

Luis Li

PARTNER

Litigation
Los Angeles

luis.li@wsgr.com
323-210-2935



FOCUS AREAS

Board and Internal
Investigations
Commercial Litigation
Litigation
Strategic Risk and Crisis
Management
Trial
White Collar Crime

EXPERIENCE

An accomplished trial lawyer and fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, Luis Li has led and played an integral role in numerous high-stakes, high-profile trials for a wide range of clients and has tried dozens of cases to verdict in state and federal courts across the country. Luis is consistently recognized in the *Chambers USA* guide, where his clients have described him as “Spectacular in court with a limitless pool of skills – down to earth and can talk to a jury” and as a “Top trial lawyer - just outstanding on his feet in front of a jury in court.” His experience includes complex business litigation, corporate crisis management, internal investigations, white collar criminal defense, and international enforcement matters. Luis has represented a variety of leading companies and individuals across a range of industries, including technology, biotech, aerospace, media and entertainment, sports, oil and gas, social media, and cultural institutions. His background as a former assistant United States attorney has served to establish him as a trusted advisor for the most complex cases and sensitive internal corporate investigations.

Luis has thrice earned *California Lawyer* “Attorney of the Year” (CLAY) Award honors, including for his complete victory at trial representing Vanessa Bryant in a federal civil rights trial against LA County; successful defense of Transocean, the owner of the Deepwater Horizon, in civil litigation arising from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill; and for the successful representation of the Norton Simon Museum in a long-running dispute over ownership of two paintings by Lucas Cranach the Elder.

Prior to joining Wilson Sonsini, Luis was a litigation partner in the Los Angeles office of Munger Tolles & Olson LLP. After starting his career at Munger Tolles, he rejoined that firm in 2005 following 10 years in public service. From 2002 to 2005, he was chief of the criminal branch of the Los Angeles City Attorney’s Office, where he directed one of the largest prosecutorial agencies in California. Previously, from 1995 to 2002, Luis served as an assistant U.S. attorney for the Central District of California, where he focused on complex, large-scale racketeering and organized crime matters. As deputy chief of the Major Crimes Section and Anti-Terrorism coordinator from 2000 to 2002, he oversaw the investigation and prosecution of organized crime and terrorist groups, including the successful prosecution of several international criminal organizations.

Following law school, Luis served as a law clerk for Judge Dickran Tevrizian of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

Luis has summited Denali and has raced in the Transalp Challenge and La Ruta de los Conquistadors, both considered among the most challenging multi-stage mountain bike races in the world.

CREDENTIALS

Education

- J.D., UC Berkeley School of Law, 1991
Associate Editor, California Law Review
- B.A., English, Yale University, 1987

Cum Laude, With Distinction in Major

Associations and Memberships

- Fellow, American College of Trial Lawyers
- Board Member, Norton Simon Foundation
- Former Board Member, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
- Former Board Member, The John Thomas Dye School
- Former Board Member, Bet Tzedek

Honors

- Recognized as a 2023 “General Litigation Trailblazer” by *The National Law Journal*
- Honored with three “California Lawyer Attorney of the Year” (CLAY) Awards, one in 2023 for representing Vanessa Bryant in a federal civil rights trial against Los Angeles County for its sharing of photos from the scene of the 2020 helicopter crash that killed Kobe and Gianna Bryant, one for his successful defense of the Norton Simon Museum in a closely watched ownership challenge, and one for his role defending Transocean, the owner of the Deepwater Horizon, in litigation stemming from the 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico
- Secured one of the *Daily Journal’s Top Verdicts of 2022* for victory in a civil rights trial brought by Vanessa Bryant against Los Angeles County
- Named 2023 “Leading Commercial Litigator” by the *Daily Journal*
- Recognized twice as a “Top 100 Lawyer” in California by the *Daily Journal*, one for his successful defense of the Norton Simon Museum in a closely watched ownership challenge and one for his role representing Vanessa Bryant in her privacy and federal civil rights suit against the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department
- Recognized as a “Top Litigator in Los Angeles” by the *Los Angeles Business Journal*
- Named a “Criminal Law Trailblazer” by *The National Law Journal*
- Honored with two *California Lawyer* “Attorney of the Year” (CLAY) Awards, one for his successful defense of the Norton Simon Museum in a closely watched ownership challenge and one for his role defending Transocean, the owner of the Deepwater Horizon, in litigation stemming from the 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico
- Secured one of the *Daily Journal’s* “Top Verdicts of 2016” for representing Norton Simon in successfully resolving claims involving two paintings subject to Nazi-coerced sales during World War II
- Selected for inclusion in *Chambers USA: America’s Leading Lawyers for Business*, with recognition in the General Commercial Litigation and White-Collar Crime & Government Investigations categories

