



Sexual Harassment Attorney Marcus Petoyan



SEXUAL HARASSMENT
ATTORNEY

MARCUS PETOYAN

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By Anthony Calderon

Don't let Attorney Petoyan's boyish looks fool you - he's a fighter. Once he commits to you as a client there's almost a physical shift in his energy as your case is fused with his moral sensibilities and literally becomes his fight. Att. Petoyan uses the metaphor of himself as a boxer stepping into a ring for 12 round battles on behalf of his cli-ents. On the wall of his Oceanside office in the spectacular Pacific Palisades there's a framed black and white photograph of Muhammad Ali knocking George Foreman clear off his feet in their historic 1974 bout in Zaire.

ATTORNEY MARCUS PETOYAN:"In the lower right corner of that photo you can see George Plimpton, Norman Mailer and Richard Pryor."

HW: "Okay, I can hear the reverence in your voice - what is it about Ali?"

ATT. PETOYAN: "I just always re-spected how he continuously stood up for himself and the things he believed in."

HW: "As a writer I'm detecting a back-story to your sentiment. When did 'standing up for yourself' really become important to you?"

ATT. PETOYAN: "You know, you might laugh, but I think a lot of our personality is forged at a young age, in

school, on the playground; and the ultimate 'moment of truth' as to where you stand in that social arena is when kids are 'choosing sides' as to who goes on what team. And if you were untalented, or not as athletic as others, you got left behind. You didn't get picked, and often times, you were abused by bullies. So, I always chose kids to be on my team who I felt had 'heart,' and really wanted to play - regardless of whether or not they'd actually help me win."

HW: "Where were you when I was growing up...? So, did you always want to be a lawyer?"

ATT. PETOYAN: "Actually, I loved history - specifically American history - but what I found most appealing about the formation of our country was that 'We are a Nation of Laws, shaped by Lawyers.' I wanted to be in a position to help make a change in our country for the better."

HW: "So, you were pretty focused on being an Attorney as an undergraduate at Cal State."

ATT. PETOYAN: "Well, there are different ways to make a difference. I spent about 3 years in college working as a Youth Counselor in a hospital, because I was considering becoming a Psychologist and working with kids."

HW: "And what was that experience like?"

ATT. PETOYAN: "I discovered, first of all, how enormous the problem of neglected, emotionally and physically abused youth in America actually is, and how inadequate, elusive and imperfect our solutions to these problems were. So, I came to the realization that the only way I could make a significant change in the issues I cared about was as an Attorney."

HW: "Alright, so, as Actors would say 'I know your motivation.' Sexual Harassment - what should a person experiencing this in their workplace do?"

ATT. PETOYAN: "To begin with, you need to create a record of what's going on; this means you need to complain in writing, and save copies for yourself. You need to save e-mails sent to you with inappropriate content. You may want to look for witnesses that can confirm what's going on in the workplace. And finally, you need to see an Attorney... Victims should also know that the company they work for will do everything in their power to discredit them, but in my experience, it doesn't matter how big the corporation is, or how great their resources are, or even how ferocious their battle - the great equalizer is the Jury Trial. Here, the small and vulnerable can go head to head with some of the largest companies in the world and prevail... And the courtroom is one of the only places that this can happen."

HW: "You're saying people really shouldn't be afraid to fight for their rights."

ATT. PETOYAN: "Yes - just be prepared for the fight. It may take up to 12 months to resolve your case, but if you can - to use an old cliché - 'weather the storm,' at the end of the day, you can be victorious. Remember that over 40% of women have suffered some form of sexual harassment, which means most of us know someone who has experienced it. Juries know this problem exists, they just want to see the facts about your particular case. You did your job competently for 5 years and then all of a sudden your Supervisor fires you for poor work performance; Juries are smart enough to know there's probably more going on there - it's my job to spell it out for them."

HW: "What's been your proudest moment as an Attorney?"

ATT. PETOYAN: "I represented a woman with three kids who was being sexually harassed at her job by a man who was bringing in a lot of money for the company, so her Supervisors were turning a blind eye to it. The woman had a son who was disabled, so she needed medical insurance; her husband didn't have insurance on his job, and wasn't making very much money, so her job was basically providing the medical care for her son. Finally, my client literally had a nervous breakdown because of the abuse at her workplace... The Jury awarded my client \$700,000.00 in general damages, which, in 2001, was the largest damages verdict for pain and suffering ever awarded...but for my client, irrespective of the money, there was an intangible sense of justice that came with that verdict - she no longer felt like a victim. And, as an Attorney, to see your client go through that kind of transformation...there's no greater gratification in my profession."

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