

# HAVE YOU EVER...

★ *Cheated on your beautiful Swedish wife with AT LEAST A DOZEN mistresses?*

★ *Been ACCUSED OF GROPING one of your employees?*

★ *Fired your UNDOCUMENTED HOUSEKEEPER in your run for governor?*

★ *Sent DIRTY E-MAILS TO PORN STARS while serving in the U.S. Congress?*



HELLO,  
I'M ATTORNEY

# GLORIA ALLRED

by Ed  
Leibowitz

...AND YOUR  
**GOOSE**  
IS COOKED!

Photograph by  
Jill Greenberg

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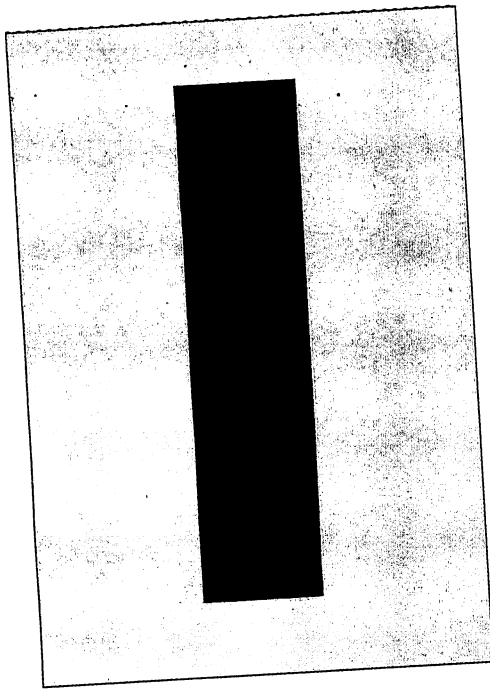
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**I**T WAS ONLY a few hours ago that attorney Gloria Allred summoned these several dozen reporters, bloggers, and cameramen to the Milton Berle Room of the New York Friars Club, but in reality they've been waiting days and days for her to materialize. A week has gone by since Politico reported allegations of sexual harassment against Herman Cain

on its Web site. The story was made for the 24-hour news cycle—a presidential future threatened by lechery of the past, corporate payoffs in exchange for silence, a rich and powerful alpha male denying everything, the victims given a once-in-a-lifetime chance to vanquish their aggressor, in the process turning American

political life on its ear. But the narrative has failed to live up to its promise because Cain's four accusers just aren't talking. Bound by confidentiality clauses they reached long ago with the National Restaurant Association, they can't show their faces to the tabloids, let alone discuss what the Republican hopeful might have done to them when he served as the lobbying organization's president in the 1990s.

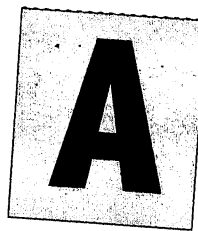
Finally on this November morning Allred has arrived to deliver the goods—to catalyze, to indict, to champion, striking the perfect balance between vapidness and utmost seriousness as she introduces yet another woman with a lurid story to tell the world. By her side is Sharon Bialek, a new accuser of Cain who isn't bound by a confidentiality agreement.

Allred is five feet, two inches tall. Her short feathered hair is brown and tinged with gold highlights, and she has a narrow nose and a wide, confident chin. The forehead and cheeks are remarkably smooth for a woman of 70. Her brown eyes, so dark they almost burn black, withstand a dozen camera flashes without blinking. In a purple turtleneck, gold necklace, and smart black blazer, she approaches the podium with the command of a ringmaster. At her right, silent and grave, looms Nathan Goldberg, her career-long law partner. To her left Bialek clutches the script she'll be reading from—all about that evening in the '90s when she met Cain for dinner in Washington, D.C., to discuss her employment prospects, only to allegedly have the former Godfather's Pizza CEO make a sudden grab at her genitals in a parked car and push her head toward his crotch.

