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CALIFORNIA LAWYER ATTORNEYS OF THE YEAR

AWARDS

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WE HONOR

43 ATTORNEYS

FOR THEIR

EXTRAORDINARY

ACHIEVEMENTS

IN 2006

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By the Editors of CALIFORNIA LAWYER



**MICHAEL D.
SOBEL**

SOLE PRACTITIONER
BEVERLY HILLS

**MICHAEL J.
OLECKI**

GRODSKY & OLECKI
SANTA MONICA

**MICHAEL H.
ARTAN**

SOLE PRACTITIONER
LOS ANGELES

CHARGED WITH KIDNAPPING AND ASSAULTING A TEENAGE GIRL, Compton middle school teacher Raul Ramirez faced the possibility of life in prison. Artan and Sobel successfully defended Ramirez against criminal charges before a state court jury, winning a rare finding from a judge that Ramirez was “factually innocent.”

Artan, Olecki, and Sobel then took the matter to federal court in Los Angeles, arguing that Ramirez’s civil

rights had been violated. None of them had ever worked on a civil rights case before, let alone tried one. But the trio of attorneys was outraged at the way the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department had conducted the investigation, withholding exonerating evidence and keeping the newly wed Ramirez in custody for ten months. As a result of the charges, Ramirez also lost his job as a special-education teacher.

In February 2006 a federal jury returned a verdict of \$18 million in compensatory damages against the county of Los Angeles and the sheriff's department. And Ramirez eventually got his job back. Prior to the punitive phase of the trial, the case settled for \$9 million.



For Kathy
with Thanks for selecting the jury
That rendered the verdict that
brought us the CLAY
Michael