

CUSTOM CONTENT  
JANUARY 25, 2021

# MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**W**ITH LOS ANGELES THE MELTING POT THAT IT IS, WE'RE TRULY A NATIONAL LEADER WHEN IT COMES TO INFLUENTIAL minorities and diverse workplaces – and the field of law is no exception. There are some particularly stellar minority attorneys in the LA region and we've alphabetically listed 95 outstanding professionals here, with insights and information about their careers, practice and successes they've achieved.

Congratulations to the class of 2021 who made this list and thank you for working to keep the people and businesses of Los Angeles protected.

MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

Letter from the Publisher



We're pleased to share our Minority Leaders of Influence: Attorneys special edition. Based on California Bar Association statistics, the percentage of overall attorneys practicing in California today, who also happen to be minorities, has been steadily growing since the 1970s. In 1974, for example, California's legal profession was made up of less than 5% minority practitioners, while last year that statistic reached 22%. While there is still much work to be done in terms of achieving a balance that reflects the diversity of our state's general population, the statistics continue to improve at a steady clip. The number of minority attorneys newly licensed by the bar last year, in fact, was a solid 47%, so the future looks bright in terms of increasing diversity.

There are some particularly stellar minority attorneys in the Los Angeles region who happen to be from a broad cultural spectrum.

For our coverage in this issue, we accepted nominations from our readers, the legal profession, and businesses throughout the region. From there, we narrowed down those considered to be particularly impactful on the legal scene, while serving as trusted advisors, along with maintaining the highest professional and ethical standards. We thank them all for their significant contributions to the Los Angeles business and legal community at large.

Congratulations to each of the superb legal professionals who made the class of 2021.

With respect and appreciation,

Josh Schimmels  
Publisher & CEO  
Los Angeles Business Journal

The best leaders inspire  
us to soar higher.

YC YUKEVICH | CAVANAUGH



Delmar S. Thomas, Partner

Yukevich | Cavanaugh is proud to congratulate our **Partner Delmar S. Thomas**, for being named by the *Los Angeles Business Journal* to the **Minority Leaders of Influence: Attorneys** list.

yukelaw.com

# HUESTON HENNIGAN LLP

Congratulations

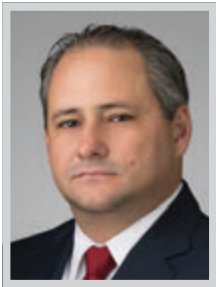


**MOEZ M. KABA**  
**VICKI CHOU**

**Minority Leaders of Influence: Attorneys**  
*—Los Angeles Business Journal*



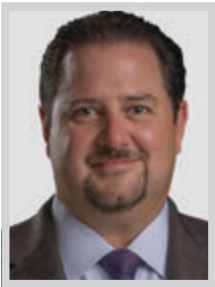
MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**ADAM ABRAHMS**  
*Member of the Firm*  
Epstein Becker & Green, P.C.

Adam C. Abrahms is a member of the firm in the Employment, Labor & Workforce Management and Health Care & Life Sciences practices, in Epstein Becker Green’s (EBG’s) Los Angeles office. He serves as national co-chair of EBG’s Labor Management Relations Group and a member of the firm’s Board of Directors, as well as a member of the firm’s national ELWM Steering Committee.

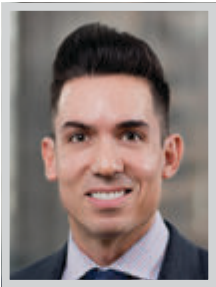
Abrahms has dedicated his practice exclusively to representing employers in their labor relations needs on a national basis, having handled matters on the ground in over 20 states, aiding employers in developing strategies to remain union-free and, in organized operations, to securing and expanding management rights. He has one of the largest practices of its kind in the market. Abrahms is frequently called upon by employers from across the nation to provide strategic guidance and representation on their most complicated labor relations issues.



**SEAN ANDRADE**  
*Partner*  
Andrade Gonzalez LLP

Sean Andrade is an exceptionally talented and creative lawyer who is well known for his ongoing representation of the nation’s second largest school district, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), playing a critical role in leading the District through the recent chapter of numerous difficult and complex, multi-plaintiff tort matters and the subsequent high-stakes efforts to obtain insurance coverage for those same multi-million litigations. He has led the defense in multi-plaintiff cases and the plaintiff-side of the insurance recovery efforts in cases involving hundreds of millions of dollars.

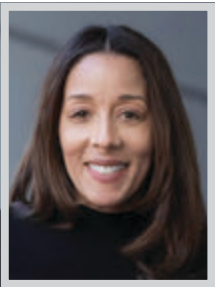
Over the past nine years, Andrade has played a critical role in leading LAUSD through the Miramonte Litigation – the largest sexual abuse litigation ever facing a public school system – and other major, multi-plaintiff sexual abuse cases. Last year, he led LAUSD to a major win resulting in the losing insurer paying more than \$21 million to the School District for defense costs with interest.



