Maritza Antu
Assistant district attorney,
Harris County
Houston
Age: 32

Harris County Assistant District Attorney Maritza Antu says she knows she's in the right place by working as a prosecutor.

"I feel like a superhero," she says of the time she spent prosecuting child abuse cases. "I feel like I'm just really doing something incredible with my career."

Justin Keiter, an ADA who was hired at the DA's office at the same time as Antu and who tried cases with her, says Antu is an all-star prosecutor whose tiny stature is in stark contrast to her skills as a lawyer.

"She's a ferocious pit bull. Man, you just don't see it coming, but she's firm. She will always do what she feels is right, even if it's unpopular," says Keiter.

Antu earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Texas in Austin and then graduated from the University of Houston Law Center in 2005.

"I wanted to be a trial lawyer, and I had the misconception I could be a civil lawyer, make the money and also go to trial — and soon realized: No, if you want to be a trial lawyer, you go to the DA's office," Antu says.

She started work there even before she passed the Texas bar examination in November 2005.

Since then, she has moved up through the ranks: She started in misdemeanor court and was promoted to felony court as a junior prosecutor. Then, she became a supervisor in misdemeanor court and later was promoted to a felony No. 2 prosecutor. After that, in 2009, Antu moved to the child abuse division, where she spent two years and two months.

"That is my passion. That is where I even get sentimental about it. I feel so strongly about those cases because, in my opinion, those victims are truly the most innocent victims in this courthouse," she says.
While assigned to the child abuse division at the DA's office, she won convictions in three super-aggravated sexual assault cases, a charge that carries a minimum sentence of 25 years without the possibility of parole.

In late 2011, Antu moved to the public integrity division, where she prosecuted police officers. Then, in May 2012 she was promoted to chief felony prosecutor. She currently works in the 178th District Court.

Bill Moore, who supervised Antu when he was chief of the public integrity division, says she is a good communicator and great with juries.

"She's very good at taking complicated information and refining it down to a point the jury can understand well. That's a gift you really need in handling complex criminal cases," says Moore, now chief of the intake division.

In addition to trying cases, Antu, who is fluent in Spanish, says she often serves as a spokesperson from the DA's office when a reporter working for a Spanish-language television station asks for an interview.

"When Univision comes knocking, I know it's going to be me," she says.