

Meet Our Associates – Kayla Chen

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Tell us a bit about yourself and your career before joining Selendy Gay.

I joined Selendy Gay directly from law school. Before that, I spent a year in China getting a Masters in Global Affairs at Tsinghua University as part of the Schwarzman Scholars program where I interned at a local public interest law firm and worked for an international non-profit that connected organizations working on the ground with legal resources. I was always interested in how the law impacts global policies, but my experiences both abroad and domestically made it clear that I wanted to pursue a law degree to understand the systems we were working to improve.

What made you want to join the firm?

I knew I wanted to be a litigator somewhere that gave me the flexibility to engage in different industries and practice areas. Since Selendy Gay has a great reputation as a firm of generalist litigators, I knew I would get exposure to a wide variety of cases and develop skills that I could apply in any context. It was also important to me to gain substantive experience early in my career, and I felt that Selendy Gay would invest in my growth.

Additionally, I wanted to find a place with a culture where I could be my authentic self. I was impressed with how diverse the firm is, and I knew I would enjoy engaging with people in this environment.

What has stood out to you about your first year?

What stands out to me is the trust that Selendy Gay has in its associates to get involved in every aspect of litigation, which allowed me to have a substantive part in multiple matters.

Within my first year at the firm, I was part of three separate deposition and trial preparation periods. One of those cases was a bankruptcy litigation where we acted as the fiduciary for 1.7 million account holders who used a cryptocurrency platform before it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Since it was a relatively small case team and the litigation moved very quickly, I was deeply involved in almost all aspects of the case. I took the first cut at drafting exhibit lists, managed experts, and was invited to sit in while partners counseled clients, which isn't always possible at larger firms.

My experience outside of bankruptcy litigation has also trained me across the lifecycle of litigation. For instance, while preparing for deposition and trial, I learned what what matters in each stage of litigation and the importance of each step that comes before. It's been incredibly valuable to have hands-on experience that can translate to my other cases.

How have you grown professionally in your first year at Selendy Gay?

I've grown immensely at Selendy Gay, both in the concrete skills needed to be a lawyer, like writing and research skills, as well as in my ability to think critically about case strategy. As a new associate, it's easy to get lost in the weeds of an assignment, but I've learned that the best associates see the bigger picture of a case. The partners encourage associates to think deeply about the case strategy at hand and bring their own ideas and questions to the table.

Selendy Gay also has a culture of feedback that encourages growth in its associates, which I think is unique to a firm of our size. Each time I approach a new case, I'm able to take the lessons I've learned from a previous matter, and I feel more prepared to react to the different challenges that arise during litigation.

What are you most looking forward to in the next phase of your career at Selendy Gay?

Before I leave to clerk next year, I'm excited to take an active role in more pro bono matters, appellate work, and international arbitration work, and to continue developing my understanding of legal strategy. I gained a lot of experience very quickly, so I'm looking forward to using that experience in the context of more practice areas and continuing to work on my generalist skills.

Attorney

- Kayla Chen