**MATTHEW BENEDETTO**  
*Partner*  
WilmerHale

Matthew Benedetto is a litigation partner in WilmerHale’s Los Angeles office with over ten years of experience representing clients in complex civil, criminal and regulatory matters, often involving crisis management and public policy responses. Benedetto has extensive experience representing pharmaceutical companies, health-care companies and financial institutions in both federal and state False Claims Act (FCA) and whistleblower actions. In the healthcare space, he has unique experience litigating California’s Insurance Frauds Prevention Act, a qui tam statute in the Insurance Code, including arguing before the California Court of Appeal.

Benedetto is a national thought-leader on FCA issues, speaking and publishing widely on the topic, most recently on FCA risks posed by the federal government’s response to COVID-19 via the CARES Act. Benedetto also represents clients facing a range of challenges outside of whistleblower actions. Benedetto also serves on WilmerHale’s Pro Bono and Public Service Committee.



**GINA BIBBY**  
*Partner and Global Head of the Fashion Tech Practice*  
Withersworldwide

Gina Bibby is a partner in the Withers corporate team and is the global head of Withers’ Fashion Tech practice. Bibby’s practice focuses on technology, fashion, and fashion technology, helping clients protect their innovation through commercial agreements, and patent, trademark and copyright procurement and litigation. She leads a global practice focused on advising fashion tech clients on matters involving corporate formation, venture capital, corporate transactions, real estate, privacy, e-commerce, intellectual property, and more.

Bibby routinely handles matters involving data privacy, e-commerce, intellectual property and technology licensing, and intellectual property counseling. She has significant trial experience handling complex intellectual property, unfair competition, and trade secret disputes. Bibby is also a registered patent attorney and is admitted to practice in the US District Courts for the Northern District of California, the Central District of California and the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.



**WILLIAM BRIGGS II**  
*Partner*  
Venable LLP

William J. Briggs, II, a partner with Venable LLP and a member of the Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners, is recognized as a leading trial lawyer and civil litigator, with extensive experience in matters pertaining to the entertainment industry. With over 30 years of experience, Briggs has been successful in representing some of the most recognizable names in the film, television, music, and sports industries. His clients include actors, musicians, comedians, producers, high-net-worth individuals, athletes, and entertainers.

Because of his substantial courtroom capabilities, Briggs has helped defeat multi-million-dollar claims brought against his clients. His practice focuses on disputes that involve trademarks, copyrights, the First Amendment, defamation, invasion of privacy, right of publicity, guild disputes, profit participation, royalty payments, violations of the Talent Agencies Act, and interpretation and enforcement of talent, executive, distribution, film, and recording contracts.



**JOSHUA BRIONES**  
*Managing Member*  
Mintz

Joshua Briones is a son of immigrant farm workers who came to the United States from Mexico to work in the fields of Northern California. At young age when most boys were playing with Hot Wheels, Briones was already riding on a tractor with his dad and by age 8 he was working in the fields starting his day before sunrise. His hard work ethic at an early age was the fuel that helped him succeed later in life.

Today Briones is managing member of Mintz’s Los Angeles office and is a highly experienced trial lawyer with a national practice. He has received awards and national recognition for his innovative approach to the defense of bet-the-company litigation. He has represented clients in such industries as financial services, building products, retail, pharmaceuticals, automotive, professional sports, food and beverage, petroleum, chemical manufacturing, health care, high technology, and higher education.



**MICHAEL BROPHY**  
*Partner and U.S. Regional Divisional Leader*  
Withersworldwide

Michael Brophy is a partner in Withers’ trust, estate and inheritance disputes team and as of July 1, 2020, has been regional divisional leader of the firm’s US Private Client & Tax (PCT) division that consists of nearly 100 attorneys. Brophy has extensive experience representing prominent individuals, families, charities, corporate trustees, private professional fiduciaries and creditors in high-stakes litigation involving complex trusts and estates. His practice covers a broad range of complex matters including, among others, will and trust contests, accounting disputes, breach of duty actions, elder abuse and conservatorship disputes and other contested probate and fiduciary-related matters.

Brophy also has experience in business and commercial litigation, including contract, real estate, copyright, Lanham Act, trade secret, and unfair competition matters. In addition to litigation and trial work, his practice includes risk assessment and counseling, alternative dispute resolution, and administrative proceedings.



**LARISSA CALVA-RUIZ**  
*Associate*  
Frankfurt Kurnit Klein & Selz, PC

Larissa Calva-Ruiz is a key member of the Frankfurt Kurnit Entertainment Law Group based in Los Angeles. She is one of a very small community of Latina lawyers with expertise in entertainment finance. After working as corporate in house counsel in the biggest bread company in the world, Grupo Bimbo, Calva-Ruiz moved to the US in 2007 to earn her LL.M degree and join Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton. In 2015, Calva-Ruiz joined Akin Gump as a corporate lawyer working on cross-border transactions, and later on the business of entertainment.

Calva-Ruiz joined Frankfurt Kurnit in 2019, cementing her practice in entertainment finance, and expanding her practice into film and television production and distribution. In the past year, Calva-Ruiz has continued to work on high-profile entertainment industry projects. She was part of the team representing Sherborne Media Capital in its portion of a \$135 million film financing for Roland Emmerich’s Moonfall.



