

# Daily Journal

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## TOP 100 ♦ 2020

### BET-THE-COMPANY LITIGATION AND TRIAL

## Wayne R. Gross

**G**ross, a co-founder of litigation boutique Greenberg Gross LLP and a former supervisory U.S. attorney, walked through San Francisco's Tenderloin District earlier this year to visit his alma mater, UC Hastings College of the Law, and was appalled by the neighborhood's deterioration.

Homeless tent camps blocked sidewalks, open-air drug sales were in plain view and blight ruled. "It was an absolute disaster, and not just for law students," Gross said in mid-August. "I learned that 3,000 children live in the 'loin. I came back here to save Orange County and kept thinking about it. I was an adopted child, and their plight especially hit home."

So Gross called Hastings' dean and offered his pro bono services. The result was a groundbreaking federal lawsuit filed in Hastings' name in May that led to a quick agreement with City Attorney Dennis J. Herrera in June in the form of a stipulated judgment that the city will enforce state and federal laws in the same manner as they are enforced in other San Francisco neighborhoods. *Hastings College of the Law v. City and County of San Francisco*, 4:20-cv-03033 (N.D. Cal., filed May 4, 2020).

"It was fast. A lot of city officials are subject to very powerful political forces, but we wanted to see if involving the pow-

er of the federal court system could help," Gross said, noting that the headquarters of both the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and the Northern District are in the area, not to mention the state Supreme Court and the city's civil courthouse. "The judges work there, and they see the problem every day."

Gross is lead counsel in a high-profile RICO case against a global religious sect built around a doctrine of subservience to its leader, the "Apostle," and his inner circle of bishops. Those in charge allegedly sexually abuse children and adults, use members for forced unpaid labor and engage in extortion and money laundering. *Martin v. La Luz Del Mundo*, 2:20-cv-01437 (C.D. Cal., filed Feb. 12, 2020).

"It's a multibillion-dollar church few have heard of prior to our suit," Gross said. "We found a woman raised in the church and groomed from an early age who thankfully has had the courage to come forward." His lead plaintiff, Sochil Martin, has been enslaved, trafficked and sexually abused, Gross' complaint says.

Gross was struck by the coincidence that the filing of the suit was announced and Martin's photo featured on the front page of the L.A. Times on Feb. 15, 2020. It was the same front page that showed Harvey Weinstein leaving court following closing arguments in his rape trial.



**GREENBERG GROSS LLP**  
LOS ANGELES/ORANGE COUNTY  
SPECIALTY: HIGH-STAKES, HIGH-PROFILE TRIALS, INCLUDING WHITE COLLAR

"Eight years ago when Alan Greenberg and I started, we wanted to be the firm of choice for plaintiffs and defendants in their most impactful cases," Gross said. "And we wanted to do more. We wanted to file suits to change the world."

— John Roemer