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Top 100 Lawyers AND DISTINGUISHED COUNSEL



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LITIGATION
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An arbitrator sat through evidentiary hearings that stretched across years, weighing a case that would end with the largest award in California in 2025 — and likely 2026 as well: *Mohammad Honarkar and 4G Wireless Inc. v. Mahender Makhijani, Continuum Analytics, Inc. et al.* As lead counsel for the plaintiffs, Aaron May watched the arbitrator hand down a $1.34 billion award, including more than $650 million in punitive damages.

The arbitrator found that May's clients had been fraudulently induced into contributing $483 million of real estate into a joint venture, the proceeds of which Makhijani and his affiliates then converted. Evidence uncovered during the case helped the U.S. Department of Justice bring criminal charges against Makhijani, who now sits in jail awaiting trial. Coverage of the award ran in the Daily Journal, Bloomberg and the Los Angeles Times.

Getting to that result meant confronting an opposing side that refused to comply with the arbitrator's orders and would not produce discovery, even after sanctions. May's team filed motion after motion to compel compliance, each one asking for sanctions to escalate. "We were persistent and never wavered in holding the other side accountable," May said. The arbitrator eventually issued evidentiary and issue sanctions against the opposing side, helping offset the prejudice May's clients had suffered from the withheld evidence.

May has practiced law for 27 years. "I was drawn to the law because I wanted to help people solve their most complicated problems," he said.

Two judges shaped him early on: U.S. District Judge William Matthew Byrne and U.S. Circuit Judge Raymond Fisher, for whom May clerked. "Judge Byrne taught me that oftentimes the best way to resolve a dispute was not through trial or motion practice but by getting everyone in a room together and trying to work things out," May said. Fisher's lesson took a different shape: "Judge Fisher taught me that the details matter," May said.

Those lessons continue to guide May's caseload, which today includes individuals under federal criminal investigation, partners in business disputes and California businesses defrauded by insiders. "I try to solve my client's problems for them in the most pragmatic and efficient manner possible," he said.

May serves on the boards of two housing rights organizations, the Housing Rights Center and the Inner City Law Center.

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