## CONGRATULATIONS

Russ August & Kabat proudly congratulates our partners and colleagues,  
**Irene Lee** and **Benjamin Wang**,  
on being named among the  
**2021 MINORITIES OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS.**

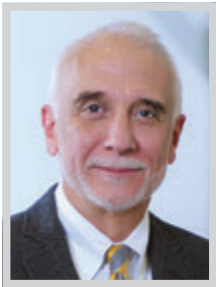


Russ August & Kabat focuses on representing plaintiffs in patent, trademark, copyright infringement and complex business litigation matters, intellectual property protection and licensing, mergers & acquisitions, and real property transactions and litigation.

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12424 Wilshire Boulevard, 12th Floor Los Angeles, California 90025

MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**RALPH CAMPILLO**  
*Member*  
Mintz

Ralph Campillo is a Cuban native who came to the US as part of the Peter Pan Kids program in the early 1960s. Campillo went on to pursue the American dream and graduated from USC in 1973 with a BS degree magna cum laude and later graduated with a JD from UC Davis in 1976. Campillo has always practiced in Los Angeles and joined Mintz in 2017 and his addition added critical depth to Mintz’s already experienced team of California litigators, particularly in the complex tort, product liability and commercial litigation. Since his arrival, he has shaped the Product Liability Practice into a powerhouse team serving Mintz’s deep roster of sophisticated clients. With an unparalleled track record in high-profile cases involving product liability, mass torts, commercial disputes, and other complex litigation matters, Campillo is one of the nation’s foremost trial lawyers.



**RICARDO P. CESTERO**  
*Partner*  
Greenberg Glusker LLP

Ricardo Cestero is an entertainment litigation partner at Greenberg Glusker LLP. Cestero is best known for developing creative strategies and winning arguments for his clients – celebrities, athletes, and sports and entertainment companies – in a wide range of entertainment-related disputes and lawsuits. His practice also extends beyond the entertainment industry to complex commercial litigation involving partnership, contract, and real estate disputes. Cestero has particular expertise in First Amendment issues, such as defamation and restraint of speech, as well as extensive experience handling motion picture and television production and distribution disputes and profit participation cases. Over the years handling these types of disputes, Ricardo has built a reputation for delivering exceptional legal work. His clients include Golden Boy Promotions, Oscar De La Hoya, Univision Communications Inc., Univision Networks and Studios, The Tolkien Trust, Private Internet Access, Inc., MD Insider, Inc., Tricolor Auto Group, and Ganas Auto.



**CAMILLA CHAN**  
*Partner*  
Raines Feldman LLP

Camilla Chan is a partner in the litigation department at Raines Feldman LLP. She is a vigorous advocate for her clients – often finding that the best outcomes are reached outside the courtroom. She has experience handling a diverse mix of litigation matters, including real estate, entertainment and business contracts disputes. Chan works to develop creative strategies for litigating cases and to efficiently manage litigation matters from inception through judgment. Recent matters Chan has handled include representing a partner in a cannabis dispensary in Marina Del Rey, where a partnership dispute involved allegations of fraud and breach of contract, which was successfully settled. She also represented an IT management company and certain partners in another partnership dispute arising after the termination of one founding partner, where the dispute involved claims for breach of contract and breach of fiduciary duty and cross-claims including misappropriation of trade secrets, breach of fiduciary duty, and fraud.



**CYNDIE CHANG**  
*Office Managing Partner*  
Duane Morris LLP

Cyndie Chang is a dynamic and inspirational leader in her law firm and the legal industry. She was president of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) in 2016-17, which serves as the national voice of the APA legal community, and the Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association (SCCLA). She is on Duane Morris LLP’s governing Partners Board and is the firm’s Los Angeles managing partner, the first Asian American female to serve in that role in the firm’s over 100 year history. She is also an experienced trial litigator, who is passionate about understanding and partnering with her clients in identifying business concerns, creatively resolving disputes, and mitigating risk and litigation. She has tried cases to verdict as first chair in various venues, but has also avoided cases from litigation through listening and identifying practical solutions and opportunities for settlement.



**VICKI CHOU**  
*Partner*  
Hueston Hennigan LLP

Vicki Chou, a recognized rising star and accomplished trial lawyer, is a key member of both the Trial Practice and the White Collar and Investigations teams at Hueston Hennigan LLP. She represents individuals and companies in high stakes business disputes and criminal matters, including complex commercial litigation, intellectual property matters, SEC enforcement actions, and white collar criminal defense. Since joining Hueston Hennigan, Chou has earned leadership roles in several of the nation’s most high-profile bet-the-company cases. She has also been involved with developing strategies related to the defense of some of the highest profile defendants and in terminating high-stakes criminal investigations. She has earned praise from clients and colleagues achieving her client’s objectives. Chou is a seasoned trial and appellate attorney who recently served as an assistant United States attorney in the Central District of California in both the Criminal and National Security Divisions and was a deputy chief.



