

CI contributor Chang Wang's new venture helps Americans and Europeans understand China

Editor's Note: Three law professors from Europe, the U.S. and China co-founded Kingsfield Law Office in 2015. The firm serves clients interested in doing business in China and to help Chinese clients to understand the U.S. and European legal systems. China Insight interviewed Chang Wang about his law practice with Kingsfield Law Office



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RUSSELL K.L. LEU



CHANG WANG

China Insight (CI): Please tell us how you picked "Kingsfield Law Office" as the firm's name since it is not the last name of any of the partners?

Wang: Law Professor Charles Kingsfield is the main character in John Jay Osborn Jr.'s 1971 novel "The Paper Chase," which was made into a 1973 film of the same title. The novel and the movie are considered most accurate depictions about American-style legal education. Kingsfield was played by John Houseman, a British-American actor, who won both Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor and Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actor for this role.

The three partners of Kingsfield Law Office are law professors: Alexander H.E. Morawa, former associate dean of the University of Lucerne Faculty of Law, Switzerland, is an internationally renowned expert in international human rights law, public international law, and comparative constitutional law. Russell Leu, associate dean for internationalization at Beijing Foreign Studies University Law School, is a seasoned attorney specializing in cross-border transactions and foreign direct investments in the U.S. and China. I am a senior associate professor of law at China University of Political Science and Law, the largest law university in Asia. I also teach law at the University of Minnesota Law School.

All three of us went to law school in the U.S. and now practice and teach law. We borrowed the name of a good law professor whose most famous statement to his students is: "You teach yourselves the law, but I train your minds. You come in here with a skull full of mush; you leave thinking like a lawyer."

CI: What are Kingsfield's practice areas?

Wang: Our three primary practice areas are foreign investments and due diligence, immigration law, and art law.

Foreign investments and due diligence. From setting up business entities to regulatory compliance, our bilingual attorneys are experienced in complex cross-border transactions and negotiations. Our investigative team regularly conducts due diligence investigations on Chinese businesses and institutions. On average, we set up 10 new companies and conduct 20 due diligence investigations each year for investment and joint-venture purposes.

Immigration law. Kingsfield Law of-

fers complete services in all areas of immigration law, with particular emphasis on employment-based immigration (EB1 and EB5). We have first-hand experience in customizing client portfolios to securing authoritative expert support letters, crafting interdisciplinary documents and authoring persuasive petition letters. Our attorneys have filed and been approved on more than 100 immigration petitions on behalf of prominent foreign artists, academics, journalists, athletes, scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs.

Art law. Our attorneys are both lawyers and art historians by training and our art appraisers are particularly skilled at authentication and evaluation of Asian artifacts and contemporary Chinese artworks. Our firm also partners with publishers in the United States and China to publish artist and exhibition catalogs, independent author's books and translated works. Currently we are representing 32 artists in the US, China, and Europe.

We also are growing two other areas: human rights and education law. Morawa is working with leading law schools in Brazil to develop an international legal education program in Washington, D.C., and our firm will provide legal service to the program.

CI: How will the recent U.S.-China trade war affect your China practice?

Wang: The trade war deters investors, restricts international mobility, hurts domestic businesses and consumers more than the trade rivals. Raw material prices increase, international shipments blocked by customs inspections, foreign brands facing boycotts and smear campaign. International business landscape is being shook and re-shaped, traditional rules and protocols abandoned, new power structure emerged. So Kingsfield is committed to assisting American companies to understand and navigate the complicated legal and regulatory environment in China, and to advise Chinese companies on the U.S. immigration, tax, and employment law matters.

Senior Partner Leu has considerable experience handling both international, corporate and cross-border transactions related to a PRC inbound practice as well as advising clients on U.S. corporate and real estate matters. He routinely assists outbound and international clients with their U.S. interests. All members of Kingsfield's U.S.-China Practice team are qualified and licensed to

handle corporate, financing and real estate matters in the U.S. and China.

U.S.-China relations are not at their best currently. We, as legal professionals and counsels, are committed to helping our clients navigate the difficult legal landscapes in both countries, identify new opportunities, and manage risks.

CI: What is your take on the arrest of Ms. Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's CFO, who is wanted by the U.S. authority for potential violations of the U.S. law?

Wang: It is a legal matter being played out politically, unfortunately, by both sides. The Chinese authority does not believe that our legal system is independent and free from political influences, so they overreact and retaliate. President Donald Trump's intention to use this case as a bargaining chip in trade negotiation is not helpful. His claim to "intervene" plays right into the hands of the Chinese authority and undermines the U.S.'s argument that we respect the rule of law and judicial independence. This incident has ignited nationalist fervor in China, and we can expect the anti-Chinese sentiment in the U.S. will increase accordingly.

CI: I notice Professor Morawa and you are immigrants, and Professor Leu was born in the U.S. of Chinese descent and immigration practice is one of your major practices. How do you feel about the current state of immigration law?

Wang: Immigration law is becoming a very hot practice area in the law. It is deeply personal to Morawa and me as we have first-hand experience in the immigration law process. Our academic and artistic backgrounds have enhanced our immigration law practice in multiple ways: from evaluating applicants' credentials and customizing client portfolios to securing authoritative expert support letters and authoring persuasive petition letters in various disciplines (e.g., art, law, journalism, and information technology).

We are cautious about the anti-immigration rhetoric of the current administration. Recently Morawa and I co-authored an op-ed article for BBC Chinese. The article, titled "The Meaning of 'A Nation of Immigrants'," reviewed U.S. immigration law and recent developments and controversies on immigration in the U.S. "A Nation of Immigrants" is the title of President J.F. Kennedy's 1958 book, still a most worthy and relevant contribution to the contemporary debate on immigration reform. We are surprised to see the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) remove this phrase from its mission statement in February 2018. We ended our op-ed by quoting President Ronald Reagan's 1988 speech:

America represents something universal in the human spirit. I received a letter not long ago from a man who said, 'You can go to Japan to live, but you cannot become Japanese. You can go to France to live and not become a Frenchman. You can go to live in Germany or Turkey, and you won't become a German or a Turk.' But then he added, 'Anybody from any corner of the world can come to America to live and become an American.'

Our op-ed article on immigration, through the official Twitter account of BBC Chinese, reached 1.3 million readers worldwide with positive feedbacks. ♦



BBC Chinese op-ed article by Alexander Morawa and Chang Wang