

## Haynes and Boone Partner M.C. Sungaila Receives Second CLAY Award

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March 16, 2016

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PRACTICES Appellate

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Haynes Boone proudly congratulates Partner M.C. Sungaila for receiving her second consecutive California Lawyer of the Year Award (CLAY) for her work on a Ninth Circuit asylum appeal for a transgender woman. The awards, previously awarded by *California Lawyer* magazine, this year are being given by the *Los Angeles* and *San Francisco Daily Journal* newspapers.

[Sungaila argued an immigration appeal](#) seeking to overturn a Board of Immigration Appeals' (BIA) decision to refuse her client's claim for legal protection in the United States due to alleged past and future persecution and torture. The case was one of three brought by the Public Law Center, in collaboration with pro bono counsel from three separate law firms, on behalf of transgender asylum seekers.

In light of "the particularized dangers faced by transgender women," the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the BIA's denial of the women's claims, observing that the BIA and Immigration Judge "failed to recognize the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation" and that "laws recognizing same-sex marriage may do little to protect a transgender woman... from discrimination, police harassment and violent attacks in daily life." These decisions are the first by a federal appellate court to recognize the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity in the asylum context.

At the firm, Sungaila is a litigator in the [Appellate Practice Group](#). She has briefed and argued appeals raising cutting-edge and core business issues, and helped secure important rights for women and girls nationally and internationally. Clients call on her to craft approaches to emerging legal issues across multiple cases and jurisdictions and to provide pretrial and trial consultations in cases where an appeal by either side appears inevitable or a "key case" outcome might impact a whole series of cases for a client. At the core of her broad appellate practice is Sungaila's passion for the rule of law and for helping shape undeveloped areas within it.

The annual California Lawyer Attorneys of the Year Awards recognize lawyers licensed in California for achievements with a significant impact on public policy, the law, the profession, or a particular practice area. The lawyer must be an active member of the State Bar when the work was done.

Sungaila was also a recipient of a 2015 CLAY award for the precedent-setting franchisor vicarious liability case she argued before the California Supreme Court, *Patterson v. Domino's Pizza*, which was also named by the *Franchise Times* as the number one franchise court decision nationwide in 2015.

This year's CLAY award winners will be announced in the March 16, 2016 issue of *The Daily Journal*.