

Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP

Loretta Lynch and Lina Dagnev, Partners—Litigation

Loretta Lynch's legal career has included both private law practice and public service, including three presidential appointments. She served as the U.S. Attorney General (2015–2017), appointed by President Barack Obama, and she has twice been appointed U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York. Today, at Paul, Weiss, Loretta is consistently called upon as a trusted mediator and fact finder. She handles sensitive investigations matters and high-profile litigation defense for some of the world's largest companies. Loretta received her J.D. from Harvard Law School and her B.A. in American Literature from Harvard University.

Lina Dagnev is a partner in Paul, Weiss's Litigation Department. She is a trial lawyer who represents domestic and international clients in various complex commercial and civil litigation matters, as well as in internal investigations, white collar defense, and Foreign Corrupt Practices Act matters. Lina was recently recognized by *Benchmark Litigation* in its 2023 "40 and Under Hot List." She received her J.D. from Harvard Law School and her B.A., *summa cum laude*, from Manchester University.

Describe your practice area and what it entails.

Loretta: I advise corporate clients in reputation-threatening litigation and their most sensitive government and internal investigations. This includes advising them on high-stakes regulatory enforcement issues and crisis management. Additionally, I co-lead the firm's Civil Rights and Racial Equity Audits Practice and am a founding member of our new DEI Strategic Advisory Group.

Lina: I have a generalist litigation practice, so I represent companies in a range of areas, including regulatory and internal investigations, complex commercial litigation, antitrust, False Claims Act, and post-merger suits. I focus on providing our clients with strategic counsel to resolve substantive concerns as well as anticipate collateral issues, so they can focus on running their businesses and being good corporate citizens.

What types of clients do you represent?

Loretta: I advise corporate clients in every industry, from finance to sports to biosciences to e-commerce and beyond. Recent clients have included Amazon, the NFL, Pfizer, the Northwestern University Athletics Department, BlackRock, and McDonald's, among many others.

Lina: Like Loretta, I counsel a wide variety of clients across industries. My clients include well-known financial institutions, manufacturers, and pharmaceutical companies.

What types of cases/deals do you work on?

Lina: I have a diverse practice. I handle a range of civil litigation matters, including at the trial phase. Another focus of my practice includes representing public and private companies in connection with sensitive internal investigations or investigations by the Department of Justice or U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), including Foreign Corrupt Practices Act matters and other regulatory enforcement matters.

Loretta: In addition to defending companies and individuals in high-profile litigation, much of my work is focused on keeping my clients out of the headlines by resolving issues through internal investigations or in negotiation with the government. For example, boards of directors hire us to independently investigate any allegations of financial misconduct, sexual harassment, or discrimination at the company; following our investigation, we compile a report with our findings and recommendations for next steps, ideally getting ahead of any litigation risk. I also help clients find ways to legally encourage diversity within their ranks, and I evaluate their DEI policies and practices and identify areas where there is room for improvement.

How did you choose this practice area?

Loretta: I've always felt a duty to stand up for others, even when doing so may be difficult, and have worked my whole career to ensure equality under the law. These are the values

to which I held fast during my tenure in public service, and this has translated into the way I conduct my investigations work at Paul, Weiss. In advising my clients, I always aim to get ahead of situations where they may find themselves at odds with the law—often unintentionally. I see great value in steering companies in the right direction because good corporate citizenship impacts us all.

Lina: I was drawn to white collar work because of how collaborative it can be, particularly with respect to internal and regulatory investigations. Being able to investigate the underlying issues allows us to then strategize, think creatively, and counsel our clients to resolve pressing concerns as early as possible. I also appreciate the opportunity to manage the cases holistically, taking into consideration crisis management, reputational harm, personnel management, and business needs. This broad approach has allowed me to develop strong relationships with my clients and think strategically about their issues.

What is a typical day like and/or what are some common tasks you perform?