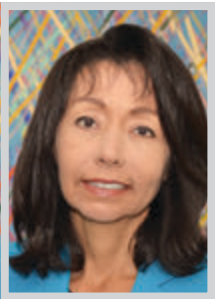
**MICHELLE A. COOKE**  
*Partner; Leader of Manatt’s Intellectual Property Protection and Enforcement Practice*  
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP

Michelle Cooke is a nationally recognized attorney and the go-to advisor for companies navigating global market expansion, brand development and entrance into the digital landscape, as well as those facing complex, multijurisdictional trademark disputes. As leader of Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP’s intellectual property protection and enforcement practice, Cooke is known for the breadth and depth of her knowledge of the intellectual property landscape both in the United States and abroad. She counts well-known entertainment, multimedia, software, apparel and consumer products companies among her clients. Alongside her role leading the firm’s intellectual property practice, Cooke is a member of Manatt’s Board of Directors and a member of the firm’s Strategic Growth and Recruiting Committee. She also serves as chair of Manatt’s Committee for Diversity & Inclusion (CD&I), a committee appointed by the firm’s board.



**VICTOR DE LA CRUZ**  
*Partner; Leader of Manatt’s Land Use Practice*  
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP

Leader of Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP’s nationally recognized land use practice, Victor De la Cruz has successfully guided his clients through complex land use matters at the intersection of law and government for nearly 20 years. Through his record of success, De la Cruz has cemented his position as the go-to advisor for entitlements and California Environmental Quality Act matters for the companies and institutions that are shaping Southern California’s landscape with prominent high-value developments. De la Cruz’s clients include developers, institutions, high-net-worth individuals, for-profit companies and nonprofits. Notable clients include Mount Saint Mary’s University, the American Music and Dramatic Academy, Athens Services, Republic Metropolitan, Colas Rail, Foot Locker, Sun Communities, and Oportun. An outspoken supporter of the advancement of underrepresented communities, he is an active member of the Board of Directors of Bet Tzdek Legal Services, the Mexican American Bar Foundation, Uncommon Good and Community Partners.



**DORA DE LA ROSA**  
*Associate*  
Glaser Weil LLP

Dora de la Rosa is an associate in Glaser Weil’s Real Estate department. Her path to Glaser Weil has been non-traditional. The daughter of Mexican immigrants who came to the United States via the Bracero Program in the 1940s and 1950s, she was born in Los Angeles and attended LAUSD schools. She received a B.A. in History from UC Berkeley and a J.D. from Boalt Hall, UC Berkeley. After years of “Big Law” experience, de la Rosa was thrilled to join Glaser Weil. Years of government service have helped in her representation of Los Angeles County, among other Glaser Weil clients. Among her notable transactions have been the redevelopment of the Victoria Golf Course in Carson and the redevelopment of several major commercial/residential projects in Marina del Rey. de la Rosa continues to volunteer with various charitable organizations and serves on the firm’s Diversity Committee.



MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**ROCKARD “ROCKY” DELGADILLO**  
*Partner*  
DLA Piper

Rockard “Rocky” Delgadillo has more than 30 years of experience in litigation, economic development transactions, and government law and public policy, including serving an eight-year tenure as the City of Los Angeles City Attorney. As the city’s chief lawyer and chief criminal prosecutor, Delgadillo led more than 550 attorneys who comprise the second largest municipal law firm in the nation. He was the first Latino to win citywide office in more than 100 years when he was elected in 2001.

Today, as a partner in DLA Piper’s Los Angeles office, Delgadillo works closely with a variety of local companies to offer advice on strategic development and growth. Among his recent work has been advising an aerospace manufacturer in matters related to the pandemic, while assisting the company in acquisitions; and guiding real estate investment firm Square Mile Capital Management in the opening of an eight-story, 253-room, 206,000 square foot Hilton Hotel in Santa Monica.



**WILLIAM DELGADO**  
*Partner*  
DTO Law

A relentless litigator with an unmatched obsession for superior results, Will Delgado represents huge names such as Costco, Target, Honda, and Nature’s Bounty, among others, and approaches litigation with a clear focus: win, as fast as possible. To do that, he dives into his clients’ business so that he has a clear understanding of what matters, what doesn’t, what creates leverage, and what triggers a successful outcome.

In his over 15 years of practice, Delgado has litigated and tried numerous cases ranging from straightforward commercial matters to complex patent cases. Currently, he focuses his practice on intellectual property and class action defense. He has litigated intellectual property claims in numerous district courts, including the Eastern District of Texas and the District of Delaware as well as appeared before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit and the International Trade Commission.



**MARISSA DENNIS**  
*Partner, Office Operating Partner*  
*of Los Angeles Office*  
Allen Matkins

Marissa M. Dennis is a litigation partner in the Los Angeles office of Allen Matkins where she was recently appointed office operating partner. She also serves as the co-chair of the firm’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Her litigation practice is focused on commercial, real estate, and financial services litigation.

Dennis commonly represents commercial landlords, tenants and developers in a variety of breach of contract and tort actions, as well as national lenders and servicers in complex consumer finance litigation. She also has extensive experience representing technology companies in unfair competition and false advertising claims, including in multiple class actions. Dennis has chaired numerous jury trials, bench trials, and arbitrations, and has argued before the California Court of Appeal and federal and state courts throughout California. A large portion of her practice of late has been representing landlords and tenants in Fair Market Rent disputes.



**ANET DRAPALSKI**  
*Partner*  
Fisher Phillips LLP

As a partner at Fisher Phillips, Anet Drapalski serves as a key advisor to employers across California in a diverse group of industries, including technology, hospitality, fashion, financial services and automotive/autonomous vehicles. She defends employers against a wide range of employment law claims, including disability, race, age, and gender discrimination, sexual harassment, retaliation, and unlawful termination of employment. Drapalski also defends employers against wage and hour class action claims and representative claims under the Private Attorney General Act.

