

PLAINTIFFS' HOT LIST | A SPECIAL REPORT

This week we spotlight the nation's plaintiffs bar, singling out firms that scored at least one significant win between Feb. 1, 2014, and Jan. 31, 2015—meaning that they prevailed in a bench or jury trial in which a lot of money or a principle was on the line or the outcome set a benchmark. To be eligible, firms needed to devote at least 50 percent of their litigation resources to plaintiffs work. And we asked some of these litigators to share trial tips or lessons learned, or reflect on their role models.

Motley Rice LLC

The September jury verdict that held Arab Bank PLC accountable for financing terrorism stands as a landmark in Motley Rice's rich litigation history.

The case marked the first time that a bank has been held liable in a civil suit under the U.S. Anti-Terrorism Act. It amplified Motley Rice's long-held conviction that the civil justice system can be a powerful weapon to deny terrorists such as the Palestinian group Hamas the money that feeds their attacks.

"Arab Bank was a watershed," said Jodi Westbrook Flowers, head of the anti-terrorism and human rights practice at the 12-year-old Motley Rice, which labored for 10 years on the case against one of the Arab world's largest lenders.

Motley Rice was one of four firms—including Osen of Hackensack, N.J., the first to file; Sayles Werbner of Dallas; and Turner & Associates of North Little Rock, Ark.—pressing claims that the bank funneled money that supported two dozen Hamas attacks in Israel during the early 2000s.

Sayles Werbner co-founder Mark Werbner credited Motley partner Michael Elsner with winning over the jurors. "Mike Elsner really brought a very special connection with the jury," Werbner said. Damages will be decided in a proceeding set for July; Arab Bank's counsel at DLA Piper have promised a vigorous appeal.

Motley Rice in 2014 extended its global reach by taking as clients families that lost loved ones in the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 in March. It is exploring a class action against South African gold producers whose workers suffer from silicosis.

The firm scored big in two complex Florida cigarette-smoker trials, with jury verdicts totaling \$68 million. It concluded a decade of litigation against Travelers Cos. Inc. with an appeals court ruling that will make \$500 million available to asbestos victims.

"The facts lead where the facts lead," Flowers said, quoting the late firm co-founder Ron Motley. "We're not afraid of challenges." —LISA HOFFMAN



JODI FLOWERS

FIRM FACTS:

- **Founded:** 2003
- **Based:** Mount Pleasant, S.C.
- **Total number of attorneys:** 68
- **Partners:** 27
- **Associates:** 39

ROLE MODEL:

■ Firm co-founder Ron Motley, a renowned mass tort trial attorney who died in 2013. Flowers was headed for a domestic practice career when she met Motley and saw the light when he asked if she really wanted to do "pots and pans" work

for a living. "I had one of those moments," she recalled. She credits Motley with setting the firm's brash approach, commitment to the underdog and willingness to take on such formidable opponents as Saudi Arabia. "Ron's passion for the law was unparalleled." —JODI FLOWERS