



Next Gen



This week's Q&A with

Jonathan Pelayo

Jonathan Pelayo is a Partner in Locke Lord's Construction Practice Group based in the Houston office. His practice is split into three areas. About 50 percent is construction work, ranging from drafting construction, architectural and other contracts to resolving disputes in arbitration and litigation. Forty percent is energy work, representing clients in both upstream and midstream disputes. The remaining 10 percent is best described as "any other dispute you may need a lawyer to help you with." The diversity in his work is what he finds most enjoyable.



More About Jonathan

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career?

As a younger lawyer, one of my biggest challenges was learning when to tell Partners or clients "I don't know the answer to that question, but I will find out." Over time, I have learned that clients appreciate the honesty in that answer, understanding that with a little bit of time to investigate the issue, we will provide the help they need. I think too many lawyers are tempted to answer every question a client may ask on cue, without being sure of the answer (and with the risk of being wrong). The real consequences of the latter outweigh any perceived consequences of the former, but learning that was challenging earlier in my career.

What inspired you to become a lawyer?

In January 1995, when most of my friends were outside playing basketball in the Laredo, Texas, 80-degree "winter," I was glued to *Court TV* and its coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial. I thought it was the coolest thing in the world to watch people use their wits arguing for a living (and not get in trouble for it). Watching that trial, and all of the coverage surrounding it, inspired me to want to help people with their problems by writing and talking. Although, I've tried to steer clear of people that need help with the kinds of problems Mr. Simpson was *allegedly* confronting.

What drives or motivates you on your hardest days/during your most difficult matters?

When my mother was in her 40s, and working full-time as a middle school teacher, she went to night school to get her master's degree. I still remember sitting next to her at the dining room table while we both did our homework. She never missed a single one of my basketball games, University Interscholastic League meets or other extracurricular activities. She finished her master's degree with a 4.0 GPA. I think about that often because no matter how difficult this job can be, it won't ever be as hard as the job my mom did when I was a kid.

If you could have dinner with one person, living or dead, who would it be and why?

My grandmother on my mom's side. She passed away when I was a baby, so I never had the opportunity to develop a relationship with her. More than anything, I wish she could have seen what an amazing parent her only daughter turned out to be. A close second, for entirely different reasons, would be 2Pac. Maybe I could invite them both?

What is your favorite thing about, or to do in, Houston?

Houston is a diverse city that doesn't feel obligated to tell everyone how diverse it is (no offense to my second home, Austin). From community leadership to the legal market to the variety of food, I don't think there's any city more diverse than Houston.

What would be your fantasy career if you weren't a lawyer?

I would be the starting shooting guard (#35) for the San Antonio Spurs. This may seem like a fantasy to you, but I'm still holding out hope for the 2019–2020 season. Maybe I could fill the void left by Manu Ginobili?



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