

Daily Journal

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TOP 40 UNDER 40

California's leading lawyers of 2019

Laura R. Washington

Washington, is a Latham & Watkins LLP partner who represents high-profile clients in complex business disputes in the entertainment, media and other sectors. Working with her prominent mentor, Marvin S. Putnam, who leads Latham's entertainment, sports and media practice, Washington is currently active in conducting closely-watched cases connected to the MeToo movement.

When Putnam moved to Latham from O'Melveny & Myers LLP in 2015, he worked hard to persuade Washington to come along. She and Putnam had both graduated from Georgetown University Law Center, and Washington had been his summer associate back in 2008.

By 2015, "I was a sixth year associate on a partnership track at O'Melveny, so it was a hard decision," she said. "He actually drove over to my house to set out his reasons why it made sense to go over to Latham. I took a leap of faith. He said we could build a practice together, and he was true to his word."

She took a while to think it over.

"I saw it would be an opportunity missed," Washington said.

Still, there were issues.

"It was two months before my wedding. I finally told Latham I'd start but first I had to go on my honeymoon." She and her new husband went to Spain. "That was the only two weeks in my whole career when no one emailed me," she said.

She made partner at Latham in January 2018.

Washington represents Miramax Inc. and Tim Sarnoff, an independent board member of The Weinstein Co., in a federal class action brought by women alleging they were sexually assaulted or harassed by Weinstein. The claims involved racketeering counts against Weinstein and others ranging from mail and wire fraud to civil battery. Washington and the Latham team in April 2019 persuaded the court to grant their motions to dismiss their clients from the case. *Geiss v. The Weinstein Co. Holdings LLC*, 1:17-cv-09554 (S.D. N.Y., filed Dec. 6, 2017).

"Our clients were named in the original complaint as vicariously liable for Weinstein's actions," Washington said. "But they couldn't be vicariously liable because assault was outside the scope of Weinstein's employment. We also had a winning statute of limitations argument."

Washington represents Beyoncé in several matters. "Not a bad client to have," she said happily. "When we met she was so humble and appreciative. Not a diva at all. One of the best clients you could have."

In one case, before Latham got involved, another firm had sued for trademark infringement a man selling merchandise bearing the word Feyoncé and the phrase "Put A Ring On It," a line from a well-known



**Latham & Watkins
LLP**

Century City

Practice: Litigation & trial

Age: 35

Beyoncé song, "Single Ladies." *Knowles-Carter v. Maurice*, 1:16-cv-02532 (S.D. N.Y., filed April 5, 2016). The suit alleged the seller sought to capitalize on the notoriety of the popular song and its famed singer.

Washington said that after she and Latham took over the case, the seller offered to stop.

"We dropped the suit," she said. "Beyoncé wasn't looking for money or further litigation. It was a win for everybody."

— John Roemer