In addition, Drapalski works to prevent litigation by providing preventative counseling for employers. This includes updating and providing advice regarding the status of California’s many changing laws, sound personnel policies, sexual harassment and human resources training, implementation of leave policies, employee defection and trade secrets, employee classification, and compliance with workplace regulations. Drapalski was born in Jalisco, Mexico and is fluent in Spanish.

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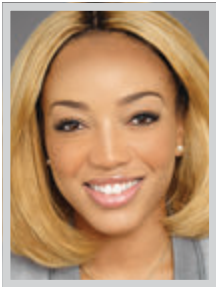
Los Angeles Business Journal

2021 Minority Leaders of Influence

**Mercedes O. Martin**  
Shareholder

**Masahisa Mitsunaga**  
Shareholder

MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**SIERRA ELIZABETH**  
*Partner*  
Kirkland & Ellis LLP

Since joining Kirkland, Sierra Elizabeth has become one of the top litigation partners in Kirkland's Los Angeles office. She is a cornerstone of Kirkland's Black community, and a passionate advocate for the advancement of disadvantaged populations. She continues to be a leading figure at Kirkland serving as co-chair of the firm's Racial and Ethnic Diversity subcommittee. Elizabeth has taken a leading role in many complex and high-profile commercial litigations. She has represented well over 50 clients in nearly 20 different jurisdictions across the country and abroad, in over 20 industries. She has an impressive client roster including General Motors LLC, 3M, 19 Entertainment and dick clark productions, Goldcrest Film Distribution III Limited, Royal Bank of Scotland, and Toll Bros., who she represents in their most significant litigation including contract and business torts, class actions, product liability and toxic torts, and intellectual property and entertainment matters.



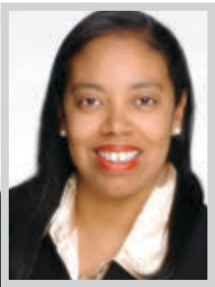
**E. MARTIN ESTRADA**  
*Partner*  
Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP

There's truth to the adage that success begets success, and for trial lawyer Martin Estrada, prominent courtroom wins have led to increasingly complex and high-profile assignments from clients such as Southern California Edison, BNSF Railway, Wells Fargo Bank and Plains All American Pipeline. In fact, there are few Hispanic trial lawyer in Los Angeles whose practice matches the depth and breadth of Estrada's. After seven years at the US Attorney's Office, Estrada rejoined Munger, Tolles & Olson as a partner, where he primarily represents companies and their executives in complex litigation, and conducts sensitive internal investigations. In total, he's tried more than 30 federal and state trials and arbitrations, argued more than a dozen appeals and conducted hundreds of investigations. He served as a member of the firm's management committee from May 2019 until recently, and has now transitioned to the firm's Compensation Committee.



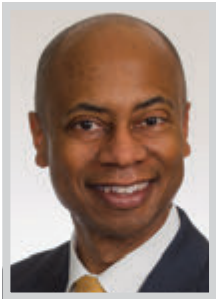
**SHAREEF FARAG**  
*Partner*  
BakerHostetler

Shareef Farag represents employers in all types of litigation and provides comprehensive counseling on employment-related matters. Most significantly, Shareef focuses his practice on managing the most complex and highly sensitive cases including a difficult dispute between a company and a former executive. Employers face challenging issues each day and often turn to Shareef on managing their workforce and mitigating risk. Farag is active in the National Employment Law Council, an organization that strives to be the premiere organization for all experienced management-side labor and management-side employment law attorneys and human resources leaders of color practicing by providing an unparalleled platform for innovative community and relationship-building, meaningful professional advancement, and dynamic mentoring. Farag is also very active with BakerHostetler's Diversity and Inclusion programs and is also active with the California Minority Counsel Program.



**AMBER FINCH**  
*Partner*  
Reed Smith

Amber Finch is a partner in Reed Smith's Los Angeles office. She is also the partner chair of the firm's African American Business Inclusion Group STAARS, (Sustaining and Training African Americans at Reed Smith), which works to increase and support the growth of black lawyers and administrative staff at Reed Smith across all ranks. A member of the firm's Insurance Recovery Group since joining in 2011, Finch has quickly become a go-to lawyer for creating effective risk management solutions. With her litigation background, she has helped her commercial policyholder clients recover hundreds of millions of dollars in insurance proceeds. She represents a litany of clients from start-up businesses to middle market and Fortune 500. She helps companies manage risk by negotiating broader insurance coverage on the front end, negotiating insurance and indemnity provisions in deal contracts, assisting with tender and collection on claims, and litigating insurance and indemnity disputes.



