

Leah Evert-Burks: This is Leah Evert-Burks with the Center for Anti-Counterfeiting and Product Protection @ Michigan State University and *this is Brand Protection Stories* - stories about the practice of brand protection by those who live it. In *Brand Protection Stories* we talk to those in the brand protection community about particular cases in their careers. Through some *stranger than fiction* real life scenarios we learn about the practice of brand protection and the challenges faced by brand-owners worldwide.

Leah Evert-Burks: This episode of Brand Protection Stories is brought to you by Digimarc.

Sasha Lazarevich: Well, they had one store in downtown LA, and they had a front retail area and they also had a back large storage area. That storage area had all the products that they carried, but the counterfeit toys that they were selling, we're concealed in special boxes that we're heading in the back. If a customer came there to buy them, they had to request them, especially from the front, from the owners of the sales clerk, and they would have a specific individual wheel out the toys for a few minutes, so that customer could quickly look at them, and then they would go and hide them in the back again. So they were conscious of the fact that they were not only counterfeit, but that it was illegal to sell them.

Leah Evert-Burks: Since 2015 Deputy City Attorney Sasha Lazarevich has prosecuted all IP criminal matters for the Intellectual Property Prosecution Section of the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office. As the first prosecutor hired into this specialized position, Sasha built out a criminal prosecution program from the ground up. This includes developing prosecution best practices, which have led to notable results such as a 98% conviction rate and financial restitution to victims ordered in every case resulting in a conviction. To date, Sasha has reviewed and prosecuted hundreds of IP criminal matters arising in numerous industries including technology, pharmaceuticals, fashion, personal care, and entertainment. She handles all stages of the proceedings, including jury trials, and sets litigation priorities for the criminal part of her section. As a result of the overwhelming success of her enforcement efforts, Sasha spends significant time presenting IP prosecution best practices to law enforcement and industry representatives. Thus far, she has provided training to over 2,000 law enforcement officers from over 36 states, local, and federal agencies as well as dozens of brand owners from across the U.S. Sasha has also conducted trainings for over 100 prosecutors from California and beyond. Additionally she has traveled internationally to speak to foreign law enforcement and legal professionals about best practices for IP crimes prosecutions. More recently, the focus of Sasha's work has turned to the sale of counterfeit and illegal pharmaceuticals including fake Xanax and Viagra, which can cause serious injury and death. She is also working on an initiative to improve enforcement of cybercrimes with an IP component especially in regards to criminal activity occurring on the dark web. Prior to her work as an IP crimes prosecutor, Sasha worked on routine criminal matters including driving under the influence cases and violent offenses. She is also a former Googler. Sasha received her J.D. from University of Washington and her B.A. in political science from Columbia University.

Leah Evert-Burks: Welcome Sasha to Brand Protection Stories.

Sasha Lazarevich: Thank you for having me today, Leah. It's great to be here.

Leah Evert-Burks: So parents worry about their kids. It's literally the nature of the job--we worry about their health and safety, their development. But even something that seems as trivial as worrying about getting them the right toy or the right party favor, bearing your child's favorite character, we know that counterfeiters counterfeit everything, and that unfortunately includes toys. Today we're going to talk to you, Sasha, about stories involving the counterfeit toy industry, how high demand and cheap prices make this category of goods attractive to counterfeiters. So, I also live in California, so obviously familiar with the distinct areas of Los Angeles, and like many large metropolitan cities, they're certain sectors of the city that are dedicated to certain industries. You know, for instance jewelry, fashion, but I was surprised to hear that there's a toy district.

Sasha Lazarevich: Yeah, so I'm here in Los Angeles with the Los Angeles City Attorney's office and you know, I prosecute full-time intellectual property crimes, and a lot of that involves prosecuting cases involving counterfeit goods, and the downtown area is a very active area for the sale of counterfeit. We have the toy district, as you mentioned, which is focused on toys and also the fashion district also known as Santee Alley which is another very active area for counterfeiting. Um, so, I've had a number of cases that have involved counterfeit toys specifically and, you know, that's what I'm here to talk about that with you.

Leah Evert-Burks: Can you kind of paint the picture of what this toy district is comprised of?