The Milton Berle Room fits the occasion well. It's the same venue Allred chose only six months earlier to stage a press conference with porn actress Ginger Lee, during which the attorney recited sexually explicit e-mails her client had received from Representative Anthony Weiner. The married New York congressman resigned the next day. Berle—a TV

mainstay of Allred's youth and reputedly once the best-hung man in Hollywood—sponsored Allred's admission into the Beverly Hills Friars Club in the '80s, overturning its men-only membership policy. "For Milton," Allred has said, "it was all about his penis. How big it was and where it has been."

Standing at the podium, Allred winds up her introduction of Bialek's case. "She reached out to Mr. Cain for help with finding a job," the lawyer says. Allred pauses before training on the cameras the abrupt deadpan gaze of a Borscht Belt comedian. "She reached out to Mr. Cain for help in finding another job. Instead of receiving the help that she had hoped for, Mr. Cain instead decided to provide her with his idea of a stimulus package." Fourteen minutes of airtime, and the attorney has transformed this flagging scandal into a Gloria Allred scandal—lewder, ranker, more compelling, and potentially game changing.



**A**T HER WILSHIRE BOULEVARD law offices Allred keeps a collection of three-inch binders stuffed with press clippings. The 119 volumes take up an entire wall of the conference room, and more are added at the rate of four

to six a year, documenting Allred's path from being a feminist lawyer with a regional reputation to the most widely known celebrity lawyer in the world.

The binders devoted to the 1980s show her at the peak of activism. She forced the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to abandon its practice of shackling women prisoners in hospitals as they went through labor. She chipped away at L.A. district attorney Ira Reiner's intransigence until he endorsed a program to collect from deadbeat dads. She and another of her law partners, Michael Maroko, won a settlement against Holocaust deniers on behalf of a survivor of Auschwitz. She argued for people with AIDS who'd been let go from jobs or discriminated against in the marketplace.

In February 1984, Allred sued the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Her client, Rita Milla, had been sexually molested by seven priests when she was 16 years old and later impregnated by one. She brought the case all the way to the California Supreme Court; though the justices rejected it, Allred went on to establish paternity by one of the priests, got another to admit the archdiocese had told him to stay in the Philippines to avoid possible prosecution, and persisted until the state changed its laws to address rampant priest abuse. In 2007, when Milla's daughter turned 25, Allred reached a settlement for \$500,000.

Of course, the enigma of Gloria Allred lies in the ease with which she ricochets from the substantive to the seemingly trivial. It was also during the 1980s that she cemented her reputation as a lawyer with an affinity for cases that are headline rich and content poor. She went after the Elysium Fields nudist colony for charging men more for lovemaking classes than it did women. She confronted the Yellow Balloon children's salon on behalf of a three-year-old who was charged \$2 more for a haircut than her brother was for his. She waged a publicity campaign against Madonna, demanding she record a pro-choice song to make amends for what Allred had determined was the anti-abortion message of the hit "Papa Don't Preach."

FROM TOP: D. DIPASUPLI/GETTY IMAGES; MARK RALSTON/GETTY IMAGES; FREDERICK M. BROWN/GETTY IMAGES; DAMIAN DOVARGANES/AP PHOTO



With the 1994 O.J. Simpson murder trial she went international, and as a public figure lost proportion. While L.A. County prosecutors Marcia Clark and Christopher Darden were outlawed in the courtroom, Allred, serving as the attorney for Nicole Brown Simpson's family, became Johnnie Cochran's only worthy adversary in the media.

It's gotten to the point where the histrionics of her tabloid cases have drowned out the serious civil rights work she continues to do. In 2008, she and Maroko won the right for gay and lesbian couples to marry in California, having fought for four years until the California Supreme Court ruled in their favor. Extending the marriage franchise to same-sex couples amounted to one of the more significant expansions of civil liberties in California in decades, and although Proposition 8, the California Marriage Protection Act, negated the verdict in Allred's case, the right has been upheld in Federal District Court and may ultimately be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. But even a case with that kind of heft gets snowed under by the coverage Allred won as Tiger Woods's scourge, or as the advocate for Amber Frey, who had slept with Scott Peterson before he murdered his pregnant wife.