**TERRENCE FRANKLIN**  
*Partner*  
Sacks, Glazier, Franklin & Lodise LLP

Terrence (Terry) Franklin had been practicing trusts and estates litigation for nearly 25 years before he discovered that his legal career was the path to his mission in life – to 'Help Bend the Arc of History Towards Justice' by sharing the story of his family's experience escaping from slavery, nearly two decades before the end of the Civil War. Franklin's efforts in the diversity and inclusion space have been lauded by the legal community. One example is Franklin being "Highly Commended" in the category of "Outstanding Contribution to Furthering the Advancement of Diversity in the Legal Profession." He was also selected by the National Black Lawyers, a professional and educational organization comprised of the nation's premier African American attorneys, for inclusion in its list of Top 100 Lawyers in California. Franklin actively mentors Sacks, Glazier, Franklin & Lodise LLP's minority lawyers and supports them taking leadership roles in organizations to increase their visibility and build their practice.



**MICHAEL GERVAIS**  
*Partner*  
Susman Godfrey LLP

Michael Gervais is an accomplished trial lawyer who represents plaintiffs and defendants in cutting-edge litigation. Most recently, Gervais was one of nine lawyers appointed to the leadership group representing a proposed nationwide class of consumers suing TikTok and its parent company for privacy violations. And last year, he achieved a full defense verdict for energy company Vitol in a major antitrust victory. For the past four years, Gervais has represented a class of indigent misdemeanor arrestees pro bono in a landmark case to challenge the money bail scheme in Harris County, Texas. Along with Civil Rights Corps and the Texas Fair Defense Project, Gervais' work helped secure a sweeping preliminary injunction from a Houston federal judge, who struck down Harris County's money bail system. The decision focused national attention on the countrywide practice of jailing poor people because they are unable to afford bail when arrested for minor offenses.



**ALBERT GIANG**  
*Partner*  
King & Spalding

Albert Giang's cutting-edge practice focuses on defending tech startups and public companies against class actions, regulatory enforcement, and other litigation, and on crisis management for disrupters who are navigating novel legal and regulatory issues. A thought leader in the tech industry, his high-profile clients include Lyft, Postmates, Eaze, TikTok, Weedmaps, and FabFitFun. Giang has built an impressive track record for passionate advocacy on some of the most pressing legal issues – a pillar of influence in the technology, appellate and pro bono fields. In addition to defending clients as outside litigation counsel, Giang serves as "go to" counsel for his clients on issues such as arbitration strategy, platform liability, unfair competition, employment misclassification, the Communications Decency Act, and the Telephone Consumer Protection Act. Last year, he led the team that won a complete dismissal with prejudice of a nationwide class action alleging robotexting by Postmates, in a case with important implications for vicarious liability.



**LISA GILFORD**  
*Partner*  
Sidley Austin LLP

Lisa Gilford is one the preeminent first-chair trial lawyers in the country representing clients in a wide variety of industries, including automotive, pharmaceutical, communications, oil and gas, aerospace and chemical manufacturing, sports and higher education. Her stellar reputation representing big-name clients in class actions, multidistrict litigation, products liability matters and large-scale commercial disputes has earned her multiple accolades from various trade and industry publications. Gilford is particularly adept at handling matters with scientific or technical aspects, and frequently work with and prepare engineers, physicians, computer scientists, economists and other technical experts for deposition and trial. Gilford also serves as the Diversity Committee co-chair of Sidley's Greater Los Angeles offices and is a member of Sidley's CCPA Litigation Task Force. She is consistently at the forefront of influential work targeting women and minorities.



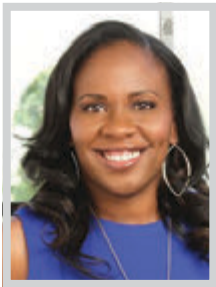
MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**HENRY GONZALEZ**  
*Partner*  
Andrade Gonzalez LLP

Henry H. Gonzalez is a founding partner at Andrade Gonzalez LLP, one of the top minority-owned litigation boutiques in the Los Angeles area. After graduating from Harvard Law School and receiving his bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley, Gonzalez began his legal career at Munger, Tolles & Olson. Initially, he focused his practice on a wide array of commercial litigation, complex and mass torts, and white-collar criminal matters. Gonzalez has expanded his practice to include the defense of public entities, insurance coverage, labor and employment matters, and litigating trademark, misappropriation of trade secrets, and unfair business practices disputes.

Gonzalez has first and second chaired numerous jury and bench trials. He has been part of trial teams that have obtained multi-million dollar verdicts in commercial litigation and employment matters, including first chairing several federal court trials that resulted in multi-million dollar verdicts for his clients for trademark and copyright infringement.



**DEMETRIA L. GRAVES**  
*Certified Family Law Specialist and Managing Partner*  
The Graves Law Firm

Demetria Graves, a certified family law specialist, currently serves as the secretary of the Family Law Executive Committee with the California Lawyers Association. She also currently co-chairs the African American Alumni Association at Loyola Law School and is a mentor to several law students and young attorneys. Graves serves as a Judge Pro Tem with the Los Angeles Superior Court. Additionally, she is an adjunct professor and has taught at Abraham Lincoln Law School and West Los Angeles Community College.

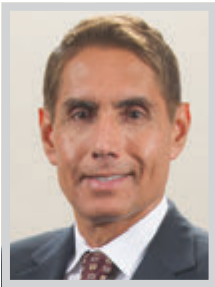
Graves continues to work diligently to ensure diversity in the legal profession and work with her colleagues across all organizations to provide informative programs for lawyers of color and women seeking judicial appointments. Practicing in Family Law, and serving on several boards in California, she has become very aware of the necessity of well-rounded judges and she is beyond dedicated to ensuring that we have bright, diverse, and knowledgeable judges in our community.



