

# Daily Journal

DECEMBER 7, 2022



## TOP WHITE COLLAR LAWYERS 2022



**BRIAN R.  
MICHAEL**

MORRISON FOERSTER LLP

LOS ANGELES

INVESTIGATIONS  
WHITE COLLAR DEFENSE  
& COMPLIANCE

**B**efore joining MoFo's securities litigation, enforcement and white-collar defense groups in May, Michael had worked at a few other large law firms over his career and served as an assistant U.S. attorney in Manhattan and then Los Angeles. He also spent about five years as the deputy general counsel and group chief compliance officer for 21st Century Fox.

His career path through government, in-house and private law firms, he said, is reflected now in the kinds of cases he handles. "I've got this unique set of experiences that I think clients find to be very valuable," he said.

One good example is his representation of the primary victims of a \$650 million fraud considered the largest Ponzi scheme in Hollywood history. Michael represented JJMT Capital and its three founders, who had invested heavily in their old college friend Zachary Horwitz's phony film-licensing company TinMM Productions.

"He deceived and defrauded his friends ... and left them all quite frankly in financial ruin," Michael said.

When they grew suspicious and investigated Horwitz's operation, they asked Michael to assess the information they'd gathered and package it for federal prosecutors. "I understand how to do investigations, and I understand how to work with the Justice Department," he said.

He presented the information to the U.S. attorney's office in February 2021. On Feb. 14, 2022, Horwitz was sentenced to 20 years in prison and ordered to pay more than \$230 million in restitution. *U.S. v. Horwitz*, 2:21-cr-00214 (C.D. CA, filed May 4, 2021).

Currently, Michael is wrapping up an investigation for the state attorney general's office into how confidential personal information from a state firearm-related database was disclosed publicly.

"I was given a mandate ... to find out what happened, how it happened and then to make recommendations," he said. His report is set to be released this month.

Previously, he had opposed the attorney general's office while representing a national sport governing body in an inquiry concerning allegations of historical sexual abuse and misconduct. The matter was resolved without any criminal or civil enforcement action being taken.

Michael said he is gratified that he could handle that negotiation across from the attorney general's office and then later be hired by it to investigate its database exposure.

In other matters, he recently removed General Motors from a federal investigation into an ex-employee's alleged foreign bribery. He also protected a former high-ranking Los Angeles official from being charged or publicly identified in a city council corruption probe.

"I take great pride in being able to help [clients] navigate matters that might never see the light of day," he said. "It makes it a little bit challenging when you're trying to establish your experience and credentials with potential clients that you can't tell them about a lot of the work you've done."

— DON DEBENEDICTIS