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Worldwise: Former Pro Football Player and Real Estate Investor Jerome Nichols' Favorite Things

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Jerome Nichols, co-founder of capital fund Standard Real Estate Investments.
Courtesy Jerome Nichols

Sixteen years after ending his pro football career, Jerome Nichols is still working to level the playing field. As co-founder of capital fund Standard Real Estate Investments, Nichols is putting his muscle behind broader access to development capital.

"Our mission is to advance diversity and inclusion generally, and we use real estate as the medium for that," the onetime Washington Redskins defensive tackle tells *Penta* from Los Angeles, where he lives with his wife and two children. "There's an under-appreciation of businesspeople and communities of diverse backgrounds. And there's a lot of value that can be created at the asset level, in neighborhoods, by people who wouldn't normally get the opportunity for access."

Until he launched Standard Real Estate Investments in 2020, Nichols was a senior director at commercial real-estate behemoth CBRE, overseeing more than US\$7 billion in investments over a 15-year career. He and co-founder Robert Jue, a fellow CBRE alumnus, saw an opening to serve smaller players who often get overlooked by giant funders.

Headquartered in L.A. and Washington, D.C., Standard Real Estate Investments is "first and foremost market-rate, return-driven investors," says Nichols, 40. "We're advancing our mission in a way that's commercial, and we believe our mission will drive returns." In their new venture, Nichols and Jue raise money from institutions including pensions, family offices, foundations, and endowments and manage that capital. For real-estate projects, "we seek out local development partners who have boots on the ground. I've been pleasantly surprised at the number and quality of people in the market that I hadn't been exposed to before starting the firm."

Blind spots among institutional investors can produce lopsided development in neighborhoods and cities, Nichols says. "Many of these places are underinvested, but have the same demographics and demand drivers that other neighborhoods do. You can literally see one side of the street for half the price of the other side of the street."

As it grows, the firm is also "part of a larger movement for change," Nichols says. "Most minorities or women in institutional real estate investment didn't get a job because their uncle knew someone. They probably had to work harder, longer, and smarter. They can feel underappreciated at very big companies. We give them autonomy."

Nichols shared a few of his favorite things with *Penta*.

The emerging neighborhoods I have my eye on include... in Washington, D.C., it's Wards 7 and 8, usually referred to as "east of the river." It's got waterfront, proximity, transit, opportunities, and it's undervalued.

The person who's inspired me most is... Quintin E. Primo III, the founder and CEO of [US\$14 billion fund] Capri Capital. He's a generational mentor for me. I interned with his firm in business school. As a Black man, it was very impactful.

Right now, I'm reading... Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now*. It's been especially impactful for me recently. There's so much going on outside of you. People tend to focus on things they can't change and which only matter if you worry about them. *Doing* is all that really matters.

The biggest misconception about Los Angeles is... that it's all Hollywood. There are so many different pockets and neighborhoods. It really has everything. You just have to go find it.

My go-to spot for a power lunch or breakfast is... I'll eat in the office. We're in Neuehouse in Hollywood. It's great, and very high-touch, with great food and beverage service. It's like a full-service hotel, but with coworking. I have to get out of there before evening, because the cool kids come in, and I can't hang.

I will not fly without... AirPods. A sleep mask. And my CLEAR pass. I'm on planes all the time, but I'm always walking onto the plane as it's taking off.

On my personal playlist, you'll hear... I'm a '90s/2000s dancehall and reggae person. Capleton, Sizzla, Busy Signal, those kinds of folks.