

# SEPTEMBER WOMEN'S INITIATIVE SPOTLIGHT:

## Catie Johnson

Catie Johnson is Senior Counsel in Tyson & Mendes' Los Angeles office, where she defends individuals and private entities in state and federal general liability matters, including but not limited to premises liability, motor vehicle negligence, products liability, habitability, excessive force, and civil rights claims. Catie, who was recently promoted to Team Leader, is a creative and proactive negotiator with an outstanding track record of obtaining favorable settlements for her clients. In 2017 and 2018, she was named Super Lawyers Rising Star! When not in the office, you can catch her in the kitchen whipping out new recipes or at the park with her family. Read on for more.

### Q&A



**T&M:** Where did you go to undergrad and law school?

**CJ:** I am a "Double Wave." I attended Seaver College at Pepperdine for my undergraduate studies. I knew I wanted to go to law school, but I decided to work for a couple years first. When I did go, I found myself back at Pepperdine for the School of Law.

**T&M:** What did you like most about the city the two schools were located?

**CJ:** What is not to like about Malibu? It is beautiful, and not congested like much of Los Angeles. If I were to have my nose to the grindstone studying, it might as well have been with an ocean view.

**T&M:** What drew you to Tyson & Mendes?

**CJ:** I am in the stage of my career where I do not want to keep thinking, "What is my next move?" in order to advance myself in this industry. Prior to joining Tyson & Mendes, that thought was always in the back of my mind. I kept hearing great things about the firm, its people, clients, and work. I was impressed with the time and resources the firm invests in its clients and employees alike, as well as the advancement opportunities for those who want to work hard and build a name for themselves. Tyson & Mendes offered me a position I felt would get me to where I want to be in my career, without having to bounce from firm to firm.

**T&M:** What do you enjoy most about working at the firm?

**CJ:** First and foremost, the people. I truly enjoy the company of my co-workers. They are intelligent and kind people who understand the rewards and stresses of the job, take it all in stride, and have pride in everything we do. Second, the work. Our work covers a wide variety of legal issues, so I am never bored! There is rarely a day that goes by where I am not intellectually challenged in some capacity.

**T&M:** What benefits do you think a client has by working with a female attorney?

**CJ:** I have had the joy of working with exceptional attorneys of both genders throughout my whole career. Disclaimer aside, females historically have a steeper hill to climb to succeed in

our field. It just takes a certain tenacity and pride to ignore the lingering "boys club" mentality held by many in the industry, and do the job well despite the dubiousness that still occasionally rears its ugly head in our profession. That tenacity and pride is reflected in our zealous advocacy of our clients. Tyson & Mendes has quite a few spectacular female attorneys I am lucky to call colleagues.

**T&M:** What has been the biggest challenge of your career thus far?

**CJ:** Honestly? Imposter syndrome. Days have passed doing this job, and somehow the days have turned into years. The experience I have gained in my years of practice is invaluable, but there is still so much to learn. There are always those attorneys, older and more experienced than me, across the table fighting for their clients - just like I am - and telling me I do not know what I am doing. But it turns out, I do know what I am doing. Sometimes it is difficult to muster confidence, especially when I am thrown into an unfamiliar situation. It is also what I love most about being a lawyer. It is always a challenge, but I am constantly learning and conditioning my self-worth.

**T&M:** What made you want to become a defense attorney?

**CJ:** Before I went to law school, a boss once told me I operate in black and white, gray is not my strong suit, and I should keep that in mind when deciding where I want to land in the legal arena. I eventually left that job, got my J.D. and license to practice, and started out doing plaintiffs' personal injury work. I quickly realized it was not for me. As it turns out, I am much better at taking a puzzle apart and putting it back together in a way that works for my client as opposed to writing a story from scratch. Being an insurance defense attorney still requires a substantial amount of creativity, and a bit of work in the gray, but it is a variety of creativity that is better suited to my personality and skill set.

**T&M:** What did you want to be when you grew up?

**CJ:** A journalist. I was an avid reader growing up, and I loved to write. I was the editor of my high school newspaper, and I took all the English and creative writing classes I could. At some point in high school, my favorite English teacher told me I was a dry

writer and perhaps I should consider legal writing as opposed to journalism. I listened. And I have forgiven that teacher, wherever she is!

**T&M:** Tell us about your most memorable hotel stay?

**CJ:** It was quite recent. My husband had a convention in Las Vegas and I decided to get away for the weekend with him and my daughter. My good friend was kind enough to comp our room, and it turned out it was an epic penthouse suite with a jacuzzi on the patio, two bedrooms, three bathrooms, four showers (which honestly does not even make sense), and a day and nighttime butler. It was incredible.

**T&M:** If you could be any TV lawyer for a day, who would it be and why?

**CJ:** Alicia Florrick from the Good Wife. Spoiler alert - it does not end well for her. But throughout the series, she was smart, gutsy, and brave, and went after what she wanted while still putting her family first.

**T&M:** What's your favorite restaurant in Los Angeles, and what dish(es) do you recommend?

**CJ:** This is a tough one! Los Angeles is full of amazing restaurants, but an old family favorite and special occasion spot is the Tam O'Shanter in Atwater Village. It is a Scottish themed Lawry's restaurant with the best prime rib and a great bar with live music, but the star for us is the French onion soup. A close second is Little Beast in Eagle Rock. They have a savory bread pudding that is tough to beat.

**T&M:** When not at work or home, where are we most likely to find you?

**CJ:** I have a toddler, so I am not sure that ever happens! You can probably find me playing in a local park, strolling through Huntington Gardens in Pasadena, or in an exercise class if I am on my own. However, much to my husband's chagrin, I love to frequent Nordstrom and Costco. After all, retail therapy is a very important part of stress relief.