**JAMEL A.R. GREER**  
*Associate*  
Akerman LLP

Jamel Greer focuses his practice on representing clients in the higher education and collegiate athletics sector. His experience includes representing higher education institutions in matters involving regulatory and compliance issues at the local, state and federal level, in conducting training for board members on the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Open Meetings Act, and general board governance.

Greer routinely counsels higher education institutions on issues of student and employee privacy, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Greer also handles various investigations involving alleged mistreatment of student-athletes, Title IX discrimination claims, and NCAA investigations involving potential violations by student athletes, coaches and staff. In addition, he represents higher education institutions in litigation matters, and serves as a lead attorney in ongoing concussion litigation involving collegiate student-athletes.



**ROBERT S. GUTIERREZ**  
*Of Counsel*  
Ballard Spahr LL

During a legal career spanning three decades, Robert S. Gutierrez, of counsel in Ballard Spahr's award-winning practices in media, entertainment, and copyright law, has played a leading role in high-profile and landmark cases involving major media outlets and some of the biggest entertainment industry names and companies in Hollywood and beyond. Recently, Gutierrez has maintained his position on the front lines of high-profile battles to protect the rights of his clients in cases with important ramifications not only for his clients, but for the law itself as it relates to copyright, the First Amendment, defamation, and related issues.

Gutierrez is a litigator and counselor who advises clients across the media and entertainment industry, representing them on a spectrum of issues, including contract, ownership, and royalty disputes; idea submission and copyright and trademark infringement claims; and matters involving allegations of defamation, invasion of privacy, and unfair competition.

**Davis Wright Tremaine congratulates our friends and colleagues, Diana Palacios and Giancarlo Urey, for being honored among the Los Angeles Business Journal's 2021 Minority Leaders of Influence: Attorneys list.**



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MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**SUSAN GUTIERREZ**  
*Partner*  
Proskauer

Susan L. Gutierrez is a trial lawyer specializing in high-stakes matters across industries. She is a litigator and advisor to Fortune 500 companies in the consumer products, pharmaceutical, media, entertainment and sports industries, including Creative Artists Agency and the National Basketball Association. Promoted to partner at Proskauer in 2018, she has been trial counsel for multiple clients in complex product liability trials including most recently for Johnson & Johnson in the highly-publicized talcum powder litigation.

Gutierrez has tried multiple high-profile cases to verdict in state and federal courts throughout the country. She also has significant experience coordinating and managing large, complex actions from the pleading stage through discovery and trial, including cross-jurisdiction matters involving multiple parties, counsel, and case issues. Recent key clients include Gilead and Mattel/Fisher Price, among others. When she is not in the courtroom, Gutierrez is fostering diversity in the legal profession.



**PATRICK HARDER**  
*Chair, Infrastructure Group*  
Nossaman

Over the past several years, Patrick Harder – chair of Nossaman’s Infrastructure Group – has served as the leader of the legal team advising on several of the largest, most innovative, most impactful, and most technically complex Public-Private Partnership (P3) projects in the United States and California. These projects include the Convention Center Renovation and Expansion for the City of Los Angeles, the massive \$7 billion Landside Access Management Program (LAMP) at the Los Angeles International Airport – which is currently under construction, and the recently completed UC Merced 2020 project for the University of California Board of Regents. Progress has continued unfettered on many of the projects he leads despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Harder traces his family roots back to the town of Ajijic along Lake Chapala, in the State of Jalisco – his mother was born and raised in the region and he lived there as a child. He has many family members still living in the area.



**MIRA HASHMALL**  
*Partner*  
Miller Barondess, LLP

Mira Hashmall is an experienced litigator who represents clients in all phases of litigation, from pre-litigation counseling to appellate proceedings. She has successfully represented clients in federal and state court jury trials, including healthcare companies, commercial banks, government agencies, and entertainment studios; and has successfully represented clients in federal appeals involving First Amendment claims, insurance coverage issues, defamation and libel claims, and employment disputes.

Hashmall is a Certified Specialist in Appellate Law, The State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization. She developed significant expertise representing clients in appellate proceedings before the U.S. Supreme Court, the California Courts of Appeal, and the Courts of Appeals for the Sixth, Ninth and Tenth Circuits. She has been appellate counsel in matters involving real estate developments, contract disputes, whistle-blower actions and malicious prosecution claims.



**R. STERLING HENDERSON**  
*Partner*  
Gibbs Giden Locher Turner Senet & Wittbrodt

R. Sterling Henderson is a partner practicing in the Los Angeles office of Gibbs Gidden and is licensed in the states of Alaska and Washington. He represents a variety of corporate and individual clients, including business and property owners, general contractors, subcontractors, and material suppliers, in a wide range of complex business, commercial, and construction negotiations and disputes.