Sasha Lazarevich: Yeah, sure. So, it's a 12-block area in eastern downtown LA. It's a very multilingual, multicultural area. It has a lot of one-story, two-story buildings with a lot of storefronts that are painted different colors, and there's about 500 toys and electronics businesses in that area. So, for example, today, I'm going to talk about two cases involving business owners who had retail storefronts on the same street in the toy district, and both of those owners, actually there was four of them because it was two sets of husbands and wives, who had family run businesses with counterfeit toys which were imported from China, in that area, so a lot of people in Los Angeles, you know, customers go down there to buy gifts for their kids. It's a very busy area during the holidays, for example, but also a lot of other toy stores in Los Angeles go there to source goods wholesale because they can know they can get, you know, a large number of toys at a low cost that they can resell at a markup, right, and the fashion district is the same way. You'll have, you know, clothes stores from other parts of town that go there. So when these things are manufactured, these counterfeit toys, um, a lot of them end up in downtown Los Angeles before they hit the larger Los Angeles area.

Leah Evert-Burks: So it's retail and wholesale. So, for the wholesale, you don't know where those are going to end up.

Sasha Lazarevich: Right. So, I say they're not only stores in the traditional sense that customers are individually impacted. They're distributors in a sense as well, and they will sell a very large volume of goods if you, you know, they'll often give out their phone number. They'll tell people if you buy, you know, over a certain number of goods, we'll give them to you at this lower price. And so yeah, they definitely, other retailers source their goods from down there.

Leah Evert-Burks: Okay, so before we get into the specifics of those cases, I did want to mention that and the listeners have heard your bio before we started talking here today. The City Attorney Mike Feuer has created a unique intellectual property prosecution section. I believe there's two prosecutors including you, full time that prosecute IP crimes. The focus being civil litigation but also criminal litigation. And can you speak to that a little bit? You know, I spent some time getting on the city of Los Angeles website and looking at the scope of what the city attorney does, you know, protecting and fighting to improve the quality of life in LA, in the neighborhoods. You have a large responsibility for the city. So, in saying that your city attorney has developed this section that's dedicated to IP crimes is unique.

Sasha Lazarevich: We're very fortunate in the city of Los Angeles because it's a large metropolitan area. We have over 4 million people in the city alone. We have over 11 million people in the county. City Attorney Mike Feuer has been exceptionally supportive of our efforts and our unit. Our unit is small. It is comprised of two prosecutors: the original prosecutor Kevin Gilligan, who's my supervisor focuses all of his time now on civil litigation and specifically Business and Professions Code violations and the area of 17 200, so it's unlawful competition. So this can be against individuals or property owners or businesses. A lot of it is focused on closing businesses that engage in crime or allow the sale of counterfeit. He also does abatements and other property specific efforts. Those cases require secondary trademark liability, but they're still predicated on counterfeiting crimes occurring at those locations and oftentimes the cases in which I secure a conviction might be part of the evidence that he shows to a civil court judge to get an injunction or an abatement or to get a business closed down when they're doing wrong. But yeah, we're, I think, the only local agency in the country that has an intellectual property specific unit, so that makes us unique, at least I haven't met anyone else who does this full time as a prosecutor, and we feel very fortunate to be able to do this work, especially in LA which is really the biggest counterfeit market in the country, barring perhaps New York which might compete with us somewhat in terms of the amount of these types of crimes that happen. So, it's really meaningful and we're really grateful to Mike Feuer because he's been so exceptionally supportive.

Leah Evert-Burks: Well, you know, LA is a national and worldwide trendsetter in so many ways, but given the amount of counterfeits that you see in LA--I guess it's not surprising, given the size of the city--but it's also, I would say, kind of a perfect storm, you know, you've got multiple sports teams, the fashion hub, major international ports, street gangs, the entertainment industry which a lot of toys are tied to. So it is kind of a unique area, so it's nice and refreshing to see a city take counterfeiting so seriously, as the city of Los Angeles does.

