.” I wanted to be knowledgeable about the Latino community and set the record straight. I wanted to be armed with accurate information to combat all the inaccurate information being disseminated.

Proposition 187, otherwise known as the Save Our State initiative,

**JENNIFER TRUSSO**

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### **SHEPPARD MULLIN RICHTER AND HAMPTON**

**Headquartered:** Los Angeles, CA

**Founded:** 1927

**Number of Attorneys:** 640

**About:** Sheppard Mullin is a leading international law firm with offices in 15 major cities worldwide, representing clients such as Bank of America, MasterCard, Nordstrom, and Kraft.

## TRUSSO'S GO-TO READ:

### *My Beloved World*

"The author, Sonia Sotomayor, is the first Hispanic Justice of the US Supreme Court. She had a difficult upbringing, [as did I]. One thing that really resonated with me was her description of why some people make it and some people don't. She said that you need to have someone show you love and be your safe place."

- Jennifer Trusso

## MEMBERSHIPS:

- **State Bar of California** (Member)
- **Orange County Bar Association** (Member)
- **Hispanic National Bar Association** (Vice President of Regions, former Deputy General Counsel)
- **Federal Bar Association, Orange County Division** (Board of Directors)
- **Order of the Coif** (Member)
- **National Latina Business Women Association of Orange County** (Member)
- **Diversity and Inclusion Committee of Sheppard Mullin** (Member)
- **Diversity and Inclusion Attorney Network (DIAN) of Sheppard Mullin** (Member and Mentor)
- **Women's Lawyers Group of Sheppard Mullin** (Orange County Coleader)
- **Women Attorneys Leadership Council** (Member)

along with the negative propaganda associated with it made so many feel that being Latino was a bad thing for a long time. Then, all of a sudden, there was a huge shift. It wasn't a slow gradual change; it was as if someone turned on the lights and the country realized Latinos have buying power. I remember being at the gym the exact moment I felt it happen. I was exercising when something about the "Latino vote" splashed across the TV screen during the 2008 presidential election. My first thought was, "Wow, they are paying attention."

### *Turning Experience into Action*

At Sheppard Mullin we are strongly encouraged to dedicate time to other organizations, which makes it easy for me to be active in the Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA) and the Legal Education Fund. As vice president of regions for the HNBA and a board member of the Legal Education Fund, what I do for one organization benefits the other. The only way I can balance my involvement in such organizations and my partnership at Sheppard Mullin is by being highly organized. I am type A+++. My family and clients come first.

My own childhood was challenging. I lacked guidance, but I grew up with a sense of social justice for my community. Although no one else from my family attended college, I knew it was in the cards for me. Entering law school, I had a one-year-old. I

made a commitment to my son and myself that I wouldn't study after I picked him up from daycare. I would spend as much time with him as possible, and as soon as I put him to bed I would study. Those three years I got very little sleep, but I had a family to take care of.

As I tell my kids, when you are smart and a hard-worker, nothing can stop you from succeeding. I want kids with backgrounds like mine to know they can overcome an abusive childhood and succeed. For a long time I tried to hide that part of my life, but after college I recognized that my story was inspiring and can provide young adults with hope and courage. I have made a concerted effort to speak out to students, high school, college, and law school.

When asked which is harder, being a woman or being a minority, and I think it depends on the circumstances. The overarching challenge is trying to successfully manage my time. There's practicing law, developing business, handling administrative tasks, plus advocating and recruiting diversity at the firm. Sheppard Mullin has many men in leadership roles, including our chairman, who are committed to bringing women and minority attorneys into the firm and into management positions. However, we have to acknowledge that the burden of advancing this goal falls most heavily on the shoulders of women and minority attorneys. I'm optimistic we can. ■