

# Daily Journal

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## TOP BOUTIQUES IN CALIFORNIA 2022

### KARLIN & PEEBLES, LLP

LOS ANGELES

INTERNATIONAL TAX,  
TRUSTS & ESTATES  
& CHARITABLE  
PLANNING SERVICES



JANE PEEBLES, MICHAEL KARLIN, CYNTHIA D. BRITTAIN, MARIA-SOLEDAD OTERO AND THOMAS M. GIORDANO-LASCARI

**M**ichael J. Karlin and Jane Peebles already had long careers when they decided to join forces and create Karlin & Peebles, LLP, which specializes in tax law for foreign clients. Peebles met Karlin in 1988 at Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP, and decades later they decided to found their own firm in 2007.

"Our firm is quite unusual, we're a boutique firm and every lawyer here is what I call a large firm refugee," Peebles said. "We've had wonderful training but now with a much smaller shop, we offer a much higher level of client service. We specialize in international planning — not for big multinational corporations but for their owners."

A typical Karlin & Peebles client might be someone who may have family members in the U.S. who are about to move or who want to expand their businesses. "Our clients are high networth individuals and families who move here, and we also go in the opposite direction. We represent Americans who are doing business abroad," said Karlin.

He remarked that there used to be a distinction between inbound and outbound planning but that lines are blurring because people who move continue to have businesses and family abroad, something he discusses at length in an article he co-wrote with Peebles and Joohee Jung titled, "International Estate Planning," published in the Journal of International Taxation No. 7 and 8.

Cynthia D. Brittain said there's no such thing as a typical day at the firm because of the logistics and business hours of their international clientele. "I was on the phone at 4:30 this morning with a client in Saudi Arabia, but other folks will be on the phone at 11 to speak with someone in Hong Kong or China."

Thomas M. Giordano-Lascari said that they all work together closely. "We help with pre-residency planning, income tax and optimization." As an example, he mentioned working with a foreign banking institution to get specific licenses and the liquidity that would come from the purchase.

"My clients are global," said Brittain, describing her practice. "They have corporations with a global footprint and multinational beneficiaries." She said a typical client might be someone who is about to move to the U.S. but finds that they are completely out of compliance with local tax law.

"That's OK," she said. "When they fall on our feet, they come with the intention that we will help them become compliant in a legal manner." She called those cases the most satisfying.

Maria S. Otero, originally a Swiss lawyer who moved to the U.S. 18 years ago, said context is everything, and that it's important to be aware of what is going on in the world. "Some of my clients are in Europe or South America," she said. "Right now I'm following the Brazilian elections because I know it's going to have an impact on our clients. The Chilean elections also had an impact."

Otero said her practice can throw her into a totally different language, and as

an example named a case involving the blockchain. In some matters “there are no laws,” she said, “The country’s laws will always be behind and that’s why we put up with our schedules because you’re always discovering new things.”

The firm was split in the middle when it came to people moving into the U.S. While some attorneys said they tend to suggest other countries with more efficient tax regulation for the sake of businesses, others commented they want everyone to come in because America “is the greatest country in the world.”

But, arguments like that usually end, they said in between laughs, when it comes to the issue of the California grandchild — that is, foreigners who have a grandchild born in the state. They commented that those cases are usually very straightforward because they disregard all rationale; grandparents do not care and only want to be with their grandchild.

Karlin & Peebles said they try to foster a multicultural, multilingual approach to the cases they work with. The attorneys at the firm come from a vari-

ety of backgrounds and countries, and speak French, Armenian, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin, Cantonese and German, among other languages.

“Jane and I strongly believe in continuity and in building the future of the firm,” Karlin said before mentioning their roster is expanding.

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