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SKADDEN, ARPS, SLATE, MEAGHER & FLOM  
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## 45 UNDER 45

How did we pick these outstanding young lawyers? Let us explain.

Edited By Julie Triedman

WHETHER IT'S "DEALMAKERS OF THE YEAR," "Litigation Department of the Year," "Big Suits," or "Big Deals," the pages of *The American Lawyer* typically brim with pictures of men. But time and again, we've come across remarkable women lawyers, many of whom fell outside of our deals-and-suits-heavy coverage. To give them their due, we decided to identify the best of the best among young women lawyers in The Am Law 200, and bring them together in a single issue.

We called various industry sources and also invited The Am Law 200 to submit a maximum of five nominations per firm. All told, we had more than ten nominees for each spot on our "45 Under 45" list, so our team of reporters and editors could afford to be picky. In the end, we passed over the many ink-worthy "rising stars" in favor of a few dozen women who—despite their youth—have already arrived. Some are well-known, others less so. But all have achievements we could quantify: They are leading billion-dollar deals or financings, first-chairing high-stakes litigation, arguing appeals, or managing important firm clients. We also looked for those with an upward trajectory at their firms, whether taking on progressively larger roles, heading important firm initiatives, or bringing in significant new business. We also recognized a few women who have built successful original practices, like privacy law or clean tech, or have taken their practices to new places, whether that be public international law or the Middle East. One thing we didn't take into account: A lot of these lawyers are juggling careers with raising young children.

After the initial vetting, we got on the phones. Every finalist was screened by an *American Lawyer* reporter, who reviewed her record and called clients and opposing counsel. Then we tried to distill it all into approximately 125 words per profile. It was a big job, but these women are worth the recognition. Read on.

—JULIE TRIEDMAN

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**LAST MARCH**, we highlighted Gao as one of the “The New China Hands,” the rising generation of mostly Chinese lawyers edging Western expats aside as China practice leaders at international firms. Gao spent the rest of 2010 showing why she deserves that recognition. A specialist in representing start-ups rather than state-owned enterprises (think Baidu.com, not PetroChina Company Limited), Gao last year guided roughly a dozen Chinese companies through Nasdaq or New York Stock Exchange offerings, including navigation software company AutoNavi Holdings Limited, tutoring firm TAL Education Group, and research group ShangPharma Corporation. Kevin Chen, ShangPharma’s COO, says Gao is a font of knowledge for start-ups looking to move to the next level. “She introduced us to other CFOs who had been through what we were trying to do,” says Chen, whose company went public in October.