

PROFILE

OF A BASF PRESIDENT

Leslie A. Gordon



Arturo González, whose father moved from Mexico to the United States as a farm laborer through the Bracero Program, was the first of his siblings to be born in the United States and the first to attend college. A graduate of Harvard Law School, he's now chair of Morrison & Foerster's litigation group and also BASF's new president.

Despite being named to practically every list of top lawyers, the father of four children ages twenty-one through eleven wants his kids raised with a healthy perspective on the privilege he's attained. They live, for instance, in San Lorenzo. He explains, "You won't find other law firm partners there. I wanted my kids to grow up in a modest area and attend diverse, public schools."

We asked González some offbeat questions to learn more about him.

WHAT WAS YOUR CHILDHOOD HOME LIKE?

I lived in Roseville across the street from the railroad tracks in a three-bedroom, one-bathroom home with a big yard.

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT YOU?

My parents went to school for one day combined. They were raised in a small village outside of Guadalajara with no water, no electricity, no gas, no doctors, no roads. My mother never went to school. My father went for one day of instruction, but he was punished for not working that day so he never went back.

WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST PET PEEVE?

I don't have too many, but one that comes to mind is hypocrisy—elected officials who claim they want to serve

people, but spend most of their time trying to figure out how to stay in office.

WHAT'S A COMMONALITY AMONG THE MOST SUCCESSFUL LAWYERS YOU KNOW?

They take the initiative, work hard, and are thorough and always prepared.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO?

My three boys say they want to be lawyers. If that were to happen, maybe we can set up a firm together.

WHO WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO MEET, LIVING OR DEAD?

Thomas Jefferson so I could find out once and for all what they intended when they wrote the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. What were they thinking of when they wrote that all men are created equal when so many people were slaves? Were they thinking slavery would be phased out? I really would like to know.

WHAT WILL THE LEGAL PROFESSION LOOK LIKE IN TEN YEARS?

There will be more diversity on the juries, in the employment sector of the clients we represent, in the judiciary, and among in-house counsel ranks. I am hopeful that will lead to more diversity in our profession, including at large firms.

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FUN?

I am a season ticket holder for the Raiders and Golden State Warriors, but lately that's not been as much fun as I'd like.

WHAT'S THE MOST ADVENTUROUS THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?

I visited Israel earlier this year along with other Latino-American businessmen in an effort to build relations between the people of the United States and the people of Israel. I visited Masada, where a group of Jewish people chose to take their own lives and the lives of their families instead of living as slaves. It was a very moving and educational experience.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW FOR SURE?

That large law firms will never become truly diverse unless the clients demand it.