Leah Evert-Burks: The discipline of brand protection is derived out of trademark law- since counterfeiting is a violation of trademark rights – it's important to remember that these are laws set up regionally throughout the world to protect the consumer. Yes, trademarks are assets of companies, but they tell the consumer the source of the goods and provide the assurance of origin. But, brand protection isn't only the responsibility of the legal profession, it's multi-disciplinary by nature, *and* necessity. People find themselves in this field from such diverse career

paths as security, supply chain, law enforcement, marketing, IT, finance and yes legal, as well as many more.

Leah Evert-Burks: But, let's get into these cases because I know our listeners want to hear about it. So again, these are toys that were being sold in two locations in the toy district of LA. Was there a certain age that these toys were directed toward? Were these toddler toys or for teenagers? Or what were the age span for the toys?

Sasha Lazarevich: I would say in both cases, the toys in question were targeted towards kids under the age of 10. And in one particular notable case, they're targeted towards toddlers, so kids maybe between the ages of three to six or something like that. And that particular toy was a very popular toy in that case that parents were trying to find desperately for their kids. They were organizing birthday parties around this toy, and the counterfeit version of it that was found in our particular case that we prosecuted--I personally prosecuted--involved plastics that were unsafe for use and children above certain levels, so it was very concerning to us and of course we took the case very seriously.

Leah Evert-Burks: And when you talk about that age group, I've always kind of called that in-the-mouth stages, you know, because everything goes to their mouth, so if you're dealing with hazardous or dangerous chemicals, and I believe what you found in some of the toys you seized and confiscated were phthalates, which is a plastic PVC, which has been found to cause issues with development of young children, damage to lungs, damage to heart. So, you know, phthalates are regulated by the consumer products protection commission. And so, you know, that has been viewed at very seriously by regulators, but yet this substance was found in the toys you seized.

Sasha Lazarevich: It was, and it was found to be in amounts that were higher than the safety guidelines recommended and required. And in that particular case, it seemed as though based on the evidence that was collected by law enforcement that the counterfeit toys were produced in China, that they were sent over here to this particular business in large volumes and that they were selling them to the public. And now, you know, we don't know, in that particular case, I don't know that the business owners were aware of that plastics issue, specifically, but it was very clear that they knew that the goods were counterfeit because they were very covert about the way that they handled sale to that particular toy compared to other non-counterfeit toys in their store.

Leah Evert-Burks: Can you walk us through that? So how did they handle the counterfeit goods in their stores?

Sasha Lazarevich: Well, they had one store in downtown LA, and they had a front retail area and they also had a back large storage area. That storage area had all the products that they carried, but the counterfeit toys that they were selling, we're concealed in special boxes that we're heading in the back. If a customer came there to buy them, they had to request them, especially from the front, from the owners of the sales clerk, and they would have a specific individual wheel out the toys for a few minutes, so that customer could quickly look at them, and then they would go and hide them in the back again. So they were conscious of the fact that they were not only counterfeit, but that it was illegal to sell them, for example, and the counterfeit toy was sold at a small fraction of the cost of the authentic toy, which

made it very desirable I'm guessing to retailers in Los Angeles who may or may not have been aware that it was counterfeit. They could buy it in large volume. They knew it was in high demand, and it would most definitely be bought by consumers because kids wanted this toy. So, that part was pretty concerning. There's a huge profit to be made in the sale of counterfeit, and I think we're both aware of those figures. So, in some cases it can be more profitable than the sale of cocaine for example or other hard drugs, and there's sort of the knowledge there that in most jurisdictions there aren't dedicated prosecutors who are focused on this issue, and so a lot of this activity sort of flies under the radar. Here in LA, we're lucky to have the support of LAPD and the sheriff's department, both of which have special units that are fully dedicated to this, and we have the privilege to work with them, which makes it easier to enforce. But, business owners in downtown LA, they know this, and so they become more--at least the ones that are obviously engaging in the activity--more covert, more circumspect and careful about how they're sharing information, how they display those counterfeit items, and that type of thing.

Leah Evert-Burks: Counterfeiting can be lucrative but in many jurisdictions prosecution results only in low penalties, therefore it attracts a wide spectrum of criminals from out-of-garage sellers to sophisticated networks funding terrorism. And what *is* counterfeited? *Just about everything.*

Leah Evert-Burks: So, some of those partners, you mentioned LAPD, Sheriff's Department, helped with your investigations of these locations. Can you explain what they did to build the case for the arrests and then the subsequent prosecutions?

