

1 Peter R. Ginsberg  
 (Pro Hac Vice Pending)  
 2 [prginsberg@sullivanlaw.com](mailto:prginsberg@sullivanlaw.com)  
 Mitchell C. Stein  
 3 [mstein@sullivanlaw.com](mailto:mstein@sullivanlaw.com)  
 Clark A. Freeman  
 4 [cfreeman@sullivanlaw.com](mailto:cfreeman@sullivanlaw.com)  
**SULLIVAN & WORCESTER LLP**  
 5 1633 Broadway, 32nd Floor  
 New York, New York 10019  
 6 (212) 660-3000; (212) 660-3001 fax

7 Scott L. Metzger (Bar No. 89718)  
[metzger@dsmw.com](mailto:metzger@dsmw.com)  
 8 William P. Keith (Bar No. 270587)  
[keith@dsmw.com](mailto:keith@dsmw.com)  
 9 **DUCKOR SPRADLING METZGER &  
 WYNNE**  
 10 A Law Corporation  
 101 West Broadway, Suite 1700  
 11 San Diego, California 92101  
 (619) 209-3000; (619) 209-3043 fax

12 Attorneys for Plaintiff  
 13 KAWHI LEONARD

14 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
 15 SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

17 KAWHI LEONARD,  
 18 Plaintiff,  
 19 v.  
 20 NIKE, INC.  
 21 Defendant.

CASE NO.: '19CV1035 BAS BGS

COMPLAINT FOR:  
 DECLARATORY RELIEF  
 [JURY TRIAL DEMANDED]

Action Filed:  
 Trial Date: None set

24 Plaintiff KAWHI LEONARD (“Plaintiff” or “Leonard”), an individual, by  
 25 and through his undersigned attorneys, hereby alleges as follows against Defendant  
 26 NIKE, INC. (“Defendant” or “Nike”):

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1 **INTRODUCTION**

2 1. In 2011, just after being drafted to the National Basketball Association  
3 (the “NBA”), Kawhi Leonard authored a unique logo that included elements that  
4 were meaningful and unique to him. Leonard traced his notably large hand, and,  
5 inside the hand, drew stylized versions of his initials “KL” and the number that he  
6 had worn for much of his career, “2.” The drawing Leonard authored was an  
7 extension and continuation of drawings he had been creating since early in his  
8 college career.

9 2. Several years later, as part of an endorsement deal with Nike, Leonard  
10 allowed Nike to use on certain merchandise the logo he created while Leonard  
11 continued to use the logo on non-Nike goods.

12 3. Unbeknownst to Leonard and without his consent, Nike filed an  
13 application for copyright registration of his logo and falsely represented in the  
14 application that Nike had authored the logo.

15 4. Leonard intends to use the logo on clothing lines, footwear and on  
16 other products and, among other things, in connection with sports camps and  
17 charity functions, but Nike explicitly has objected to such uses.

18 5. As set forth below, Leonard brings this action seeking a declaratory  
19 judgment of non-infringement and that Leonard is the author of the logo and Nike,  
20 in registering for copyright of Leonard’s logo, committed fraud on the Copyright  
21 Office.

22 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

23 6. This Court has original subject matter jurisdiction over Leonard’s  
24 claims pursuant to the Federal Declaratory Judgments Act, 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201 and  
25 2202, as well as under 28 U.S.C. § 1338.

26 7. Personal jurisdiction exists over Nike pursuant to California Code of  
27 Civil Procedure § 410.10.

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1 8. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to 29 U.S.C. § 1391(b), because  
2 certain events giving rise to the claims made herein occurred in this Judicial  
3 District, Plaintiff at relevant times has resided in this Judicial District, and  
4 Defendant regularly conducts business in this Judicial District.

5 **THE PARTIES**

6 9. Kawhi Leonard is an American professional basketball player and was  
7 at times mentioned herein a resident of the County of San Diego, California.

8 10. Defendant Nike, Inc. is now, and was at all times relevant herein, a  
9 United States multinational corporation that is engaged in the design, development,  
10 manufacturing and worldwide marketing and sale of footwear, apparel, equipment  
11 and accessories. Nike is headquartered in the State of Oregon and is the world’s  
12 largest supplier of athletic shoes and apparel.

13 11. Upon information and belief, Nike regularly transacts business in the  
14 State of California and in this Judicial District.

15 **FACTS**

16 **A. Background**

17 12. Kawhi Leonard is an American professional basketball player  
18 currently playing for the Toronto Raptors of the NBA.

19 13. After graduating High School, Leonard went on to play basketball for  
20 San Diego State University before entering the 2011 NBA draft.