When a Fox News psychiatrist recommended that parents shield their children from watching Chaz Bono on *Dancing with the Stars* last fall, Allred leaped on the moment with characteristic aplomb. She held a press conference, urging people to throw dance parties across the nation in support of Bono, vowing that she would dance with anyone who was transgender or transitioning toward it. During the show's September 2011 premiere, the attorney cohosted a "Pro-Bono" party at Micky's Bar and Lounge in West Hollywood with lesbian activist Robin Tyler, whom Allred had represented in her gay marriage victory. "We're going to be dancing with Chaz," Allred explained to the local news crews, BBC Radio, and CNN, "and we're going to be dancing for justice and for equality, and that's why we're here tonight."

By the time the DJ cued up Laura Branigan's "Gloria," Bono was an afterthought; the evening had become a celebration of Allred, who smiled and laughed a little but struggled on the dance floor, stiff as a politician among the transgender leaders, drag queens, middle-aged gays and lesbians, and a young hottie showing his six-pack. Too self-disciplined a public figure to let go, Allred made do as best she could with awkward finger pointing and faint attempts at a *Saturday Night Fever* Bus Stop.

**A**LLRED OFTEN TALKS of being in a perpetual state of war, sometimes alongside her law partners but mostly as a solitary combatant. She's sacrificed almost the entirety of her private life to her clients, and, less explicitly, to the demands of her ever-expanding public self. She hasn't taken a vacation since the early '80s. Twice divorced,



#### MAKING THEIR CASE

From top: Allred at press conferences with porn star Ginger Lee; Nicky Diaz Santillan, the former housekeeper of gubernatorial candidate Meg Whitman; porn star Joslyn James; and Rita Milla, who had been sexually molested by priests

Allred is finished with dating. "I'm not interested in older men or younger men," she says. "A relationship is going to take a certain amount of time. Like if you have a plant, you have to water it. You can't just leave that plant alone and say, 'I'll see you in two weeks.'"

She wouldn't spend money on haute couture. Her signature power suits—many of them bright red in homage to her last name—are by midtier designer St. John. The double-knit ensembles resist the creasing and wear they'd otherwise suffer on her constant business trips.

A millionaire many times over, Allred doesn't collect fine jewelry or art. Her Mercedes CL500 is ten years old and looks it. The one great luxury she's allowed herself is a \$5.6 million oceanfront house in Malibu. She works there Saturdays and Sundays, and during the week lives in a Pacific Palisades condo she's had since the 1980s. Allred doesn't exercise beyond walks on the beach and doesn't cook. "There are four steps to a meal," she tells me. "You have to buy it. You have to cook it, eat it, and clean it up. I like as much as possible just to eat it, and maybe buy it."

Allred claims only four friends—her daughter, Lisa Bloom, who is a CNN legal commentator; her law partners, Goldberg and Maroko, who were classmates of hers at Loyola Law School in the early '70s; and Fern Brown Caplan, whom she met on her first day of high school. She says she hasn't had time to find new ones. "I know how to conserve my energy so I don't waste it," she explains. "If I'm going to get involved in personal dramas or worrying about the past, that's not a good use of my time and my energy."

Gloria Bloom grew up lower middle class in Philadelphia. Her mother, Stella, was a vivacious chatterbox from Manchester, England. Her father, Morris, sold photo enlargements door to door, saving up for their only child's college education. "He just worked 14 hours a day," Allred recalls. "From the moment I saw him in the morning he was at his desk working, and then he'd go out knocking on doors. That's what he did—knock on doors and probably be rejected most of the time but keep going."

He spent the family vacation in Atlantic City schlepping around his briefcase of wares. Stella's schooling hadn't gone beyond eighth grade; with Morris she was a housewife. In the living room of their row house Stella would sound off about religion and politics; she'd go out dancing at night while Morris kept working. Despite her exuberance, Stella couldn't conceal her disappointment about what her life had become. Gloria remembers her warning, "Don't turn out like I did." "She meant having a career and an education," Allred explains. "I said, 'Mom, there's nothing wrong with you. You're a great mom.'"