Sasha Lazarevich: Absolutely. So, this case that we've been talking about involving that high-in-demand toy, that location had been selling counterfeit for about 15 years, and they're a husband and wife business owners. The husband had been convicted in the past at the felony level for the sale of counterfeit. They had been noticed by various trademark owners repeatedly through cease and desist to stop selling these products, but they just kept selling counterfeit products anyway. They might sell a counterfeit product with a different trademark. You know, I don't know if that was intentional to, you know, avoid the cease and desist issues, or if it just happen to be what they could get and what they wanted to sell, but the activity had been going on for a long time and so private investigators hired by companies had been there are numerous times. I probably had nearly 1000 pages of evidence in terms of a dozen investigative reports. Multiple police reports of all about location and there was, I believe, a search warrant served. And in that case, that particular case, I believe it was the sheriff's department that served the warrant, but both LAPD and the Sheriff's Department have worked in that downtown area on these cases.

Leah Evert-Burks: And I know for some brands, not just toys, but some brands are a bit hesitant to become involved in counterfeit prosecutions because of potential negative perception. Did you find that to be the case with these prosecutions or were you able to partner well with the brands that were being counterfeited?

Sasha Lazarevich: You know, that's an interesting question. I found that it varies from brand owner to brand owner. Some are very hesitant. Certain big names that have very pristine reputations, especially with small children and families, they

don't want the word counterfeit in any way affiliated with their brand. And they're fearful, it seems to me based on my interactions with them, that if they get involved, it will somehow taint them. But there are other brands that I've worked with that have been very forthcoming and very aggressive about prosecuting these cases that really want to help because it's their attitude not only that they need to protect their intellectual property actively because they must to preserve it, you know, legally speaking, but also that they have a responsibility to the public to help inform them of the differences and the reasons why they should be buying authentic products, you know, they may be more expensive but they're safety tested, they're made in safe facilities, they're intended for that customer base those small children to use them safely, not to choke on them, to have the proper warnings, all those types of things, right. And counterfeit goods don't, so it really varies across the board but I would urge, you know, all trademark owners to be actively engaged with protecting their own brand and working with prosecutors and law enforcement agencies because it's to everyone's benefit. It's to the benefit of the consumer and it really is, in my opinion, having done this for nearly seven years now, to the benefit of the company too because it puts, you know, those criminal elements on notice that, you know, they need to follow the rules, and you know they're not just going to look the other way.

Leah Evert-Burks: Mm hmm. So both these cases, there were extensive investigation done, as you said extensive evidence gathered. The culprits arrested and prosecuted. And as you mentioned on the outset, LA uses a very interesting hybrid approach in prosecuting counterfeiters that involve criminal statutes and civil statutes together. Can you talk to that a bit as to how that is done and why you see that as a necessary formula?

Sasha Lazarevich: It's a really effective formula, and it works really well for us. We have a very small unit--just two prosecutors. I handle all the misdemeanor criminal cases across the city, and Kevin handles all the civil cases. That's a huge volume of cases. Every time a case comes into a unit, we make an assessment about where it's best situated, whether it should be a criminal prosecution or a civil prosecution. We talked a little bit already about the certain types of laws that Kevin enforces in civil court and ways that he holds property owners and business owners accountable. As for me, I'm prosecuting California Penal Code statutes, Business and Professions Code statutes, Health and Safety Code statutes, among others. So depending on the type of product and the conduct involved, a lot of our cases are Penal Code 350 A1 trademark infringement cases, and those require a seller of counterfeit who has the knowledge that the item that they're selling is counterfeit and they intend to manufacture, sale or attempt to sell it for a profit. So, most of our cases fall under that category in criminal land. The reason it's so useful to have both civil and criminal enforcement efforts, prosecution efforts, is that Kevin can go after business owners a little more easily but also properties or areas of town or injunctions that tie multiple individuals together for instances who may be in a gang selling in the same part of town. So, that has some of the collaborative efforts of a business in terms of ongoing concerted effort to commit the same crime over and over again for the purpose of a profit, and criminally I'm going after individuals, right, and so those two things together are very, very effective. The other virtue of it is, you know, there

are cases that go to the District Attorney's office, which is a separate office with a different jurisdiction than us, and if they go after someone in a felony, Kevin can still pursue a civil action against a business or property relating to that same activity without creating a conflict. So, that's also very effective. And we've spoken other municipalities come to us fairly frequently to ask us for advice about this issue, both domestically and internationally actually and both of us have gone to other countries to talk about our efforts here because this is sort of groundbreaking in terms for local law enforcement to effectively deal with this issue at this scale, so it's really effective.

