

Women's History Month: Spotlight on Founding Principal Dorothy Wolpert

In celebrating Women's History Month and following [Bird Marella's 40th Anniversary](#) milestone, the firm is pleased to honor one of its founding principals, [Dorothy Wolpert](#), and her inspiring legacy.

Dorothy Wolpert began her law career in mid-life after graduating from UCLA School of Law in 1976 with unconditional support from her husband and two children. With aspirations of becoming a trial attorney, Ms. Wolpert started as an associate at a top entertainment firm at the time, Kaplan, Livingston, Goodwin, Berkowitz & Selvin. Ms. Wolpert's time at Kaplan Livingston was marked by her work on [Crawford v. LA Board of Education](#), one of the most notable desegregation cases in history. Her public service experience at Kaplan influenced Ms. Wolpert to devote time to pro bono work. Ms. Wolpert's commitment to public interest work would build the foundation for her litigation career.

After Ms. Wolpert joined her co-founders to form Bird Marella, her commitment to pro bono and community service led to many landmark victories with the firm. With fellow name principals [Mark Drooks](#) and [Ekwan Rhow](#) at the helm, Ms. Wolpert's efforts in the El Monte Thai Worker Slavery Case contributed to a historical moment that shed light on human trafficking and horrific working conditions in Los Angeles.

Ms. Wolpert has long served on the Board of Directors for the [Inner City Law Center](#), having previously served as President of the Board. In 2004, she received the organization's Katherine Krause Award for Public Service.

Ms. Wolpert has achieved numerous victories in pro bono matters and has contributed countless hours in the pursuit of justice. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Wolpert and the lawyers at the Inner City Law Center secured a [multi-million dollar settlement](#) for over 50 residents displaced from a South Los Angeles apartment building plagued by housing code violations and hazardous living conditions.

And at the height of the pandemic, in a partnership with the [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\)](#), the firm successfully obtained victories in two class action suits against Lompoc and Terminal Island federal prisons regarding the insufficient measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Bird Marella's efforts in these class actions earned the firm the [ACLU'S 2021 Humanitarian Award](#).

Most recently, the UCLA School of Law profiled Ms. Wolpert in "[A Career of Uncommon](#)

Decency“ and announced that the school would honor her with a U. Serve L.A. award. Additionally, the UCLA School of Law is establishing the “Dorothy and Stanley Wolpert Public Interest Law Fellowship.” The program will provide financial support to UCLA Law students who work for the Inner City Law Center; the grants will allow students to work with underserved communities in Los Angeles, while also promoting long-term social change.

“Dorothy represents the best of UCLA School of Law,” says Dean Jennifer L. Mnookin. “She’s an exceptional lawyer dedicated to pro bono work who has taken the time to support generations of students and lawyers who have followed. The school is rightly proud of her and all she’s done, and I am fortunate to call her a friend.”

Managing Principal Paul Chan affirmed, “Dorothy embodies the best of what the legal profession has to offer. Throughout her career, she has been a champion for those fighting for justice and equality. Her pro bono efforts have made an enormous impact on the lives of so many. We applaud Dorothy for her decades-long commitment to public service.”

Ms. Wolpert serves as Co-Chair of Bird Marella’s Pro Bono Committee.