Attending the Philadelphia High School for Girls, Allred and Caplan were part of the city's young female elite—though it was public, only students with high IQ scores were admitted. "This was before women's lib, but we were liberated women," Caplan says. "Girls were president and vice president of the class, editor and (CONTINUED ON PAGE 132)



## Gloria Allred

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 91

associate editor of the yearbook. We were told there was nothing we couldn't accomplish." Caplan, who often slept over at the Blooms, recalls the teenage Gloria as a guy magnet. "She always had the boys lined up," Caplan tells me. "I'm short and fat, and I've always been chubby, and when boys would ask her out, Gloria would say, 'I'll go out with you if you get a date for my friend Fern.' She introduced me to my husband."

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ALLRED DOESN'T REMEMBER hearing the word *feminism* until she was 33 and just out of law school. Two years later, in 1976, she launched the firm of Allred, Maroko & Goldberg, which scraped by with small-bore civil cases, court-appointed criminal defense work, and a smattering of sexual discrimination employment cases. Allred began to frequent women's meetings in a basement on Bunker Hill. At one of them she was asked if she would read prepared remarks at a news conference for the National Women's Political Caucus, chiding California governor Jerry Brown for his poor record of appointing women judges. "What is a news conference?" Allred remembers asking. "Why would anybody come? No one's ever heard of me. I wouldn't know what to do."

It didn't take her long to acclimate. The following year Brown arrived in Los Angeles for a summit with local feminists. Speaking to the press afterward, he congratulated himself for turning things around so dramatically that "in California women have made more gains than anyone in the country." The attendees agreed, except for Allred. Serving as coordinator of the L.A. chapter of the National Organization for Women, she characterized the meeting as a travesty packed with attendees handpicked by the governor's staff. Women's issues, she said, had been shifted to "the very bottom" of Brown's agenda. The California state coordinator from NOW had to step in to clarify that Allred's views didn't represent anybody's but her own. (Allred would prove

much kinder to Brown during his gubernatorial campaign three decades later. Weeks before the 2010 election, she introduced the world to Meg Whitman's longtime undocumented housekeeper, Nicky Diaz Santillan, who'd been fired by the Republican nominee after apparently being deemed a political liability. Whitman went from enjoying a slight lead in the opinion polls to losing the election by 13 points.)

Women's rights became more of a calling when Allred met Midge Mackenzie, who wrote *Shoulder to Shoulder*—a popular chronicle of the British suffragette movement of the early 20th century—and produced the BBC documentary series of the same name. "She said to me, 'Gloria, you have to speak out about your cases,'" Allred recalls, "and your clients have to speak out about them because women need to know that their herstory is not just in the past. It's happening now." In a corner office decorated with antique furniture, Allred has the much-thumbed paperback copy of the book Mackenzie inscribed to her as well as a mannequin decked out in the uniform, bullet cap, and baton of an Edwardian bobby, sworn enemy of women struggling for the vote.

American feminism in the 1970s, with its focus on consensus and theory, was an awkward fit for Allred. "Gloria acts independently," says Shelly Mandell, a family lawyer who succeeded her as president of NOW's L.A. chapter. "NOW was too restrictive for her style." Though Allred admired the critiques of Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan, she was no philosopher. She gravitated to the incendiary flair of the militant suffragettes chronicled in Mackenzie's book who chained themselves to Buckingham Palace, shouted down members of Parliament, and staged hunger strikes in prison until their jailers forced feeding tubes through their noses. Like them, Allred lives for conflict—which may be why her stature only grew while feminism subsided as a mass movement.

"If you're afraid of personal attacks," she says, "you're never going to make a difference." Sure, she allows, it's easy enough as a general principle to get people to agree with you when you talk about sexual harassment and violence and injustices done to women. "But when you get down to specifics," she continues, "when you're challenging people in power and business and government—when I'm giving the name, rank, and serial number of who did it, when, how, why, and to whom they did it, and what we want because they did it...Once you get into that, you're in the war zone. You're on the battlefield. You're not in academia."