Leah Evert-Burks: In addition to federal statutes, state statutes can play a key role in prosecuting counterfeiters in the US. The Brand Protection Professional journal has included several articles that serve as a resource on available statutes. For instance, the 12th edition provides instructive information in "Looking at State's Laws" Check out this edition and others at a-capp.msu.edu/outreach/brand-protection-professional-bpp/.

Leah Evert-Burks: And I think one of the things that's groundbreaking is, you know, talking about the focus of civil litigation against property. You've been able to bring in landlords and owners of buildings into the sphere of liability which has been a challenge before. So, I think that that has been really effective for the city of Los Angeles.

Sasha Lazarevich: And it is, and what's great about it is it can be a very collaborative effort, especially on the civil side, you know, once property owners become aware of what's going on, we notice them, and they know, and if they do allow it to continue for whatever reason, you know, they come in for hearing and we talk with them about things that they can do to clean up their properties, ways that they can prevent this issue from coming up again, how to screen tenants, how to secure their buildings, how to prevent criminal activity at their properties so they're not liable. And so you know, customers and residents who live at those properties and work there also aren't, you know, met with some sort of perilous situation by coming into contact with it. So, it's really useful. Some things do ultimately go to litigation, you know, on the civil end, and you know, we've had very successful results, you know, Kevin secured multimillion dollar verdicts against property owners and businesses that have repeatedly allowed this to happen, but really the true desire is to prevent it to educate the public to improve, you know, working and living conditions for everyone in Los Angeles, so people can have a safer and healthier life here.

Leah Evert-Burks: And we're talking about, in talking about toys, we're talking about a very vulnerable population, the consumer base being, you know, as you said, toddlers, and you know young children, so hopefully that resonates with property owners and business partners that are involved. So, going back to the cases you talked about, you just mentioned Kevin has been able to get multi million dollar verdicts on the criminal side. What were you able to succeed with and your prosecution of these two businesses or individuals?

Sasha Lazarevich: So, both of these cases were prosecuted I believe 2018 and 2019 respectively, and that was before some of the recent legislative changes that have happened in California, so both of these individuals, all four of these individuals

actually, were convicted. In both cases, the husbands appeared to have heavier ownership responsibilities, things were in their name, they were found to be selling on more dates, the wives were involved but not perhaps as actively according to the evidence that we had. So, you know, both of the male defendants in those cases were on probation for three years, they had to pay thousands of dollars in restitution and fines, they had to perform a lot of community service, they had a lot of reporting obligations, you know admonishments from our office about the severity of it, and then also search and seizure conditions on one of the businesses, and I believe the other business I closed down. So, one of the conditions of settling was that they no longer run that business so that location because it had become so problematic. And it's important to note that both of those businesses were down there for a long time in the toy district, they've been operating for years and years, all of the activity had been documented. It was difficult to stop them from doing it. And so usually, in the sphere of criminal, it takes some time to get to the point where you can get a business to close down. In civil court, it's a little bit easier to get that sort of civil remedy. So, most of the time, you have to have multiple occurrences that go on and activity has to be really pronounced, and then I have them banned from the toy district entirely, so they would have a three-year band from the toy district. They can't go down there, they're not allowed to open another store, and usually, they really do try to find some way to circumvent these things in this case, you know, when one of the owners, you know, asked could their sibling open a business downtown at the same location, and I can't tell their sibling what to do or not do, but what I can say is that business needs to be closed down in that name, the way that it is, and if they go back there, they're going to have consequences. They need to stay out of that area. Now, as of late last year, there's been some legislative changes in California, and so a lot of the cases that we have in LA, even though they may be referred to us by the DA's office and they end up being misdemeanors in our office, are very serious objectively speaking and saying that as a prosecutor in terms of the potential harm, the amount of counterfeit recovered, the repetitiveness of the criminal conduct, and those types of things. And now the maximum that they can have in terms of probation is one year, and it's very hard to get jail time in California, so we really focus on our restrictive terms that will encourage people to find another source of revenue that's legitimate to stay out of problem areas, not to be in the same line of work that might tempt them to do it again because the problem is it just makes them a lot of money. It's very profitable to sell counterfeit even though it's wrong and there are harms, and it's easy to look the other way because the public is so generally unaware of the dangers that are involved in the problems with it.

