

They've Got Next: The 40 Under 40

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**Christine Okike**

Kirkland & Ellis

## They've Got Next: The 40 Under 40-Christine Okike of Kirkland & Ellis

By Lisa Helem and MP McQueen

### **Christine Okike**

**Age:** 40

**Firm:** Kirkland & Ellis

**Practice Area:** Bankruptcy & Restructuring

**Title:** Partner

**Location:** New York

**Law School:** Columbia Law School

**Please describe two of your most substantial, recent wins in practice.**

I led the restructuring of Voyager—the first restructuring of a mega cryptocurrency platform.

In June 2022, cryptocurrency was a “buzzword” that had yet to truly impact the restructuring industry. But a string of events, including the collapse of the TerraLUNA coin and the hedge fund Three Arrows Capital, rocked the cryptocurrency space, and left a number of cryptocurrency firms, including Voyager, facing unprecedented distress.

We grappled with issues of first impression during Voyager’s Chapter 11 case, including whether the cryptocurrency on the platform belonged to the company or its customers, how customer cryptocurrency claims should be valued, and how to return cryptocurrency in kind to customers amidst an uncertain and evolving regulatory landscape.

Voyager’s Chapter 11 plan which was overwhelmingly supported by voting creditors, including 97% of its customers, provides for recoveries of cryptocurrency in-kind.

We faced challenges throughout the case, but Voyager nonetheless remains a highlight for me as the case established important precedent that will continue to inform future restructurings in the cryptocurrency space.

In addition to my restructuring practice, my pro bono work has been a highlight throughout my career. I recently had the opportunity to represent a sexual assault survivor in connection with a high-profile bankruptcy case in which we secured in my client’s words a “life-changing result.”

**What is the most important lesson you learned as a first-year attorney and how does it inform your practice today?**

The most important lesson that I learned as a first-year associate is to be the hardest working person in the room. There is a misconception that you can't add that much value as a first-year associate because your knowledge and experience is limited.

By putting in the work, I became an indispensable member of my teams early on in my career. Hard work opened up so many doors for me. It allowed me to build strong relationships, to master my practice and to accelerate my career.

**How do you define success in your practice?**

I define success by having a practice where I get to work with incredibly talented lawyers to help clients successfully navigate some of the most complex restructuring matters in the world. I love being a restructuring lawyer because it's such an exciting and dynamic practice.

Every day I get to tackle complex problems facing my clients and come up with creative solutions that address their near-term issues and best position them for long-term success.

**What are you most proud of as a lawyer?**

I'm most proud of having built a reputation as a go-to attorney for my clients' most challenging legal issues. In restructuring, we are often faced with novel situations that require creative thinking to resolve. I am proud to be trusted by my clients to help them navigate these issues and develop innovative solutions.

I am also proud of the pro bono work that I get to do. Over the course of my career, I have had the opportunity to work on immigration matters, domestic violence matters, clemency petitions, and non-profit formation and corporate governance matters. I believe it's incredibly important to do pro bono work and I am proud to have helped many clients achieve life-changing results.

**Who is your greatest mentor in the law and what have they taught you?**

I have been lucky to have many incredible mentors and sponsors over the course of my career. I would not be where I am today without their guidance and support.

While each of them has taught me different things, I attribute the attorney I am today to what I picked up from them collectively along the way—to work hard, to have a positive attitude, to think outside the box, to be a team player, to treat everyone with respect, to never give up, and to pay it forward.

**Tell us your two favorite songs on your summer music playlist.**

"Closer" by Goapele is one of my all-time favorite songs. It's about visualizing your dreams and then making them a reality.

"Summertime" by DJ Jazzy Jeff and The Fresh Prince is a classic. It reminds me of spending summers on Martha's Vineyard with my friends and family.

# Christine Okike

Kirkland & Ellis



Bloomberg Law®

Christine Okike of Kirkland & Ellis in Oahu, Hawaii

Christine Okike and Jonathan Hurtarte/Bloomberg Law

**Christine Okike** represents debtors, creditors, investors and others in complex restructuring transactions, distressed acquisitions, cross-border and other proceedings. She took a lead role representing BlockFi Inc. and certain subsidiaries in Chapter 11 cases in the US Bankruptcy Court for the District of N.J. She has been a speaker at The Wharton School and at the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges. Okike is co-chair of Kirkland's Firmwide Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

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