

Nicole Fanjul
Latham & Watkins

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They've Got Next: The 40 Under 40 - Nicole Fanjul of Latham & Watkins

Our 2023 They've Got Next: The 40 Under 40 honorees represent the best of the future of the legal profession. From appellate aces to white collar wizzes, our honorees take their place in our now storied Bloomberg Law tradition.

Nicole Fanjul

Age: 39

Firm: Latham & Watkins

Practice Area: Banking & Finance

Title: Partner

Location: New York

Law School: Harvard Law School

Please describe two of your most substantial, recent wins in practice.

I'm incredibly proud to work with the most sophisticated financial institutions, direct lenders, private equity sponsors, and companies on their most important financings in both the syndicated and direct lending markets.

I helped lead the Latham team that represented the lenders in the largest ever annual recurring revenue financing to support Zendesk's \$10.2 billion acquisition by an investor group. The transaction was the largest private debt backed leveraged buyout in history by debt size and illustrated that private debt funds can deliver acquisition financing of size, even in the most challenging market conditions.

In addition, I represented a global bank in a \$4.91 billion term loan and revolving credit facility, concurrent with a \$5.3 billion bond offering, for pharmaceutical company Organon. The facilities were used, in part, to facilitate the spin-off of

Merck & Co.'s women's health, biosimilars, and established brands businesses into Organon.

What is the most important lesson you learned as a first-year attorney and how does it inform your practice today?

Someone else's discomfort should not become the primary focus of a transaction. And a lawyer should not make themselves feel small to make someone else feel more comfortable. That doesn't mean you have to be combative or call out an incident or disagreement if it won't advance your position. But I have learned over the years that you can't always avoid the discomfort. Sometimes you just have to know how to recognize and name it without letting it distract you.

How do you define success in your practice?

Recently, I worked on a leveraged finance deal relating to a major acquisition. To meet the client's unique needs, we developed a novel type of debt instrument that no one had ever used before. We had all of these leaders from across lots of Latham offices and practices all talking together live, stress-testing the structure in real time, making suggestions. It was amazing.

We don't have the opportunity to create something new every day, and there I was, right in the middle of the action. This is one of the great opportunities of being at a firm like Latham: we don't just learn the rules, sometimes we make them. That to me is success within the context of the commercial work.

I am also grateful that I can provide financially for my family in a way that I never imagined I could when I was growing up. That is how the professional success has also been my personal success.

What are you most proud of as a lawyer?

I am proud that I have been able to succeed at Latham, without feeling like I have to become someone I am not. I feel strongly that I have been most successful when I bring my whole self, professional and personal, to work. And I encourage my team members to do the same.

The Covid-19 pandemic presented a myriad of significant challenges as colleagues balanced the many responsibilities of family life with rigorous professional demands. That period reinforced for me that being an empathetic leader is critical for boosting morale.

I showed my own vulnerabilities to make others feel comfortable doing the same, and I work to be transparent with colleagues to set reasonable expectations and goals so together we can meet the desired outcome for clients.

Who is your greatest mentor in the law and what have they taught you?

Because Latham is such a collaborative place, I have been mentored by many. I can't pick just one, but my banking practice group stands out to me. The group was extremely supportive when I decided to start a family while continuing to pursue my professional goals.

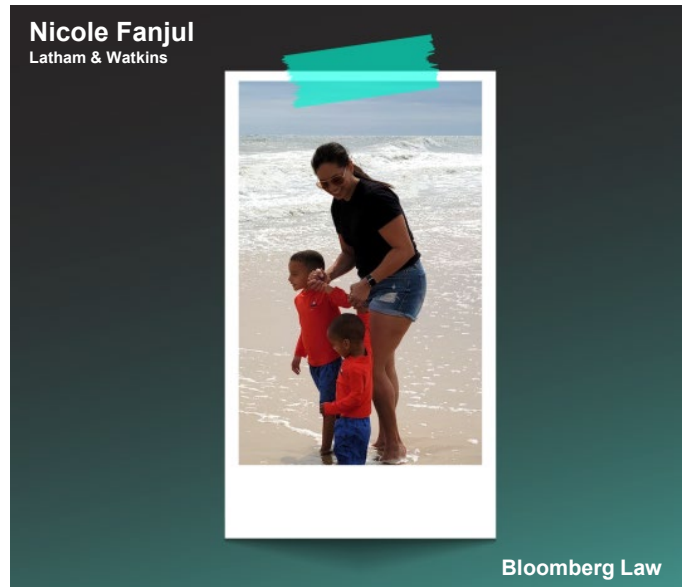
They taught me that I don't have to be shy about the demands of parenting a child; my son's photos are all over my office. I hope this signals to associates on my team that their children and families are legitimate parts of their lives and that we want them to be open about who they are.

I have watched women take on unreasonable workloads to the detriment of their families and well-being, because they were afraid of being labeled as unreliable or missing an opportunity their male colleagues would take. I try to say yes, rather than no. If I need to stretch to make it work, of course I do. But if you don't ever try to find a balance, it will never happen.

My mentors taught me that balance doesn't happen by accident. If you don't express your priorities, others will set them for you, and probably not in the way you want.

Tell us your two favorite songs on your summer music playlist.

"Calm Down" by Rema and Selena Gomez—I just love the relaxing, chill energy of this song. And "Shining" by DJ Khaled, Beyoncé and Jay-Z-- I like Beyoncé's attitude and swagger on this song as she unapologetically celebrates all her "winning". It leaves me feeling grateful and happy.



Nicole Fanjul and family on the beach in the Hamptons, New York.

Credit: Nicole Fanjul and Jonathan Hurtarte/Bloomberg Law

Nicole Fanjul serves as co-deputy office managing partner of Latham & Watkins' New York office. She has advised on large acquisition financings, including a firm team that represented the lenders in connection with The Walt Disney Company's \$71.3 billion acquisition of 21st Century Fox. Her pro bono practice includes advising on immigration matters. She also spearheaded Latham's Anti-Racism and Allyship Discussion Series to help foster education around systemic racism.