



2020 Ones to Watch: Nathalia Bernardo, Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP

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Name: Nathalia Bernardo

Company: Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP

Title: Partner

Education: Boston College Law School, J.D., cum laude, 2004; The George Washington University, B.B.A., summa cum laude, 2001

Which project, deal, or transaction was the “game-changer” in the advancement of your career?

When I first made partner, I negotiated a complex ground lease on behalf of a developer, who turned the property into a luxury co-op apartment building. Years later, I am now a partner at the firm who represented the ground lessor, working alongside the lawyers who were opposing counsel at the time. We had a very positive working relationship then, and now we get to team up together on future deals!

What led you to your current profession?

I took a business law course in college and loved it. When I got to my first law firm, I was a corporate attorney, but I was brought into a number of real estate deals to help out (this was right before the Great Recession, and there just weren’t enough hands to tackle the sheer volume of real estate transactions). Joint Venture Agreements were particularly fascinating to me – I loved taking the clients’ business terms and turning them into practical, functional agreements that would live well beyond my involvement in the deals. I was hooked!

How do you contribute to your community or your profession?

I am an adjunct professor at Cornell Law School and at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation. I walk students through real estate transaction documents such as Purchase and Sale Agreements and Joint Venture Agreements, pointing out how they’re negotiated and what clients should consider when crafting their business deal. It’s incredibly rewarding and a lot of fun.

What do you like most about your job?

I very much enjoy the mental aerobics that accompany the complex real estate transactions on which I work. None of them are easy or plain vanilla, which suits me just fine. It's incredibly satisfying to distill complicated concepts into "plain English" that clients can understand and that achieves their business goals.

What can our political leaders do to increase equality in the workplace?

I think that affordable childcare options and the ability to keep private your salary history will go a long way toward helping families and women, in particular, to succeed in the workplace, which will ultimately lead to increased equality.

Who or what inspires you?

My mom has always been an incredible inspiration to me. She worked tirelessly when my brother and I were young to give us everything she could, and we both benefitted immeasurably from her love and devotion.

If your life were made into a movie, what actor would you want to portray you?

Keri Russell might be considered a decent likeness to me (although I'm not nearly as glamorous as she is!). She's also very talented and would surely turn my story into a compelling drama.

What social media platform do you use the most professionally?

LinkedIn. I learn something new every time I open the app.

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