



LEGO SUPREME COURT LAWYERS UP

Adam Hanson

IN BUILDING AND WRITING about the intersection of LEGO and the U.S. Supreme Court, I soon realized that I was not the only AFOL¹ who also happens to enjoy entertaining journals of law. At the conclusion of my most recent submission to *The Green Bag*, I offered readers instructions on how to build their own tiny LEGO Supreme Court.² I received dozens of emails from *Bag* readers in the weeks and months following the publication asking for more information on how they too could build a tiny LEGO Supreme Court – for themselves, or for their children, grandchildren, friends, or colleagues. Emails came in from law students, lawyers, professors, and even current and retired judges. I knew this was the beginning of something bigger than a tiny LEGO set.

When I first built my LEGO Supreme Court Bench including the nine Justices,³ I knew I would have to update the creation to reflect new members of the Court as well as make structural changes to the courtroom itself.

Adam Hanson is the Director of Government Affairs for the Associated Builders and Contractors of Minnesota and North Dakota.

¹ The abbreviation AFOL – Adult Fan of LEGO – is commonly used by adult fans of LEGO worldwide. The hobby has even been the subject of short films. See *Love of the Brick: A Documentary on Adult Fans of Lego* (2009) and *A Lego Brickumentary* (2014).

² Adam Hanson, *The Largest and Tiniest LEGO Supreme Court Buildings*, 20 GREEN BAG 2D 417, 421 (2017).

³ Adam Hanson, *The Supreme Court* (2015) (*en block*), in 2016 GREEN BAG ALM. 264.

Since its creation in 2015, LEGO Justices Gorsuch and Kavanaugh have been added and the seating chart of the LEGO Justices has been adjusted accordingly – with LEGO Chief Justice Roberts maintaining his prominent seat in the center of the bench.

First, the Court needed an advocates’ table. And not just any table. The one I built for the LEGO Court is complete with a lectern, microphones, timing lights, and the all-important crank on the lectern. No detail is too small, especially for LEGO creations of the highest court in the land. On the advocates’ table are quill pens, representing the ones given to each lawyer who argues in front of the Court.⁴

But one thing was still missing. Rather, *someone* was missing. An advocate. Rather, advocates. What good is a LEGO Supreme Court with its nine Justices if there is no one to argue a case or controversy⁵ before it? The question loomed large as I thought about how to add lawyers to the Court – and who to add.

One name came to mind rather quickly. She had been in the news around the time that I got the idea to add LEGO lawyers to the Supreme Court in the summer of 2018. Prior to that she had been featured on a leading Supreme Court podcast talking about her appellate practice.⁶ It was there that I learned of her unmatched success at the Court. Her work has even appeared in these very pages.⁷ I knew she would make a great first LEGO lawyer for the LEGO Court. Of course I am referring to Lisa Blatt of Williams & Connolly. When asked if she would be comfortable with her likeness made into a LEGO minifigure, she gladly obliged.

But what good is just one lawyer at the Court? Lisa needed opposing counsel. She is currently co-teaching a course on Separation of Powers at Georgetown Law with someone who also has an impressive track record and skill arguing at the Supreme Court – both in private practice and as the 43rd Solicitor General of the United States. He too graciously accepted my offer to be added to the LEGO Supreme Court. And so the first case

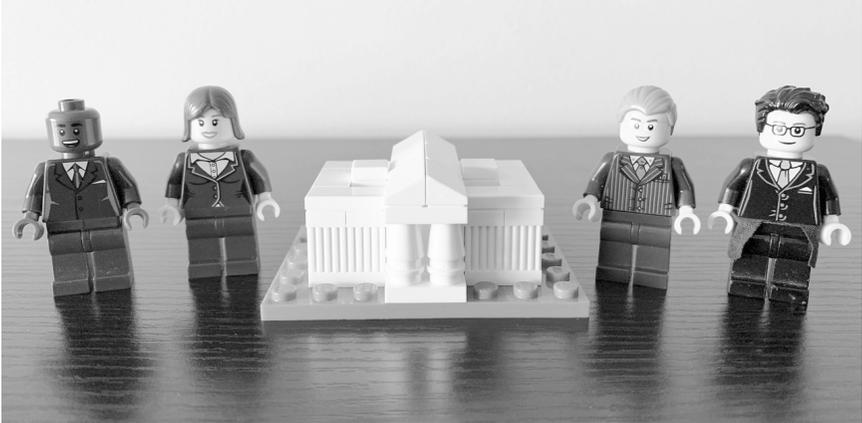
⁴ *In Re Quills*, NEW YORK TIMES (April 4, 1986), www.nytimes.com/1986/04/04/us/supreme-court-in-re-quills.html.