21 14. Leonard was initially selected by the Indiana Pacers but was traded on  
22 draft night to the San Antonio Spurs. Leonard played for the Spurs for seven  
23 seasons, including the team’s NBA Championship season in 2014. At the  
24 conclusion of the NBA Finals in 2014, Leonard was named NBA Finals MVP, the  
25 third-youngest player to win the award. In 2018, Leonard was traded to the Raptors

26 15. Leonard is known for his extremely large hands. Throughout his  
27 career, spectators have noticed Leonard’s large hands and they are often described  
28 as contributing to his success as a player.

1           16. Leonard has worn jersey number “2” through much of his career and,  
2 at times before that, the number “22.”

3 **B. Leonard Authors the Logo**

4           17. Since at least his college years, Leonard contemplated and conceived  
5 of ideas for a personal logo which would be unique to him and reflect something  
6 meaningful relating to his own image.

7           18. In late December 2011 or January 2012, Leonard refined a logo he had  
8 been creating for several years that encompassed his large and powerful hands, his  
9 initials and his jersey number (the “Leonard Logo”).

10           19. Leonard shared his original work of authorship with family and  
11 friends, solicited the advice and expertise of a creative designer, received comments  
12 and suggestions, and made modifications to his design.

13 **C. Leonard and Nike**

14           20. On October 26, 2011, Nike and Leonard signed a “Men’s Pro  
15 Basketball Contract” (the “Nike Agreement”).

16           21. The Nike Agreement term was from October 1, 2011 to September 30,  
17 2014, and thereafter extended in a series of agreements finally expiring on  
18 September 30, 2018.

19           22. The purpose of the Nike Agreement was for Leonard to provide  
20 “personal services and expertise in the sport of professional basketball and  
21 endorsement of the Nike brand and use of Nike products.”

22           23. At some point during the term of the Nike Agreement, Nike began  
23 discussions with Leonard about creating a unique logo to affix to merchandise to be  
24 sold under the Nike Agreement.

25           24. Nike provided to Leonard its ideas for modifying the logo that Leonard  
26 had designed.

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1           25. Leonard for the most part rejected Nike's concepts and, instead,  
2 forwarded to Nike the Leonard Logo which Leonard said he would permit Nike to  
3 use during the term of the Nike Agreement (under his supervision and control).

4           26. Nike reviewed the Leonard Logo, modified it, and returned pro formas  
5 to Leonard in the Spring 2014.

6           27. Leonard rejected those proposals as well.

7           28. In early Summer 2014, Nike provided additional proposals to Leonard  
8 using the Leonard Logo.

9           29. Leonard accepted one of the June 2014 proposals and granted Nike  
10 permission to affix that logo, based upon the Leonard Logo, on Nike merchandise  
11 during the term of the Nike Agreement.

12           30. Nike confirmed that the agreed-upon logo had not previously been  
13 registered by any third-party.

14           31. At the same time, Leonard's representatives confirmed that Leonard  
15 continued to own the Leonard Logo.

16           32. Leonard never transferred the rights to the Leonard Logo to Nike –  
17 conversely, as the many communications, including text and e-mails show, Leonard  
18 permitted Nike to use the Leonard Logo for their mutual benefit and for the specific  
19 purpose of effectuating the Nike Agreement for the term of the contract.

20           33. Indeed, Nike representatives recognized Leonard's rights to the  
21 Leonard Logo – referring to it as "Kawhi's logo" in written communications with  
22 Leonard.

23           34. Leonard, without dispute or challenge from Nike, continued to use the  
24 Leonard Logo on non-Nike goods, including apparel and merchandise used for  
25 basketball camps, appearances and charity events, even while Nike was affixing  
26 Leonard's Logo to Nike merchandise.

27           35. Consistent with Nike's position as a party without any ownership in  
28 the Leonard Logo, Nike refused to act several times when Leonard's

1 representatives learned that third-parties were using the Leonard Logo without  
2 authorization and reached out to Nike for assistance and advice in halting the  
3 unauthorized use.

4 **D. Nike’s Copyright Registration**

5 36. Without Leonard’s knowledge or consent, Nike filed an application  
6 with the United States Copyright Office to register the “Kawhi Leonard Logo.”

7 37. On or about May 11, 2017, the application was granted and the  
8 Leonard Logo was given Registration No. VA0002097900.

9 38. On the application, Nike claimed authorship of the Logo and rights  
10 and permissions to the Leonard Logo.

11 39. Further, Nike claimed that the Leonard Logo was authored in 2014 and  
12 first published on October 28, 2014.

13 40. Nike’s claim to ownership of the Leonard Logo is premised on the  
14 false representations Nike made in its copyright application that it authored the  
15 logo.

16 41. Nike never notified Leonard of its intention to attempt to copyright the  
17 Leonard Logo nor did it notify Leonard when the copyright was awarded.

