

# THE TALE OF THE TRAVELING PURSE

by ANDRA B. GREENE  
and KELLY L. GALLIGAN

This article was inspired by a realization that both of us authors had at the same time. Both of us independently read a post on Instagram by our friend Caroline, which read:

First time I have ever posted a mirror selfie. This moment captures a wonderful moment 7 years in the making. . . . While I was in law school, my dear friend [Andra] and I met for our daily coffee club. She walked in (she had a super woman law job) with the prettiest bag I had ever seen. I ooo'd and ahhh'd. I couldn't imagine ever being able to afford this bag but I admired the beauty. Months later, [Andra] came into coffee club and said she had a gift. She was gifting me her bag. For years—on days and nights I've wanted a little confidence boost, I've carried this bag. I feel like I'm carrying Andra on my arm. This sounds like a silly story, but I hope the moment is seen as a moment where a strong woman sought empowerment and passed something wonderful to a woman she believed in—a woman she believed could have a super woman job as well. Eventually, I'll find a strong woman to gift a bag to, thanks to Andra.

Its message about women supporting women was powerful. It spoke to us. We decided to get together over lunch to talk about it. Kelly and I are at different stages of our careers; thus, our takeaways from the post reflected that. Kelly was



Caroline's law school classmate. She is now a new partner at Rutan & Tucker. Kelly's career is on the rise, with many years ahead of her. As for me, Andra, most of my career is in the rear-view mirror. I recently retired from Irell & Manella after four decades of practice. I have started a new chapter as a mediator at Phillips ADR. Despite the disparity in our years of practice, Kelly and I always enjoy each other's company and ideas, often using #lawdaughter and #lawmama to describe ourselves.

Caroline's post led to a thought-provoking lunch conversation about different ways of mentoring and supporting our colleagues. We saw Caroline's message of how women can support women as universal, cutting across generational lines. Yet what particularly resonated with each of us was different, reflecting our ages and experience. This article speaks with our two voices.

### Our Initial Reactions to the Post

**Andra:** I had no idea that the purse I gave to Caroline years ago had been so meaningful to her. In fact, I had completely forgotten about it until I read the post. I met Caroline when she was a law student. We were part of an impromptu coffee club comprised of random people who were always at Starbucks at 5:00 a.m. From the moment I met her, I knew that Caroline would become a fine lawyer one day (which she did). Like many people starting

out, she just needed to learn that for herself. I tried to boost her confidence in small ways in the fifteen minutes we chatted each morning. Her post reminded me that we seasoned lawyers can make an impact on junior lawyers with even small gestures.

**Kelly:** My initial reaction to Caroline's post, particularly the last line, made me take stock of the power of the ripple effect. Andra's actions made Caroline want to "find a strong woman to gift a bag to," with the "bag" representing whatever would be a meaningful gesture for that person. The gesture of a gift communicated a belief in Caroline's abilities, which contributed to Caroline being the type of person who prioritizes supporting others (as Caroline already is "gifting bags" to others in a sense).

Even from afar (Caroline now lives in Texas), Caroline congratulates me on wins and finds ways to show support. For example, when I recently launched a corporate law marketing profile with a friend (@GirlNextOffice!), Caroline was one of the first to offer words of encouragement, and she sent our page to her entrepreneur friend. In turn, Caroline's support has encouraged me to pay it forward. What felt to Andra like a small gesture set a ripple effect in motion. I can't know the exact magnitude of the effect, but I know that by their actions, Andra, and now Caroline, are both indirectly "gifting bags" to enumerable women.

Mentoring happens  
in a variety  
of ways,  
from talking  
over coffee  
to purse-giving  
to letting someone  
tag along with you  
to a hearing.  
It doesn't have to  
be formal or rigid.



## Ways That Women Attorneys Can Support Other Women

The tradition of supporting others is strong in the Orange County legal community. Those who have a champion or sponsor (regardless of how small) tend to look around and find ways to spread the goodwill, and there seems to be no shortage of champions or sponsors here. We love that there are versions of Andra and Caroline's morning coffee meetups and gifting of purses happening every day in Orange County, and it is inspiring knowing that these interactions are creating lasting impacts that will continue to shape Orange County's legal community.

**Andra:** First, I don't think it's only the responsibility of women attorneys to support other women attorneys. To the contrary, everyone should be supporting their colleagues rising through the ranks regardless of gender, race, or other characteristics. Indeed, I believe that, to be successful, one needs the assistance of those in power, which in most legal organizations still means men. That said, I personally have always felt a strong desire to support women attorneys, especially those junior to me (which now is nearly everyone). I was fortunate to have had some amazing women guide me early in my career, at a time when there were far fewer women in the profession. I found I could share certain things with them that I felt I could not disclose to my male colleagues (such as my terminal case of imposter syndrome). As a result, I try to pay it forward.