Admissions

- State Bar of California

MATTERS

Select Representations

Recent Trials

- Secured a complete victory in the nationally covered jury trial on federal civil rights claims for Vanessa Bryant against the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department for the department’s illegal taking and sharing of photos of the victims of the helicopter crash that killed nine people, including Kobe Bryant and his 13-year-old daughter. National news coverage included, for example, *The New York Times*, *LA Times*, *CNN*, *New York Post*, and *Rolling Stone*. Also represented the Kobe Bryant Estate and co-led the wrongful death suit against Island Express, the helicopter company that transported the passengers who died in the crash.
- Co-lead trial counsel in a four-month criminal trial defending Plains All American Pipeline, a Fortune 150 company, from a 46-count indictment brought by the Santa Barbara County District Attorney and the California Attorney General stemming from one of the largest oil releases in California history from a pipeline near Santa Barbara; following trial and years of motions practice in which over a dozen charges were dismissed, obtained dismissal or acquittal on knowing felony counts and Plains suffered a fine of 1/400th of that requested by the government*
- Trial counsel for the NCAA in a highly publicized case brought by a class of Division I college football and men’s basketball players who asserted antitrust claims related to NCAA rules*
- Trial counsel for Transocean, owner of the Deepwater Horizon, in civil litigation arising from the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico; following a months-long trial, the court delivered a complete defense verdict*
- Lead trial counsel for a founding partner of a talent management company in a dissolution action brought by his partners; after a months-long trial, the court delivered a defense verdict leaving

- the client in charge of the company*
- Lead trial counsel for James Ray, a self-help author, in the Arizona manslaughter prosecution against him for three deaths at a sweat lodge ceremony; a jury acquitted Mr. Ray of reckless manslaughter following a nationally televised trial*
- Lead trial counsel for Charles Roven, producer of *Wonder Woman* and *Batman*, among many other films, in a state criminal case and a federal civil matter arising out of the Zaca fire, among the largest wildfires in California history; criminal charges related to Mr. Roven's holding companies were dismissed in their entirety at preliminary hearing, while the civil matter was resolved within insurance policy limits*
- Trial counsel for Rhonda Byrne in a copyright suit challenging the Australian author's copyrights to *The Secret*, Simon & Schuster's all-time bestseller; a jury returned a complete defense verdict*
- Trial counsel for the president of sales of a publicly traded internet advertising company, who was charged in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California with conspiracy to inflate the company's revenues and with causing the company to have false books and records; after a two-week trial, despite the testimony of two executives who had pleaded guilty and were cooperating with the government, the jury acquitted Mr. Kaplan on all charges after two hours of deliberation*

Litigation and Investigations

- Leading the defense of Santa Anita Race Track and Golden Gate Fields in two state court matters arising from the decision to ban a Hall of Fame racehorse trainer when six horses under his care suffered fatal injuries
- Defending the J. Paul Getty Trust in an international matter in Italy and the European Court of Human Rights arising out of the Italian government's efforts to seize the Getty Bronze, a Third Century B.C.E. Greek statue of a victorious athlete
- Represented McDonald's in an action against its former CEO seeking to claw back his severance package*
- Represented a major aeronautics company in an NTSB investigation into fatal mishap involving a sub-orbital spacecraft*
- Representing a former public official in a federal investigation into alleged corruption at the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office
- Representing a high-level officer in a federal antitrust criminal case arising from alleged "no poach" agreements
- Representing the former CEO of a division of a major international bank in an OCC matter; the government declined to prosecute the client criminally even after the bank had pleaded guilty to violation of AML laws
- Represented PG&E in criminal and civil matters arising from a series of California wildfires in Sonoma and Napa counties*
- Represented a major public university system as lead counsel in conducting a review of admissions practices for student athletes related to matters arising from the federal "Varsity Blues" investigation*
- Represented a major Los Angeles hospital in an investigation by the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office into patient discharge practices; reached an amicable resolution*
- Represented a major railroad company in a manslaughter investigation related to workplace death; no charges brought*
- Represented a major studio in an investigation into piracy and distribution of blockbuster film; investigation caught the culprit, who was referred to federal authorities for prosecution*
- Represented Norton Simon in successfully resolving claims involving two paintings subject to Nazi-coerced sales during World War II; verdict named among the *Daily Journal's* "Top Verdicts of 2016"*
- Represented the J. Paul Getty Trust as co-lead counsel in an internal investigation related to its antiquities collection; culminated in successful and widely reported settlements with Italy and Greece*
- Represented the Santa Anita Race Track in obtaining a full declination from the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office in a highly publicized investigation by that office into equine fatalities at the track*

* Denotes experience at another firm prior to joining Wilson Sonsini in 2021.