

Rising Star: Munger Tolles' Manuel Cachán

By **Evan Weinberger**



Law360, New York (April 14, 2014, 1:54 PM ET) – Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP partner Manuel F. Cachán helped Wells Fargo & Co. overcome litigation from institutional investors while working to improve the firm's diversity, making him one of Law360's top five young banking attorneys.

Cachán, who turned 40 in March, has been at the center of several major banking litigation battles in his years at Munger Tolles. The 2014 Rising Star has also worked on several cases in the bustling entertainment law arena, not surprising for a practice based out of Los Angeles.

Each of those cases follows a specific legal process even if their fact patterns and legal theories are unique, a fact that is vital to Cachán, the child of Cuban exiles. It is that respect for process that helped draw Cachán to the practice of law.

"If you can establish systems that are concerned principally with process, then the results frequently take care of themselves," Cachán said in a telephone interview. "And when you've got systems based only on results, well, that's when you get into problems."

In the last year, Cachán sat in the second chair for the Munger Tolles team defending Wells Fargo in a case launched by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota and other institutional investors about its securities lending program during a seven-week trial that concluded last summer in a win for the San Francisco-based bank.

But a combination of hard work, a close relationship with the lead counsel on the case and a respect from both the client and the court put Cachán in the position of performing around half of the cross-examinations and leading Wells Fargo's defense for the last week of the trial.

"That was an instance where both the client and the court felt that our client would be well-represented," said Munger Tolles partner Bart Williams, the lead counsel in the Wells Fargo case and the firm's former co-managing partner.

Cachán, who joined Munger Tolles in the fall of 2001 and joined the partner ranks in January 2009, is

gifted both in his ability to advocate to courts and relate to juries, Williams said.

"And he's one of the few that combines those gifts with being an extraordinarily good writer as well," Williams said.

But Cachán's work is not limited only to the courtroom.

The Harvard Law School graduate also does work in Mexico helping to reform that country's criminal justice system from one where a single judge can make decisions in secret to a more open, adversarial process.

"The system they had before was just made for corruption," Cachán said.

And he has been working hard to increase diversity in the ranks of law firms.

According to a recent California Bar Association report, only around 4 percent of attorneys in the state are of Latino heritage, despite making up around 40 percent of California's population.

"And that number has not moved much in the past decade or so," Cachán said.

Having such a situation cuts a large swath of the population out from the levers of power, including political power where so many top officials are attorneys, he said.

"You've got a problem because those people are not going to have their needs and their desires addressed through the political system, to say nothing of individual justice," Cachán said. "I think we've got to change that."

To address that, Cachán served as co-chair of Munger Tolles' diversity committee and is the co-chair of the firm's recruiting committee. Cachán also serves as a mentor, officially through a board seat on the Mexican American Bar Foundation and unofficially just by talking to younger attorneys of color and doing the best job he can.

"All I can do is my little part," Cachán said.

--Editing by Katherine Rutenberg.