AS MAINSTREAM NEWS loses its relevance, Allred becomes only more relevant to mainstream news. She's provided thousands of hours of titillating material that has helped keep cable networks from grinding to a halt. The players come and go. Past clients like Amber Frey and Tiger Woods Mistress No. 1 Rachel Uchitel slip back into obscurity. Scott Peterson rots disregarded on death row in San Quentin, and Woods's sexual escapades no longer mesmerize. But Allred retains her significance. There are always new victims to premiere and promote, new serial sexual harassers or psychopaths to square off against. In this spectacle of scandal, grisly murder, and celebrity wrongdoing, Allred has made herself the stage manager, the content provider, the indispensable performer.

Lisa Bloom, Allred's daughter, also works at the nexus of media and the law. A graduate of Yale Law School, she spent several years at her mother's firm but left a decade ago for a career as a legal commentator for Court TV, where most of her airtime was focused on stories like Saddam Hussein's war crimes tribunal and U.S. Supreme Court rulings. More recently she's been a legal analyst for CNN, where 95 percent of her commentary has been devoted to stories about star hookups, sex tapes, Paris Hilton's drug busts, and Tiger Woods's cheating. "It's almost like we're all celebrity reporters now, no matter what we started out as," Bloom says to me from the makeup chair before an appearance on the HLN show *Issues with Jane Velez-Mitchell*. She's been called in to talk about an attorney who's accused of peeking in on women customers at tanning salons.

Bloom doesn't like the cheapening of our national discourse. She's written a book about it called *Think: Straight Talk for Women to Stay Smart in a Dumbed-Down World*. When I ask about her mother's role in this culture of scandal, Bloom tells me that the audience is ultimately responsible, opting for crud on their laptops and televisions and at grocery checkout stands. "I think we are all to blame," Bloom says. "All of us—who click on those sites, who buy those magazines, and who make choices for fluff instead of the real news."

For her part Allred sees herself as one more realist in an imperfect universe. "We live in a cult of celebrity," she says. "If a celebrity's involved, it's more likely to get coverage than if a celebrity's not involved, but that's not just me. It gets more interest than civil rights cases. That doesn't mean I'll stop raising issues, but that's the way it is." Nevertheless, Allred minimizes the extent of her importance as much as she does her eagerness. Jen Heger, the celebrity legal reporter for Radar Online, (CONTINUED ON PAGE 160)

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 132) estimates that her Web site has been able to use 99 percent of the information Allred provides, although the attorney's no-leak policy can get a little frustrating. "Usually lawyers offer you information for publication but not for attribution," Heger says. "With Gloria there is no such thing as 'off the record.' It's either all or nothing. Which is one of the things I love about Gloria—and one of the things I loathe."

The Tiger Woods scandal showed Allred at her celebrity-soaked nadir. There seemed little basis for a lawsuit in her representation of three of his mistresses, but there were plenty of damaging revelations to threaten him with if he didn't pony up. Uchitel reportedly was paid \$10 million—more than three times the average jury verdict for the wrongful death of a woman in the United States—to cancel a press conference she had scheduled with Allred to discuss her relationship with Woods. Instead the attorney held a press conference with Veronica Siwik-Daniels, another of Woods's paramours, known to adult-film fans as Joslyn James. "She was in love with him," Allred told reporters, "and had reason to believe that he loved her." As proof she read a few of Woods's affectionate text messages. At a second press conference, timed to begin when Woods's nationally broadcast mea culpa ended, Allred put a supportive arm around her client as she dissolved into tears. "He mentioned just about everybody but the woman whom he said he loved," Allred railed. "Why? Why is she in the closet? That's what I want to know?"

