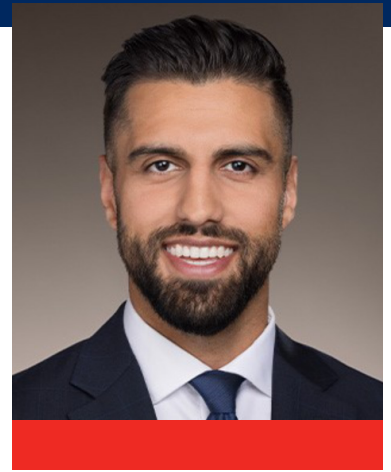


Persistence pays off for young California lawyer

By Brian Cox



Mustafa Karim began acquiring his wardrobe for a legal career long before he decided to become a lawyer.

As a junior in high school, the Wilke Fleury LLP associate got a job at a Men's Warehouse outlet and worked there until he was a senior at California State University, Sacramento (Sac State). He learned to appreciate a sharp look and put his employee discount to good use. He now has his choice of a dozen or more suits that he can wear to court.

Born in the borough of Queens, N.Y., Karim was 4 years old when his parents moved across the country to Sacramento. His parents had immigrated to the U.S. in the wake of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, landing in New York, where his father operated a food truck. Moving to California brought the Karims closer to family. His parents now work for Sacramento's unified school district – his mother as a paraeducator and his father as the lead custodian for an elementary school.

"As a first gen, my parents always pushed education," says Karim. "They knew having an education opens the gates to a lot of



Wilke Fleury LLP attorney Mustafa Karim (center) celebrates his birthday with his parents Sabir and Sultana Karim.

other opportunities."

The first in his family to graduate from college, Karim had few people to turn to with questions about navigating his undergraduate years and identifying a future career path. He now does his best to offer encouragement, guidance, and support to his younger brother, who just started college.

As a freshman at Sac State, uncertain about what direction to take, Karim elected to study criminal justice. It wasn't long, however, before he switched to political science at the suggestion of a cousin in New York who was in law school. From there, the possibility of a law career began to take shape in Karim's mind.

His senior year, he worked as a student assistant for the legal department of the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration. It was his first introduction to the world of law, and he discovered an affinity for it and set his eyes on becoming a lawyer.

With the aim of attending the University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law, Karim took the LSAT and was disappointed to score lower than he expected. Realizing that he sometimes struggled with standardized testing, Karim redoubled his efforts. He became a substitute high school teacher while he studied to retake the LSAT.

"I was not giving up," he says. "For me, it wasn't an option to just stop and quit. I was going to keep taking [the LSAT] until I scored high enough to get in."

His persistence and resilience were rewarded, and he began law school in 2020.

At the start of the summer after his first year of law school, Karim landed an internship at Wilke Fleury, one of Sacramento's longest standing law firms, providing comprehensive legal services for businesses and individuals for more than 100 years. Several attorneys recommended that Karim consider interning at the Elder and Health Law Clinic during his second year of law school. He followed their advice and the experience proved to be a highlight of his law school career.

"We were helping low-income seniors with pretty much any kind of legal issue they had," says Karim. "The most fulfilling aspect of working at the clinic was knowing that I was making a difference in someone's life who truly needed assistance."

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Mustafa Karim earned his J.D. in 2023 from the University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law with a concentration in trial advocacy.

After graduating from law school, Karim turned his full attention to taking – and passing – the bar, showing the same focus of purpose he’d demonstrated when taking the LSAT.

“I knew when I was preparing for the bar that I don’t do well on standardized tests, so I took it very seriously,” he says.

He was determined to study every day, Monday through Sunday, for 2-1/2 months. He approached preparing for the bar like a job. Having lived at home through law school, his mother would pack him a lunch when he left the house at 6 a.m. for the library where he would study for eight hours. To reduce distractions, he deleted all of his social media.

Again, his resolve paid off, and he passed the bar on the first try in November.

“My parents are super proud of me and supported me my whole way throughout college and law school,” says Karim. “They definitely mean a lot to me. We have a close relationship.”

At Wilke Fleury, Karim is a general civil litigation attorney representing clients in various matters, including property management, landlord/tenant, medical malpractice, employment, and health care matters.

“As a first-year attorney here at Wilke Fleury, I do a lot of different stuff, which is nice,” he says. “I like to learn all the different areas and see how all the partners work.”

He appreciates the size of the firm, which has about 20 attorneys, its diversity, and its open-door policy. He credits Partner Kathyne Baldwin with introducing him to Primerus.

“She is amazing,” he says. “She’s been a really good mentor. I look up to her and she gives me a lot of good feedback. I feel like I’ve improved a lot in my first six months as an attorney just because of her. She’s taught me a lot.”

Recently engaged, Karim met his fiancée, Brianna, in high school, though the couple didn’t start dating until college. She is an elementary school teacher. They share an interest in trying new foods, travel, and wineries.

Karim is a lifelong sports fan who loves the Sacramento Kings, whose NBA arena he can see from his office window. He enjoys working out at the gym and recently started learning to play golf.

Gregarious and generally laid back, Karim enjoys opportunities to forge personal relationships through networking events such as the recent Primerus Young Lawyers Conference in New Orleans. With a bright engaging smile and perfectly coiffed hair, he welcomes social occasions to expand his circle of contacts and friends.

He has more than enough suits for whatever life brings his way.



Mustafa and his fiancée, Brianna, on the beach in Monterey Bay, Calif.