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LEADING COMMERCIAL LITIGATORS 2024



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Litigation

Orin S. Snyder co-chairs the trials practice group at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP. He has been at the firm since 2005. A former assistant U.S. attorney in the Southern District

of New York, he now serves on Gibson Dunn's executive committee.

"My heroes were John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.," Snyder said. "All were social change agents, and the law is a big part of how they changed society. And I'm a longtime amateur historian. I'm well aware of the centrality of the law for bringing social change."

In January 2024, as the politically charged year began, Snyder said he hoped two of his big civil rights cases would promote respect for peaceful protest free from police use of excessive force. "In this election year, we want to create national attention to our First Amendment rights, possibly with congressional hearings spotlighting the issue."

Late last July, following an earlier jury trial win and lengthy negotiations, Los Angeles officials agreed to pay \$860,000 to settle all claims in Snyder and his Gibson Dunn team's suit on behalf of Deon Jones, the performance artist shot near the eye with a police rubber bullet at a peaceful George Floyd protest in May 2020.

The federal jury awarded Jones \$375,000, including punitive damages; the settlement reflected additional damages the city was willing to pay to avoid a second trial over further civil rights abuse claims against the police. *Jones v. City of Los Angeles et al.*, 2:20-cv-11147 (C.D. Cal., filed Dec. 9, 2020).

A trial highlight was Snyder's cross-examination of the officer who shot Jones, Peter Bueno. "Our Perry Mason moment came when I showed video of

Officer Bueno firing his weapon into the crowd. I stopped the tape and said, 'Sir, what on God's earth were you doing?' He dissembled. He had no good answer, and the jury could see that."

Snyder called it "the first jury verdict for a protester victimized by the LAPD in connection with the 2020 mass demonstrations that occurred in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, and the first finding of wrongdoing by an LAPD officer in connection with those demonstrations."

Gibson Dunn represented Jones pro bono.

In a similar case, Snyder represents a protester injured in the unprovoked attack on a demonstration in Lafayette Park near the White House, an attack that took place days after Jones was shot in Los Angeles. The incident cleared the way for then-President Donald Trump to stage a photo-op holding an upside-down bible in front of a nearby church. Settlement negotiations are in progress, Snyder said.

In commercial litigation, Snyder represents the media outlet distributing the hit television show "The Walking Dead;" he won a sweeping victory in a billion-dollar suit by executive producers who alleged they were underpaid. *Kirkman et al. v. AMC Film Holdings et al.*, BC672124 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed Aug. 14, 2017).

"Courts will enforce contracts agreed to by the parties, and an implied covenant claim is not a 'do-over' for a rejected breach of contract claim," Snyder said.

— JOHN ROEMER