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Top 100 Lawyers 2025



Mary E. Alexander

Mary Alexander &
Associates, P.C.
San Francisco

Mary Alexander has built her career on a simple principle: using litigation as a weapon against institutional power. With decades in practice, she has emerged as one of the nation's most prominent plaintiffs' attorneys, securing multimillion-dollar settlements and verdicts while taking on some of the most challenging cases in personal injury, toxic exposure and abuse litigation.

Alexander's path to law began in science. As a scientist, she witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of toxic chemical exposure. "The tragedies I saw unfold as a result of toxic chemicals being used far

too often was awful," Alexander said. This experience shaped her legal philosophy and drove her toward plaintiff work rather than corporate defense.

"I didn't want to defend the powerful," she said. "I wanted to stand with the people who needed protection, recognition and justice."

That commitment has led Alexander to represent clients in some of the most significant litigation in recent memory. She served as counsel in the largest Catholic Church settlement in U.S. history, more than \$1.5 billion, representing clergy abuse survivors.

Her work on the Ghost Ship fire case, where she served as liaison counsel, resulted in a \$32.7 million settlement for the families of 36 victims who died in the Oakland warehouse fire. *In Re Ghost Ship Fire Litigation*, RG16843631 (Alam. Sup. Ct., filed Dec. 23, 2016).

One of Alexander's most notable achievements involved an almost 20-year battle against lead paint poisoning. The case culminated in a \$1.15 billion verdict and eventual settlement to help remove lead paint from California homes, protecting countless children from exposure. *County of Santa Clara v. Atlantic Richfield Company*, Sherman Williams et al., 1-00-CV-788657 (Santa Clara Super. Ct., filed Mar. 23, 2000).

In toxic tort litigation, Alexander secured a \$21.4 million verdict for two families whose loved ones died of cancer due to benzene exposure. These cases required extensive preparation to establish decades of negligence and prove causation against well-funded corporate defendants. *Regina Eaves*

v. Ashland Inc., C16-00815 (Contra Costa Super. Ct., filed April 29, 2016).

Alexander founded her own firm to maintain independence in case selection and strategy. "Founding my own firm gave me the freedom to pursue these cases on behalf of people who deserve a fighter in their corner," she said.

Each case presents unique obstacles. In clergy abuse litigation, Alexander faced decades of institutional concealment and survivors who had to relive traumatic memories. The Ghost Ship case involved immunity defenses that threatened the entire litigation. Toxic tort cases demand proof of causation spanning decades.

"Institutional resistance, emotional trauma, and legal complexity are the common obstacles in nearly every one of my major cases," Alexander said.

The legal landscape has evolved during Alexander's career. She observes increasing recognition of institutional failures and statute of limitations reforms that allow previously time-barred victims to seek justice. The rise of women in trial leadership represents another significant change from when Alexander started practice.

She emphasized trauma-informed legal practice, understanding how litigation affects survivors. "Justice isn't just about winning, it's about how you advocate and who you serve," she said. "To this day, what drives me is the opportunity to restore dignity, secure accountability, and help clients reclaim power after the worst experiences of their lives."