When I spoke to Siwik-Daniels, she told me she didn't go public to seek money from Woods. Weeks after she demanded an apology from the golfer, she went on Playboy Radio and rated his penis. She posted selections from the hundreds of texts Woods sent to her cell phone—which were somewhat less affectionate than those Allred had recited. In one he promises Siwik-Daniels that he will "slap your face. Treat you like a dirty little whore. Put my cock in your ass and shove it down your throat." The texts were incorporated into *The Eleventh Hole*, a porn film that Siwik-Daniels starred in with three different actors playing the golfer.

Beneath the absurdity of these proceedings there is an underlying cynicism. Siwik-Daniels, like so many other clients at Allred's press conferences, offered a portrait of herself as weak, weepy, hopelessly naive, and undone by a cad. It's a stereotype—harking back to the silent movie era, with villains twirling their mustaches and maidens tied to the train tracks—that would surely have shocked the conscience of an idealistic feminist lawyer of the 1970s.

But those who claim Gloria Allred shoehorns herself into sensational cases solely for ego gratification don't recognize the most ef-

fective free advertising campaign in legal history when they see it. Those who call her an ambulance chaser are even more mistaken. The vast number of Allred's clients—including those embroiled in major sex scandals—have cold-called her. When a woman is wronged in the workplace and in need of an attorney, Gloria Allred is usually the only name that comes to mind. "Most of our cases, nobody's heard of obviously," says Michael Maroko. "A garment worker, for example, who's been fired or sexually harassed at a factory by her boss. Nobody knows him, nobody's heard of him, and they come to us with a claim against the company for sex harassment. That's a typical case. There are no news conferences about it."

Allred doesn't have time to screen the hundreds of voice messages, e-mails, and faxes that flow into the firm each day—half of them potential clients asking to talk to her personally. But as a living marquee, she has helped make Allred, Maroko & Goldberg one of the leading employment discrimination law firms in the country. In the past decade alone, the firm has won \$250 million in jury awards and settlement money, mostly for individual plaintiffs against corporations. Despite clashing with Allred when he was Scott Peterson's defense counsel and she was representing Amber Frey, Los Angeles attorney Mark Geragos admires her and her partners for their lawyering as well as their entrepreneurship. "They gin up positive publicity for causes, and that generates referrals," he says. "The way they operate is an incredible business model."

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**A** PHOTOGRAPHER FROM *Harper's Bazaar* once took a portrait of Allred clad in a suit of armor. In her girlhood, when she dreamed of knights and damsels, Allred would never have imagined lifting the visor and finding herself inside. But she wasn't halfway through college before she realized that if anyone was going to gallop to her rescue, it would have to be her.

During her first freshman mixer at the University of Pennsylvania, Allred met Peyton Bray, a tall, blond, blue-eyed senior. "He was very, very good-looking," she says, "and had an outstanding sense of humor. Extremely bright—very, very personable." They were expecting a baby by the time she was 19, and she sat out the first half of junior year to give birth to Lisa. Her marriage to Bray didn't last long; he was abusive, with an undiagnosed bipolar disorder, and would eventually commit suicide by shooting himself. "We thought he was just violent," Fern Caplan remembers. "Oh, he takes three beers and he beats her up." My husband went there at three in the morning to take her and Lisa to the

Blooms' house." Allred graduated from Penn in 1963 a single mom with an ex who wouldn't pay child support.

If Allred's parents agonized about her predicament, she has no memory of it. "They never said a thing about it," Allred says. "My dad would never have that conversation. He didn't generally have a conversation about anything. My mother talked freely about anything, but they weren't judgmental at all. And they both just absolutely loved my daughter."

Allred commuted to New York University to get a master's degree in education while teaching English at Benjamin Franklin High School, one of Philadelphia's toughest. She dated a law student and went so far as to visit the University of Pennsylvania Law School to pick up an application. But she knew it was a financial impossibility and crumpled the papers up. In 1966, Allred left her parents' home for Los Angeles. She and her daughter shared a house in East Hollywood near the 101 freeway as she taught at Jordan High School in Watts.

