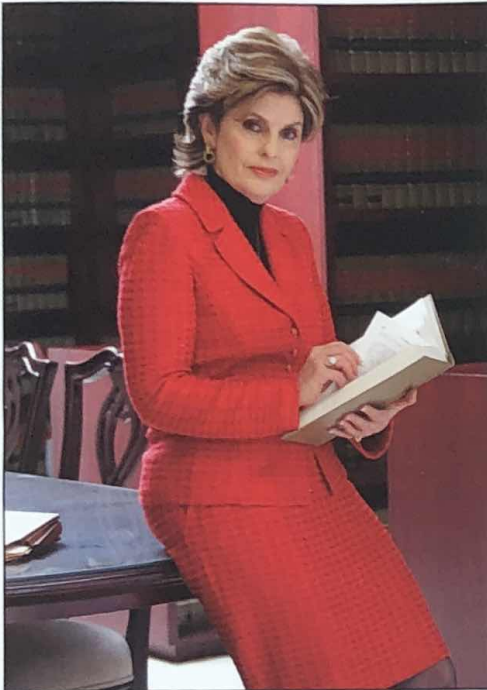


# Women On Top

## attorney **Gloria Allred** women & glass ceilings

By Suzanne Takowsky



Gloria Allred is a dynamo. A champion at getting the media to focus attention on her crusades, Allred's passion for protecting and promoting the rights of women worldwide keeps her in fever pitch mode 24/7.

Who hasn't sat down to watch the news and found themselves face to face with a determined Allred surrounded by cameras fighting through a crowd on her way to court? Undaunted by media, public opinion, or whether she tops anyone's favorite person list... Allred speaks her mind and takes an iron fisted stand on women owning their personal power.

A partner in the law firm of Allred, Maroko & Goldberg, Allred has practiced law for more than 31 years and no

doubt has seen the best and worst the world has to offer. Her firm, handles hundreds of employment, race, age, physical handicap, Aids discrimination,

**"Those brave enough to stand up for their rights and fight back are opening up the doors of opportunity for everyone else."**

sexual harassment and wrongful termination cases each year. A current challenge Allred has taken on involves the Prop. 22 measure approved in 2000 specifying only marriages between a man and a woman are recognized in our state. High-profile civil rights, rape, child sexual abuse and murder cases that we watch her fight like a wild cat over are just a drop in the bucket of her overwhelming work load.

An active feminist, Allred has received countless honors for her work on behalf of women's rights and rights for minorities, including the President's Volunteer Action Award for Outstanding Volunteerism presented to her by President Ronald Reagan at the White House. Selected in 1998 as one of "The Most Influential Women Lawyers in America" by the *National Law Journal* Allred continues to stay in the legal spotlight and was named a 2007 Southern California "SuperLawyer" by *Law and Media*, with nods from both *Los Angeles Magazine* and *TIME* magazine calling her "One of the nation's most effective advocates of family rights and feminist causes." Allred founded and currently serves as President of the *Women's Equal Rights Legal Defense and Education Fund (WERLDEF)*.

ST: Are men afraid of you?

GA: Well I imagine some are and some are not. I had an uncle who told me when men see me their reaction is more a reflection of their conscience and how they treat women. If they have done the right thing by women and they don't have anything to feel embarrassed about then, they relate very well with me. If they have not treated the women in their lives fairly or have abused them, then, they are more uncomfortable around me. Frankly, it's their problem not mine. I'm here to help victims win justice.

ST: How far do you really think that women have come in the last 25 years?

GA: Well we've come a long way, but still have a long, long way to go. Women still do not enjoy the protection of the Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution. Some women are still afraid to exercise their rights or are ignorant of them.

The good news is that many women are fighting back and saying, "We're not going to take this anymore."



This native Philadelphian also holds California life credentials in secondary school education and supervision having taught in public schools for six and a half years and lecturing at USC for several more. Allred's

best-selling book, "Fight Back And Win - My Thirty-Year Fight Against Injustice And How You Can Win Your Own Battles" has now added author to her growing list of credentials. Allred a grandmother of two—Sarah and Sam—(Allred's daughter Lisa Bloom an attorney, appears as an anchor on *Court TV*) does not mince words when it comes to condoning or condemning. Her calling card has always been and continues to be an ability to battle the best of them with wit and wisdom in heated conditions of extreme pressure and controversy. *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *Ms. Magazine*, *The American Lawyer*, *The Daily News*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The London Times*—a few of many publications that have kept Allred and her headlining-making cases in the public eye.

ST: If there is a glass ceiling in the work place how can a woman reach professional goals?

GA: There is no question that there is a glass ceiling. We see the top, but can't get through. That a token number of women have gotten through is not a sign that most have or ever will. We see in the news, 'the first woman this...the first woman that...' it's pathetic we are still talking about 'first woman' in so many areas. We need greater numbers of women at the top to be able to assess what a difference it will make. Women should not engage in the illusion they'll be judged on hard work and talent alone. This might happen for a few. It won't for most. Women need to know that even though we jump through the hoops and hurdles we may still face sexism simply because we are born female. This is a major disappointment to younger women with high expectations who are heading out into their careers. Older women already know what they've had to fight for and put up with. What they've had to suffer through. Older women are equally pained and hurt by sexism, but they are not shocked. Older women have already lost some of their illusions and know that we need to fight for our rights.