Yahonnes Cleary

Partner

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New York



Yahonnes Cleary is a trial lawyer whose practice focuses on product liability and mass tort litigation. He defends clients in multidistrict litigation, coordinated proceedings, and individual actions at every stage of a case, from pre-suit investigation through trial and appeal. His clients include pharmaceutical, medical device, and life sciences companies, energy and chemical businesses, consumer products manufacturers, technology companies, financial institutions, insurers, and quasi-public organizations.

Yahonnes' trial record includes defense verdicts in multi-plaintiff and bellwether proceedings involving claims related to chemical exposure, pharmaceuticals products, and consumer products. His experience also encompasses a broader range of complex commercial litigation, including consumer class actions, data privacy litigation, securities and financial litigation, regulatory matters, and internal investigations.

Representative Experience:

Product Liability and Mass Torts

- Trial counsel for Monsanto in Washington state court against claims brought by 15 plaintiffs alleging injuries from exposure to polychlorinated biphenyls, securing complete defense verdicts on the claims of 11 of the 15 plaintiffs.
- Trial counsel for AbbVie in multiple bellwether trials in federal and state court concerning the company's testosterone replacement therapy product, including a complete defense verdict at trial in Illinois state court.
- Trial counsel for Pfizer in national litigation concerning the company's antidepressant, securing complete defense verdicts in the first two bellwether trials, in Missouri and Pennsylvania state courts.
- Defense counsel for ExxonMobil in climate change tort suits brought on behalf of dozens of U.S. states, counties, and municipalities.
- Defense counsel for a private equity firm in consolidated class action lawsuit asserting claims related to fire at chemical plant of portfolio company.
- Defense counsel for sports league in lawsuit asserting product liability, consumer deception, and other claims related to use of online sportsbook applications.
- Defense counsel for the owners of online dating website in a consumer fraud class action arising from a highly publicized data breach.

Other Complex Commercial Litigation

- Defense counsel for CNA and affiliates in numerous lawsuits nationwide seeking coverage for business losses related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Counsel to the Governor of New Jersey in the successful defense of a lawsuit

Capabilities

Litigation
Class Actions
Consumer Protection
Environmental
Mass Torts and Product Liability
Trials

Credentials

Education

Yale University - 2009 Juris Doctor
University of Oxford - 2002 Master of Science
Columbia University - 2000 Bachelor of Arts

Admissions

New York Bar

Clerkships

US Court of Appeals, 2nd Circuit, Hon. Barrington D. Parker Jr, 2010 - 2011

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challenging an investigation into state tax incentive programs.

- Defense counsel for various investment bank underwriters in securities fraud class actions in state and federal court arising from initial public offerings.
- Defense counsel for Bank of New York Mellon in civil and regulatory matters concerning the company's foreign exchange services.
- Defense counsel for UBS against fraud claims concerning residential mortgage-backed securities.

Investigations

- Counsel to a healthcare company in federal regulatory investigations concerning data privacy and digital advertising, and to a hospital in a state regulatory investigation concerning data privacy.
- Counsel to the National Basketball Players Association in an internal investigation concerning allegations of nepotism and conflicts of interest.
- Counsel to an investment management company and to a financial institution in internal investigations concerning accounting issues.

In 2026, *Chambers USA* recognized Yahonnes in Product Liability & Mass Torts (USA) and Litigation: General Commercial (New York). *The Legal 500 US* recommends him in its Product Liability, Mass Tort and Class Action – Defense category. *Benchmark Litigation* named him a Future Litigation Star for 2026, and he was named to *Lawdragon's* 500 Leading Litigators in America for 2026.

On pro bono matters, Yahonnes has worked with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the American Bar Association, and the Bronx Defenders. He is co-president of the board of trustees of Prep for Prep and a member of the boards of trustees of Choate Rosemary Hall and the Chapin School.

Yahonnes served as a law clerk to the Honorable Barrington D. Parker, Jr. of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit from 2010 to 2011.

Yahonnes earned his J.D. from Yale Law School in 2009. He received an M.Sc. from the University of Oxford in 2002 and a Bachelor of Arts from Columbia University in 2000, where he graduated summa cum laude.

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