Leah Evert-Burks: Mm hmm. Yeah, I mean, in looking at these cases, these are very time consuming, difficult cases to bring. I think on the case, the civil side of it that Kevin handled with the location that was in business for over 15 years, I think he served cease and desist notices upwards of 80 times. They claimed at one point that they had vacated, but they hadn't. So, you know, and again talking about some of the things such as hesitancy for brands to get involved, educating on public safety issues, given the nature of these counterfeit goods, you have to do a lot of PR and education to the public, but also to everyone else involved in enforcing IP rights, just

simply they're not easy cases given the changes that you just mentioned on decriminalizing some misdemeanors, and that, as you said, you know some of the aspects of that, the city of LA still is very motivated to prosecute these cases and pursue them. And I think some people may say, you know, why? What would your answer to that be?

Sasha Lazarevich: I mean there's so many reasons why. I could probably teach, you know, a 10-hour class on this topic and talk ad nauseum. I won't do that to you, but I mean in essence, it's something that affects not only individuals but society in a really profound way, and it's something that's extremely common and very detrimental. So you have, you know, safety issues practically any type of counterfeit that makes any type of products in the world that makes that money is counterfeited, whether it's makeup, eye drops, medical devices, clothes, children's toys, which we're talking about today, a medication, and something that's counterfeit is made in very poor conditions. Typically it doesn't meet safety standards. I have cases now, for example, involving counterfeit Botox. The active ingredient in Botox is deadly in dosages over a certain amount to a shocking extent. This has an effect on legitimate business in a really negative way, so they aren't able to run their businesses successfully to the extent that they typically can and they'll lose revenue. They can't hire as many people. They don't pay as much in taxes. It degrades their brand, and things like that, and that affects everyone in society. If taxes aren't paid, schools can't be funded, roads can't be fixed, law enforcement can't be funded, and those are really big problems. I think about 10 years ago, the last time I read an economic study that was done in Los Angeles, the county lost over \$5 billion in revenue in one year from counterfeiting and piracy alone. That's just the county of Los Angeles. That's not to talk about the impact on the entire state in the country which is probably in the--actually I know it to be the case--in the hundreds of billions of dollars annually. It also funds organized crime, and a lot of the individuals that produce and distribute these goods are connected to organized crime such as street gangs, such as terrorist organizations like Hezbollah for example, and people can go look this up. This is all publicly available information. There have been congressional hearings held on this topic. There have been international investigations by the Department of Justice in these areas, and groups like Hezbollah again come to the United States or they have operatives here who sell things like counterfeit tobacco, cigarettes, make a lot of money, and they send it back to fund other illicit activities. It's not every case. A lot of people who are running businesses who are not connected to organized crime also do this simply because it's extremely profitable, and until they are met with some sort of amount of education or consequence that typically doesn't stop, so you know, it's difficult but it impacts every level of society, in my opinion, in a very detrimental way, and I think it's super important. And going back to your initial point about how difficult it is to prosecute these cases, I think one of the most important points that I could make is that it really takes dedicated professionals who specialize in this area over a long period of time to be effective. That goes for attorneys as well as it goes for law enforcement investigators. It's important on both ends. You have to have special teams that know how to do this, know how to do the investigations properly, cleanly, and it takes time. It takes time to actually effectuate a result, you know,

usually multiple investigations into a person or a location or a business before you can really act on it in an effective way. But it's entirely worth it, and I'm of the very strong opinion that, and that's me speaking for myself, as a prosecutor working in this area. I can't speak for the office more broadly, but they have been very supportive of us, is that every law enforcement agency should have a dedicated team in this area. It's necessary, and it's really important. It's easy to overlook, but once you start educating people about it, even the bench and jurors, you know, a lot of judges that I meet are not familiar with this area. And when they do jury trials, a lot of the jurors aren't, but this is LA, so we'll have entertainment industry people on our juries, and they will be fashion designer sometimes or film, you know, screenwriters, and they understand what intellectual property is a little more at a sophisticated level, so they get it.