So how can women attorneys support other women? First, as in any relationship, get to know them. Meet the people in your firm, join organizations where you will meet other women attorneys (the OCBA or OCWLA are good examples), and get involved in your community. Share information and anecdotes. Relish each other's successes and be there for the failures. Take your junior colleagues to meetings, hearings, and bar events, and explain why you are doing what you are doing. Be open to their questions. Act as a sounding board. If you can promote a colleague's accomplishments or successes to others, do it. These things are not hard; they just require intentionality. Mentoring happens in a variety of ways, from talking over coffee to purse-giving to letting someone tag along with you to a hearing. It doesn't have to be formal or rigid.

**Kelly:** I love this topic because, as a new partner still early in my career, I have been a fortunate recipient of sponsorship. I am now eager to focus more on giving back and empowering other women in the workplace. Below are a few examples of steps I have been

taking to implement this into my practice.

First, I am making it a point to celebrate accomplishments of other female attorneys. In addition to showing direct appreciation or personally congratulating my female peers on their achievements, I can make sure they are recognized by others. For example, I can highlight to partners at our firm when someone closes a big deal, plays a significant role on a client matter, or demonstrates a strength or talent. And outside the office setting, I can promote accomplishments on social media or nominate deserving candidates for awards.

Second, I am working to be approachable and to offer help. It is not always easy to make others feel like they can come to you, or to be aware of how you are acting or treating others, when you are typing furiously on your keyboard trying to meet an urgent client deadline, which happens often in our profession. But there is a way to work, even in times of stress, with a courteous and affable demeanor. For the most part, we always have at least a minute to respond congenially to someone when they approach. Even if it's not a convenient time to answer questions or provide one-on-one mentoring, you might be able to provide an opportunity to participate in or observe the current project, or at least set up a time in the future to meet.

Finally, and my favorite part of supporting other women, is giving them opportunities. I have capable, talented attorneys working under me who impress me every day. I try to give junior attorneys as much responsibility as they are ready and willing to take. I love watching them step up to the challenge and out of their comfort zones, tackle a new project, and grow in confidence and ability.

### Lasting Effects of Caroline's Post

**Andra:** Reading the story re-energized me. It reminded me that I can still be a resource for women lawyers and support them in their career development. I can learn from those junior to me, too. In fact, sometimes I feel I learn more from my mentees than they learn from me. Supporting and mentoring are two-way streets.


I often find myself saying things like, "the legal profession is different now," "in my day," and other boomer-type things. One thing that hasn't changed is the need for connection and support. As a seasoned lawyer, I can offer that.

The post also inspired Kelly and me to collaborate on different types of articles. This is only the first.

**Kelly:** I have shared Caroline's post with no fewer than a dozen people. It has spurred

many heartfelt and lengthy conversations, including related to the power of showing support and generosity to others (the ripple effect is mighty!), how seemingly small gestures can make a big impact, how others play an important role in personal or career development, legendary female champions and leaders in the Orange County legal community, feelings of imposter syndrome, female rivalry . . . the list goes on. I don't know what Caroline's expectations were in posting her story, but I doubt she could have anticipated the scope of its effect.

And why have I been incessantly talking about this post? Sure, the gifted purse story is heartwarming. But Caroline's vulnerability is the reason it had such an impact on me. First, it starts with a mirror selfie. Unless you're a seasoned influencer, there's a good chance that posting a selfie for the public to "judge" can be intimidating. Second, Caroline shares about moments where she needs a boost of confidence. I love this. The world knows Caroline as a smart, strong, successful, accomplished woman, and here she is posting her selfie and admitting that even she sometimes needs to be lifted up. We tend to see a successful woman and assume she is special, supernatural, or something we could never be. That is why it is so powerful to see successful women being vulnerable and relatable.

The post inspires me to be honest and vulnerable with others the way Caroline is. I hope to be a catalyst for important conversations like this, and to make other women feel confident in their ability to achieve. In sharing this story, we hope we have inspired you to create your own ripple effect by finding ways, no matter how small, to support someone's career. 

*Andra B. Greene is a mediator/arbitrator/independent panelist with Phillips ADR Enterprises LLP. Kelly L. Galligan is a partner at Rutan & Tucker where she specializes in mergers and acquisitions and general corporate law. Both authors would like to thank their friend, Caroline Shurig Galloway, for being who she is, and for wanting to pay it forward.*

*This article first appeared in Orange County Lawyer, April 2023 (Vol. 65 No. 4), p. 42. The views expressed herein are those of the author. They do not necessarily represent the views of Orange County Lawyer magazine, the Orange County Bar Association, the Orange County Bar Association Charitable Fund, or their staffs, contributors, or advertisers. All legal and other issues must be independently researched.*