⁵ U.S. Const., Art. III, Sec. 2, c. 1

⁶ *In Recess #2: #BadLawyerGate*, FIRST MONDAYS (Aug. 7, 2017), firstmondays.simplecast.fm/c04d3d6c.

⁷ Lisa Blatt, *In Front of the Burgundy Curtain*, 14 GREEN BAG 2D 9 (2010).

LEGO Supreme Court Lawyers Up



LEGO lawyers Kannon Shanmugam, Lisa Blatt, Paul Clement, and Noel Francisco.

to be argued in front of the LEGO Justices will be between Lisa Blatt and Paul Clement of Kirkland & Ellis.

With Lisa and Paul at the advocates' table, the remaining empty chairs needed to be filled. The United States was not currently represented at the Court so the obvious choice for the next LEGO lawyer was Solicitor General Noel Francisco. His dress differs slightly from his colleagues, both at the LEGO Court and at the actual Court. When arguing at either Court, it is customary for Department of Justice attorneys to wear formal dress.⁸

Rounding out the LEGO lawyers is also someone who has argued extensively at the Supreme Court. Like Ms. Blatt, he too appeared on a leading Supreme Court podcast⁹ but has yet to have his work published in the *Bag*. The fourth LEGO lawyer at the LEGO Supreme Court is Kannon Shanmugam of Paul, Weiss.

Constructing the bench and advocates' table was relatively easy compared to finding just the right head, torso, and hair pieces for the advocates. After careful searching and constructing, Lisa, Paul, Noel, and Kannon

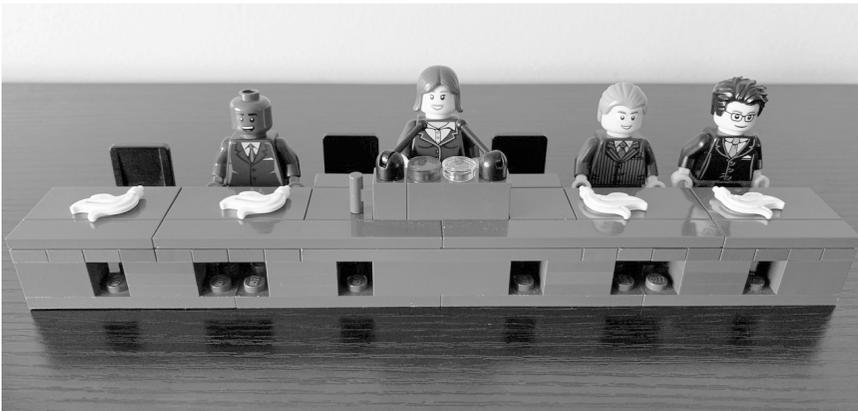
⁸ *The Court and Its Traditions*, U.S. SUPREME COURT, www.supremecourt.gov/about/traditions.aspx.

⁹ *In Recess #1: Crushing Negs*, FIRST MONDAYS (July 31, 2017), firstmondays.simplecast.fm/391b0dcf.

Adam Hanson



The LEGO Supreme Court bench (above) and bar (below).



each signed off on their minifigure's likeness. During the process, one of the four jokingly said that they would like to retain the rights to their LEGO likeness in the event a LEGO Supreme Court movie is made.¹⁰

I recognize that there are a number of other well-qualified advocates, both past and present, who would make great additions to the LEGO Supreme Court. And that is where you, the fans of LEGO, followers of

¹⁰ See also *THE LEGO MOVIE* (Warner Brothers 2014); *THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE* (Warner Animation Group 2017); *THE LEGO MOVIE 2: THE SECOND PART* (Warner Brothers Animation 2019).

LEGO Supreme Court Lawyers Up

the Supreme Court, and readers of the *Bag* can come into play. Which Supreme Court advocates would you like to see as a LEGO minifigure? Happy building and play well!¹¹



¹¹ The name “LEGO” is an abbreviation of the two Danish words “leg godt,” meaning “play well.” www.lego.com/en-us/aboutus/lego-group/the_lego_history.