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Alexander opened her personal injury boutique in 2001, launching a premises, product liability and consumer rights practice that has attained a string of eight- and nine-figure wins for clients.

“Willie Brown the mayor came. It was very exciting,” she said of her firm’s beginnings. “Now we’re looking at reopening the office after the pandemic.”

In July 2020 she achieved a \$32.7 million settlement with the City of Oakland and PG&E Co. in the first portion of the Ghost Ship warehouse fire litigation. Alexander is liaison counsel for plaintiffs in the suit seeking to hold the City of Oakland accountable for the deadly Dec. 2, 2016, fire at a warehouse containing illegal living spaces and an unpermitted concert venue. Thirty-six people died. Her wrongful death suit included causes of action for negligence, premises liability, public nuisance and more. In *Re Ghost Ship Fire Litigation*, RG16843631 (Alameda Co. Super. Ct., filed Dec. 24, 2016).

Alexander said she was warned that broad municipal immunity to civil litigation made the case a loser. “I said you have to try. They only get immunity if they inspected it, and it wasn’t even on their list. And even though they knew the place was an illegal cabaret, they did nothing about it.”

Remaining are claims against the building’s owners, who have filed for bankruptcy. “Their properties will be sold with the monies going to the plaintiffs,” Alexander said.

In her newest case, Alexander is part of a massive class action with Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy LLP and Altshuler Berzon LLP against Bank of America NA over claims it mishandled the Covid benefit

accounts it was selected to administer for unemployed people who received state relief funds in the form of BoFA debit cards. *Yick v. Bank of America NA*, 3:21-cv-00376 (N.D. Cal., filed Jan. 14, 2021).

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— Mary Alexander

Alexander’s client, class representative Clara Cajas, said in a declaration that her BoA debit card had been used twice by someone who took sums totaling \$1,500. When she reported the theft to the bank, it stalled, then froze her account, she said.

Among the claims in the master complaint is the allegation that the bank issued debit cards without advanced chip technology. Instead, the cards came with outdated, fraud-prone magnetic stripes leaving cardholders vulnerable to theft.

The complaint got the speedy attention of U.S. District Judge Vince Chhabria of San Francisco, who provisionally certified the class, issued a preliminary injunction and ordered the bank into negotiations with the plaintiffs.

“The judge said, ‘I’m sending you out to come up with a plan to fix this without years of litigation,’” Alexander said. “We’re excited—I must say it was a brilliant move on our part to force them to do something now. The stories of our clients’ economic stress are so sad. The bank knows it’s in big trouble.”

She added: “This is one of the reasons I do what I do, to make a difference.”

— John Roemer



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