Lina: One thing that I really like about my practice is the variety; I don't really have a typical day. My day may include engaging with clients, preparing for investigations, reviewing motions and filings, preparing witnesses for depositions or trial, building high-level strategies for my matters—and everything in between. I also dedicate a good portion of my time to mentoring more junior lawyers on my matters and throughout the firm; I'm invested in ensuring our associates sharpen their skills and are well equipped to reach their individual career goals.

Loretta: As Lina mentioned, there's really no such thing as a typical day in our area of the law. My work day could include reading up on documents and witness statements in preparation for interviews we conduct as part of the investigation process; strategizing with our clients' general counsel and talking clients through our game plan; preparing reports for boards of directors; or touching base with my teams to make sure everything is on track in all of our various matters.

What training, classes, experience, or skills development would you recommend to someone who wishes to enter your practice area?

Loretta: One of the key qualities of an excellent white collar attorney is the ability to see a situation from both sides—your client's and the government's—and to make a move or propose a solution based on the interests and perspectives of each. Gaining prosecutorial experience is one way to develop this perspective, but being able to think critically, strategically,

and outside the box are among the most important skills you can develop in this field. Also, don't be afraid to speak up, take up space, and play an active role in the trajectory of your career. Make yourself part of the discussion, and be ready to jump on opportunities that will bring you closer to your goals.

Lina: Perhaps more than any particular class or type of training, I see interest, motivation, and curiosity as the keys to developing as an effective litigator in this practice area. As a junior associate and summer associate, enthusiastically dig into the details—the where, when, who, why, and how questions—and remember to voice your opinion. You are the lawyer on the matter, after all; act accordingly.

What do you like best about your practice area?

Loretta: There are many things I love about my practice, such as the variety of tasks and the opportunity to work closely with so many different people. But it is particularly satisfying to finally get to the bottom of a given situation, find and propose solutions, and help our clients resolve disputes with the government in a way that keeps them on the right path. It's like solving a puzzle.

Lina: The best part of my practice is that no two matters are the same, which makes everyday practice interesting but also allows me to keep learning and growing as a lawyer. A close second is developing bespoke solutions to our clients' biggest challenges involving complex legal (and other) issues.

What is unique about your practice area at your firm?

Lina: What sets our White Collar and Regulatory Defense Practice apart is the breadth of the work we do and our incredible bench of talent. Our work spans all stages of civil and criminal investigations and enforcement proceedings—including parallel regulatory and civil proceedings—as well as internal investigations. We are regularly called upon to counsel companies in crisis, providing strategic solutions to help companies navigate this sensitive territory and mitigate against possible financial, regulatory, and reputational risks. The experience in our department is hard to match: We have more than 40 former federal prosecutors and leading government officials among our ranks. Our associates have incredible opportunities to work alongside the very best white collar lawyers on the most sophisticated corporate and regulatory investigations. Paul, Weiss offers unparalleled opportunities to develop your career as a litigator.

What kinds of experience can summer associates gain in this practice area at your firm?

Lina: Summer associates become integral members of their case teams during their time with us. Their experience on mat-

ters in this practice area may include working on fact-finding projects, preparing for and/or attending key interviews, engaging in strategy discussions, and drafting analyses. Partners often include summer associates in strategy discussions and welcome their thoughts as we determine the best avenues to resolve outstanding concerns. We encourage our summer associates to roll up their sleeves and dive in, so it's a great way to get real exposure to the practice area.

What are some typical career paths for lawyers in this practice area?

Loretta: Aside from private practice, which can involve both white collar defense and investigations work, public service is

a popular and often very fulfilling choice. Becoming a state or federal prosecutor offers the opportunity to gain crucial courtroom skills, work directly with victims and witnesses, and gain a deep understanding of the government's approach to various white collar issues. Another common (and DOJ-adjacent) career path is joining a regulatory agency like the SEC or Commodity Futures Trading Commission and carrying out regulatory investigations into companies and individuals. While white collar is certainly a competitive field, there are many different ways to make an impact in the space.

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Loretta Lynch, Partner