During her first year in L.A., Allred took a trip to Acapulco. She met a local doctor who invited her out to dinner and asked her to join him on some house calls first. The last stop was a motel, where, he told her, another of his patients was staying. They walked into an empty room, and he raped her at gunpoint. When she returned to Los Angeles, she discovered she was pregnant. She writes about the ordeal with little emotion in her autobiography, *Fight Back and Win*. After having an illegal abortion, the only kind available in California at the time, Allred got an infection and almost died. The first time she spoke publicly about her ordeal was in the summer of 1984. She told a reporter that it was among the factors that motivated her to advocate for other women who'd been raped.

"Those times when she was a victim, when she didn't take total control," Caplan says, "she doesn't want anyone to know about them, and she doesn't want to think about them. As far as Gloria's concerned, the most unforgivable thing is to be a victim."

Her years as a struggling single mother came to an end when in 1969 she married William Allred. Her new husband was a self-made multimillionaire—president and owner of a North Hollywood-based aircraft parts-and-services company called Donalco. The couple collected folk art from their travels around the world and for a time lived in a Spanish revival home in the San Fernando Valley that once belonged to Ann Sheridan.

"We clicked immediately," William Allred told a reporter in an early profile of his wife published in the late '70s. "I have no special talent for helping people, but I could see Gloria's knack for working with underprivileged kids. She has a special way of reaching out, and this

meant a lot to me. I could identify because my people had been Texas sharecroppers." When his wife told him she was too old at age 30 to realize her dream of going to law school, he told her she wasn't; when she talked about quitting in her first year, he told her she couldn't. "You see, Gloria is a person who has to achieve," he explained in the article. "Otherwise she's going to be unhappy, and she's going to make me unhappy. I said, 'When you're 65, I don't want you to look back and tell me I'm the reason you didn't go to law school. I don't want to be blamed, so stick with it.'" After she graduated, Allred pitched the idea of forming a law partnership to Maroko and Goldberg, telling them that now was the time to give it a go, before they had a family and a house and responsibilities that would make that leap impossible. Allred had a family and a house but no financial pressures.

The marriage lasted 18 years. In 1985, when his wife was already the most famous woman lawyer in Los Angeles, William Allred came under investigation for selling the U.S. government counterfeit parts for C-130 cargo planes. Allred and his codefendants were accused of manufacturing them using blueprints stolen from the company that actually held the license. Though the couple separated before he was indicted, Allred, Maroko & Goldberg served as cocounsel in his defense. After William was convicted on federal fraud charges, his estranged wife asked for a divorce. While he served a five-year sentence, she came away with a divorce judgment that left him more than \$4 million in her debt. He contested the settlement when he was freed, demanding half her share of her firm. She in turn demanded half of his stake in his company, which by that time was in serious decline.

Reached in Texas, where he's remarried, William Allred refused to be interviewed. Gloria Allred has been no more forthcoming. In her autobiography she doesn't provide details of their marriage save the year it began and the decade it dissolved; she doesn't identify her ex by name in the book, nor has she discussed him with her best friend since the divorce. "The most I've gotten out of her," Caplan says, "is, 'Fern, you can't imagine how deeply hurt I've been.'" Caplan draws a distinction between Allred's first husband, whom she will talk about, and her second, who's a forbidden topic. "Peyton didn't betray her," Caplan explains, "but she felt betrayed by Bill Allred. It was like, 'How could you drag me into this and potentially ruin my career?' Because had she been in any way, shape, or form tainted by the allegations and his conviction, that would have derailed her career, and that's a betrayal."

When I ask Allred about her second husband, she doesn't change her expression or

shift around in her chair. Nor does she answer. I try again: It seemed that they both had something special for a while. "I think that's a fair way to characterize it," she says. "We had something special for a while." She laughs, but it sounds like a cough. The topic seems over. Then she reconsiders. "There's nothing in any article that describes what really happened," Allred says. "There's nothing in any article that will explain what really happened. I'll just leave it at that."

