

Merchant & Gould Helps License and Safeguard College Photos of President Barack Obama

Background

Professor Dr. Lisa Jack was a classmate of President Barack Obama in 1980. As an aspiring photographer, Lisa Jack took 36 black and white portraits of him for a class project during their studies at Occidental College. At the time, there was no sole purpose for the photographs but she kept them for more than two decades with her college memorabilia.

When Barack Obama became a candidate for the 2008 Presidential election, she wanted to share these intimate photos with the world but needed to do so in a way that safeguarded the images from infringement. Dr. Jack retained Kristine Boylan at Merchant & Gould in mid-2008.

Challenge

Dr. Jack wanted to be sure that her photos would be protected from third parties since she promised first publication rights to Time Magazine for its “Man of the Year” issue in December 2008. She looked to Merchant & Gould for protection.

Solution

After meeting with Dr. Jack on a few occasions, Boylan took steps to protect the images through the United States Office of Copyright. Upon publication in Time Magazine in late 2008, the photos garnered instant attention. Dr. Jack and the firm have since negotiated fine art deals. Dr. Jack has received extensive coverage in the press and due to Merchant & Gould’s due diligence around safeguarding these images, she knows they are extensively protected while the rest of the world can appreciate and enjoy them.

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