18 **E. Leonard’s Trademark Registration**

19 42. On November 9, 2017, Leonard applied for, and subsequently received  
20 registration of, two trademarks in three different categories of registration  
21 consisting of, and inspired by, Leonard’s creation of the Leonard Logo, one an  
22 image of his hand, his initials and jersey number and a second logo based upon  
23 letters and numbers corresponding to Leonard’s initials and jersey number (the  
24 “Leonard Trademarks”).

25 43. As set forth above, Leonard had been developing, and authored, the  
26 Leonard Logo on his own, independent of Nike, and continued to use the Leonard  
27 Logo for non-Nike products while also permitting Nike to borrow the Leonard

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1 Logo in his joint pursuit with Nike to merchandise products within the scope of the  
2 Nike Agreement and for the term of the Nike Agreement.

3 **F. The Controversy**

4 44. Leonard intends in the near future to use the Leonard Logo on apparel  
5 and footwear that he is actively developing and intends to bring to market and to  
6 affix on items he intends to distribute in connection with sports camps and charity  
7 events, and to affix on other products to be determined. Use of the Leonard Logo  
8 is vital to Leonard's ability to continue to grow his brand and expand both his  
9 commercial reach and influence with charities with which he is involved.

10 45. On December 21, 2018, John Matterazzo, Nike's VP & Global  
11 Counsel for Sports Marketing, wrote to one of Leonard's representatives, stating  
12 that Nike owns the Leonard Logo pursuant to the Nike Agreement and Nike's  
13 copyright registration of the Leonard Logo. Matterazzo demanded that Leonard  
14 cease using the Leonard Logo on non-Nike merchandise.

15 46. On January 30, 2019, Leonard's counsel responded by requesting that  
16 Nike rescind its copyrights in the Leonard Logo and informing Nike that Leonard  
17 intended to continue to use the Leonard Logo and Leonard Trademarks on non-  
18 Nike merchandise and might affix the Leonard Logo and Leonard Trademarks to  
19 the shoes he would be wearing as a player for the Raptors.

20 47. On March 11, 2019, Nike responded that it owns all intellectual  
21 property rights in the Leonard Logo and demanding that Leonard immediately  
22 cease and desist from what Nike claimed was the unauthorized use of the Leonard  
23 Logo.

24 **CLAIM FOR RELIEF**

25 (Declaratory Judgment)

26 48. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation in the  
27 foregoing paragraphs of this Complaint.

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1 49. An actual controversy exists as a result of Defendant's filings with the  
2 Copyright Office, Leonard's intentions, established plans and need to use the  
3 Leonard Logo on products, and Defendant's demands that Leonard cease and desist  
4 from using the Leonard Logo.

5 50. Plaintiff authored and owns the Leonard Logo.

6 51. Defendant did not author the Leonard Logo.

7 52. To the extent Defendant contributed any effort to the creation of the  
8 Leonard Logo, such efforts did not constitute copyrightable material and/or  
9 constitute a "work for hire" within the meaning of 17 U.S.C. §101.

10 53. Defendant has no rights in the Leonard Logo.

11 54. Defendant is not entitled to copyright registration of the Leonard Logo.

12 55. Defendant defrauded the Copyright Office by intentionally  
13 misrepresenting the author of the Leonard Logo.

14 56. As a consequence of the foregoing, Plaintiff seeks a declaratory  
15 judgment that (i) Leonard is the sole author of the Leonard Logo; (ii) Leonard's use  
16 of the Leonard Logo does not infringe any rights of Nike, including without  
17 limitation any rights Nike may claim to possess with respect to the Leonard Logo;  
18 and (iii) Defendant committed fraud on the Copyright Office in registering the  
19 Leonard Logo.

20 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

21 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests judgment against Defendant as  
22 follows:

23 (a) For a declaration pursuant to, inter alia, 17 U.S.C. §§ 101 and 201(a)  
24 that:

25 (i) Leonard is the sole author of the Leonard Logo;

26 (ii) Leonard's use of the Leonard Logo does not infringe any rights  
27 of Nike, including without limitation any rights Nike may claim  
28 to possess with respect to the Leonard Logo; and

- 1 (iii) Defendant committed fraud on the Copyright Office in
- 2 registering the Leonard Logo; and
- 3 (b) Any such other and further relief as this Court deems just and proper.

**DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

Plaintiff Kahwi Leonard, an individual, hereby demands a jury trial.

7 DATED: June 3, 2019

8 **SULLIVAN & WORCESTER LLP**  
 By: PETER R. GINSBERG  
 (PRO HAC VICE PENDING)  
 MITCHELL C. STEIN  
 CLARK A. FREEMAN

11 **DUCKOR SPRADLING METZGER &**  
**WYNNE**  
 A Law Corporation

14 Bv: /s/ Scott L. Metzger  
 SCOTT L. METZGER  
 WILLIAM P. KEITH

17 Attorneys for Plaintiff  
 KAWHI LEONARD

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