



Principal, Orange County

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Practices

- National Compliance and Multi-State Solutions
- California Class and PAGA Action
- Class Actions and Complex Litigation
- Corporate Diversity Counseling
- Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)
- Hospitality
- Hotels
- Employment Litigation
- Restaurants
- Technology
- Wage and Hour
- Workplace Training
- Construction
- Real Estate

Education

- University of California, Berkeley, MBA 2008
- Boston College Law School, J.D. 1997
- Bucknell University, B.A. 1994

Admitted to Practice

- 9th Circuit Court of Appeals 2003
- California - C.D. Cal. 2004
- California - E.D. Cal. 2016
- California - N.D. Cal. 2004
- California - S.D. Cal. 2018
- California 2003

Michael Thomas is a principal in the Orange County, California, office of Jackson Lewis P.C. and a co-leader of the firm's Corporate Diversity Counseling practice group. Combining an MBA-level understanding of business with core emotional intelligence and empathy, Michael's multidisciplinary practice is built on listening, collaboration and—above all—focused on achieving clients' goals.

Understanding that clients are facing increasing calls from internal and external stakeholders to proactively address DEI and ESG across their business, Michael works with clients to balance today's complex web of decisions, laws and interests with varying legal, reputational and litigation risk with the often-competing demands for greater transparency. Michael's training includes a Diversity and Inclusion Certification from Cornell University and a yoga certification from the Niroga Institute in Berkeley where he studied yoga, mindfulness, and meditation and which he leverages to motivate employers to create workplaces where both employees and business thrive in unison.

Michael assists clients in developing and implementing goal-driven, legally compliant DEI initiatives using current best practices, neuroscience, adult learning, experiential learning, dialogue, body awareness and mindfulness.

Michael has also conducted customized in-house seminars and training for managers, supervisors, and employees concerning employment compliance, including but not limited to trainings regarding workplace harassment, discrimination and retaliation, wage and hour issues, workplace violence and effective communication in the workplace.

Juxtaposed against building unified strategic initiatives in his DEI practice, Michael's dedication to exceptional client service extends to defending employers in state and federal wage and hour class actions, litigation brought under the Private Attorney General's Act (PAGA), and single plaintiff cases.

Michael's record of success obtaining pre-trial dismissals, successful settlements, and defense verdicts includes employers in a wide variety of industries, including manufacturing, retail, restaurant, hospitality, transportation, janitorial services, security services, and the gig economy.

Michael's experience as lead defense counsel in resolving class and PAGA action experience includes:

- Class action brought on behalf of over 2,000 hotel employees involving claims of minimum wage, overtime, meal and rest period, reporting time pay, regular rate of pay, and wage statement violations.
- PAGA representative action filed on behalf of approximately 200 limousine drivers involving minimum wage, overtime, meal and rest periods, and expense reimbursement claims.

- PAGA representative action and class action involving over 15,000 janitors alleging unpaid minimum wages; unpaid overtime; and unpaid expense reimbursement for uniforms, safety shoes, and cell phone use.
- PAGA representative action and class action filed against a large museum on behalf of security guards involving allegations of piece-rate payment violations, off-the-clock work, unpaid rest periods, and waiting time violations.
- PAGA representative action and class action involving over 5,000 independent contractors in the gig economy claiming they were misclassified.
- Class action alleging donning and doffing claims at a manufacturing facility brought on behalf of over 250 production workers.

Honors and Recognitions

- *Savoy Magazine*, "Most Influential Lawyers" (2024)
- *Thomson Reuters*, "Stand-Out Lawyer" (2024)
- *Southern California Super Lawyers®*, "Super Lawyers" (2024-present)
- *Los Angeles Times*, "DEIA Visionary" (2022-present)
- *National Bar Association*, "Top 100 Black Lawyers" (2018, 2019)
- American Arbitration Association Higginbotham Fellow (2018)

Pro Bono and Community Involvement

- University of California at Berkeley Haas School of Business Alumni Network of Southern California Board Member
- Board Member, Crystal Stairs, Inc.

Published Works

- Class Action Trends Report Fall, (November 3, 2020) [Co-Author]
- "Local Ordinance, Massive Implications: Sonoma County Supplemental Paid Sick Leave," (August 25, 2020), [Co-Author]
- "Preventing Workplace Violence by Examining Trauma and the NFL," *Association of Corporate Counsel/Quick Counsel Articles* (December 2015) [Author]
- "San Francisco's Fair Chance Ordinance Limits Criminal Conviction Inquiries," *Law Alert* (August 2014) [Author]

Speeches

- "Key Employment Law Updates," 7th Annual National Bar Association (NBA) General Counsel Invitational (Newport Beach, CA, June 2025)
- "How to Win or Lose a Class Action in the First 90 Days," National Bar Association, Commercial Law Section, National Conference (February 2020) (panel organizer and moderator)
- "Class Action and Collective Action Litigation," National Bar Association, Labor and Employment Committee Conference (October 2019) (panelist)
- "Association of Corporate Counsel Compliance Day Panelist-Kickstart Your California Employment Compliance" (June 2017) (panelist)