Leah Evert-Burks: Mm hmm. Well, I think, as I said, you know, LA is a trendsetter and a leader in so many ways, and I certainly think in IP prosecution, the LA city attorney's office holds that role. So, Sasha, thank you for joining me today in Brand Protection Stories. I do want to ask you one final question, and that's if you could describe these cases in one word, what would it be?

Sasha Lazarevich: Persistent.

Leah Evert-Burks: That is a characteristic that you and Kevin have.

Sasha Lazarevich: It's not just us, but it's also the individuals and businesses that we deal with. I would say that you're dealing with a systemic issue, in a sense, and it requires persistency to really deal with it, you know. A lot of effort over a long period of time, a lot of patience and steadiness and repetitive action is necessary.

Leah Evert-Burks: Right, with great results. Again, thank you, and you know, thank you to you and to the Los Angeles City Attorney's office for doing the hard work.

Sasha Lazarevich: Thank you so much for having us, Leah. We really appreciate the opportunity.

Leah Evert-Burks: Sasha and her prosecution partner Kevin Gilligan through the exceptional support of the City Attorney of Los Angeles, continue to pursue counterfeiters within their city's limits. This is even when the cases prove to be extremely time consuming and difficult – driven by the priority to combat what this criminal sector supports and the dangers counterfeits present to the citizens of the second largest U.S. City, whether it be apparel, consumer goods, pharma or toys. In line with the office's mission, among other priorities, to play a "leading role in shaping the future of our city by fighting to improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods, reducing gang activity, preventing gun violence, standing up for consumers, the elderly, and protecting our environment.

Leah Evert-Burks: Now is the time to reclaim lost revenue, protect your consumer's safety, and your brand's reputation. Digimarc's digital watermark is a covert code easily applied to physical products, online images, digital documents, and product packaging. Digimarc brand protection works on its own, or as additional layers of security in your existing brand protection strategy, and supply chain Ecosystem. Digimarc has decades of anti-counterfeit experience working with governments, and now applies its proprietary watermark towards protecting and authenticating genuine assets across a wide range of industries. Find out more about how to protect your brand by visiting [Digimarc dot com slash protection](https://www.digimarc.com/brand-protection).

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Leah Evert-Burks: In the next episode we hear from Josh Mayers, ex-NYPD, FBI Special Agent, Firearms Instructor and Hostage Negotiator – he also worked counterterrorism, was in SWAT, taught interviewing and interrogation, as well as undercover operations, Josh is now teaching at University of Wisconsin Center for Law, Society & Justice - but he was also the FBI Case Agent on the notorious Sinovel trade secret theft case- where a search warrant was issued to search...a wind turbine. Join us to hear a cautionary story about the dangers often overlooked in corporate mergers and acquisitions.

Leah Evert-Burks: Thanks for joining us today for this edition of *Brand Protection Stories*, produced by the Center for Anti-Counterfeiting and Product Protection (or A-CAPP) @ Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI. Please visit us @ a-capp.msu.edu. A-CAPP is a non-profit organization founded in 2009. It is the first and only academic body focusing upon the complex global issues of anti-counterfeiting and product protection of all products, across all industries, in all markets. In addition to this series, we offer certificate courses in brand protection, applied education and academic courses, executive education, student internships, live summits and virtual events, ground-breaking research, and publish the quarterly digital industry journal, *The Brand Protection Professional*."

Leah Evert-Burks: Thank you to this episode's sponsor Digimarc.

Leah Evert-Burks: This is Leah Evert-Burks with A-CAPP. Until our next session, keep protecting your brands, and the world's consumers. Keep it real."