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ONE FRIDAY MORNING I visit a former Westside apparel warehouse to watch a taping of *We the People with Gloria Allred*—the latest syndicated contribution to the TV small claims adjudication industry, seen in Los Angeles weekday afternoons on NBC. As a radio host on L.A.'s KABC in the '90s, Allred gave political and legal commentary on the big stories of the day. But here, every Thursday and Friday, she's just playing judge, settling disputes—actual cases that have been modified for entertainment value—between plaintiffs and defendants played by actors. Today's roster includes cases like "topless tenant," "fraternity hell-house," "bad en-gay-ement," and "hairstylist home wrecker." The morning's standout performer is the irate ex-boyfriend who snipped up the sexy underwear he bought for the plaintiff when she was his woman. Allred, in her black robes, orders the bailiff to bring an armful of bras and panties to the bench so she can survey the damage.

The next day Allred gives me a tour of her house in Malibu. The floor-to-ceiling windows of the living room are flung open to the ocean. The sand-and-sky blue Ultrasuede furniture and vases filled with aqua chunks of glass came with the place, which she bought fully furnished. Satellite soft-jazz radio struggles to be heard above the wind and the surf's burble. The bottom floor is half swallowed by an antique billiard table that no one plays on but that she hasn't bothered removing. Her two grandchildren are in college now and past the point of using the bunk beds left by the previous owners. Centered at the foot of Allred's bed is the only piece of furniture she's brought in, a Danish modern stress-free chair aimed at a flat-screen television. She opens the door of the master bathroom, dominated by another flat screen. "I added that," she says. "I want to know what's going on all the time."

Lisa Bloom is away hiking in the Himalayas. "She's writing me," Allred says. "She's just a fabulous writer." Allred would never do things like that, but she's glad her daughter is having these great adventures around the world. "I want her to have a balanced life, and I want

my grandchildren to have a balanced life," she says. "I think it's healthy to have a balanced life. It's not my life, but I'm very happy. I don't long for anything. My cases are great, exciting adventures. There are no better adventures than cases."

She has arranged photos throughout the home—of the grandkids, of her and Lisa when they delivered the 2006 commencement address at the University of Pennsylvania, of her at the West Hollywood Gay Pride Parade surrounded by supporters wearing signature red pants and blazers and frosted gold-and-auburn wigs. A small cameo frame shows Allred posing with Siwik-Daniels the night she took her to an Oscar party.

I tell Allred about a conversation I'd had with Siwik-Daniels a few weeks before—how she had arrived at Allred, Maroko & Goldberg heartbroken and under siege by the media and how, on seeing the attorney, she just lost it and wept on her shoulder. "I know she was wearing a beautiful Chanel suit, one of her blue ones," Siwik-Daniels said, "but she was OK with it. She didn't push me away. She said, 'I'm right next to you. I'm right here, it's OK.' She was very mommylike."

Allred laughs at the idea that she would wear Chanel. "If you had been in the room so many times," she says, "where people are literally just crying and crying and crying about what's happening to them—lives that have been turned upside down—devastated. *Uch!* I would like to believe anyone would have the same compassion once they see it the way I do."

In the fading light the pelicans nose-dive into the breakers. The sea lions loll on their rock. A paddleboarder takes forever to putter his way past. Allred sips from her water bottle in a bright red cable-knit sweater and black leggings. Her neighbors, an orthopedic surgeon and his interior designer wife, have invited her for lobster tacos tomorrow. It's so cute, she tells me, how they've tried to fix her up, though naturally she's not interested. Allred knows I probably should be getting home but says I just have to go with her for dinner to this little place called Howdy's. They have the best Mexican food.

We get up to leave. She gathers her things in the living room. The sound system is playing Ray Charles and Natalie Cole's cover of Peggy Lee's "Fever." Looking relaxed, Allred pauses. She crouches slightly, hips locomoting in their leggings, arms swaying to the rhythm, her brown-black eyes glinting with a fire that must have driven the Philly boys of her youth crazy as she lets the music take her where it will. ■

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