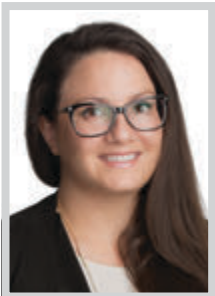
Henderson specializes in the prosecution and defense of litigation matters involving claims for breach of contract and construction-related claims, including construction delay, mechanics liens, payment and performance bonds, and judgment enforcement proceedings. He is also experienced in the defense of civil and administrative malpractice actions and insurance matters, and has advised on several real estate and commercial transactions. Prior to joining Gibbs Giden, Henderson specialized in the defense of medical malpractice and general liability actions.



**VICTOR HSU**  
*Partner*  
Norton Rose Fulbright US LLP

Victor Hsu is a partner in Norton Rose Fulbright’s Los Angeles office, and the head of the firm’s Los Angeles public finance group. Hsu’s municipal securities practice emphasizes public power, transportation, water, wastewater, and general city and county financings. His clients include the Southern California Public Power Authority, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the San Diego County Regional Transportation Commission. He has worked on some of the firm’s most high profile public finance matters over the last several years.

Earlier this year, Hsu was inducted as a fellow of the American College of Bond Counsel (ACBC). This honorary society recognizes “lawyers who have established reputations among their peers for their skill, experience and high standards of professional and ethical conduct in the practice of bond law.” Membership in ACBC is extremely limited and is composed of the nation’s most accomplished lawyers in the field of municipal securities law.



**SHADI ENOS JAHANGIR**  
*Partner*  
Blank Rome LLP

Shadi Enos Jahangir focuses her practice in the areas of commercial lending and corporate finance. She represents financial institutions, leading private equity sponsors, and corporate borrowers in middle-market debt financings and investment-grade credits. Her experience includes widely syndicated, club and single-lender representation in connection with traditional asset-based lending facilities, as well as cross-border financings, restructurings, acquisition financings and recapitalizations. She also represents clients in senior-secured, first-lien/second-lien, mezzanine, unitranche, and unsecured financing transactions.

Her recent work includes representing the world’s largest international live sound reinforcement and touring support company, in an acquisition financing of a leading provider of services in the same industry with operations across the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. She also represented the borrower in the nation’s largest Main Street Loan Program financing issued at the time in connection with the CARES Act.



**ROLAND M. JUAREZ**  
*Partner*  
Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP

Roland Juarez is known for handling high-stakes labor and employment cases for some of California’s largest and most high-profile employers in the service, manufacturing, retail and aerospace industries, successfully defending clients against the most challenging wage and hour, discrimination and non-compete claims facing employers.

Juarez’s innovative courtroom strategies have secured impressive victories for his clients, ranging from using creative arguments concerning jurisdiction to substantially limit client exposure in a matter concerning a California military base; protecting a client’s competitive advantage by applying California’s “trade secret exception” for a manufacturer of well-known personal hygiene products; and repeatedly finding breakthroughs in multiple arbitration wins for a California aerospace giant, including two that went through a full arbitration hearing. With the pandemic, Juarez has taken on emergent novel questions on compensable time brought about by new procedures.



**MOEZ KABA**  
*Partner*  
Hueston Hennigan LLP

Moez Kaba is a co-founder of Hueston Hennigan LLP. He has, at the age of 39, stacked up an enviable record of trial and appellate victories. Kaba has prevailed in trials and arbitrations across the nation, including, most recently, a complete win – on all claims – for Amazon in a breach of contract and tortious interference suit brought against it by eBay.

Kaba has also obtained at trial: a complete defense verdict for renowned research university California Institute of Technology after a four-week jury trial in a \$65 million+ tortious interference and whistleblower case; a jury verdict in favor of entrepreneur William Koch on claims of fraud, deceptive business practices and false advertising related to the sale of counterfeit high-end wine, including a \$12 million punitive damages award; and a complete defense judgment in a wrongful termination suit for the State Bar of California and the former president of its board of trustees.



MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**BRIEN KELLEY**  
Partner  
Sklar Kirsh LLP

Brien R. Kelley is a partner at Sklar Kirsh LLP in the Real Estate Department. His practice focuses on complex real estate transactions, with significant experience in commercial and multi-family residential acquisitions and dispositions and real property secured financing.

Throughout his career, Kelley has successfully represented institutional and family office real estate investors, syndicators, developers, operators and borrowers in a broad range of real-estate related matters. In 2020, he was the sole legal counsel for Tides Equities, LLC, a real estate investment firm based in Los Angeles, in connection with over \$955 million in acquisition and disposition transactions. Among other notable work last year, Kelley represented a client in connection with a \$100 million joint venture portfolio acquisition of three multifamily apartment projects located in Raleigh, North Carolina and a client in connection with the \$83 million joint venture acquisition of a 582-unit apartment community located in Mesa, Arizona.



**IRENE LEE**  
Partner  
Russ August & Kabat

Irene Lee is a partner at Russ August & Kabat, where she focuses her practice on all aspects of intellectual property, including patent, trademark, trade secret, copyright, and IP licensing. She has extensive experience in trademark and copyright prosecution, litigation, and licensing with an emphasis on global brand expansion and content management through strategic IP protection and enforcement programs. In addition, as a registered patent attorney, she counsels clients regarding patent prosecution, acquisition, litigation, and licensing with an eye toward adding value to their businesses.

Lee represents clients in a wide range of industries, including automobile, entertainment, fashion, pharmaceutical, integrated circuits, security and surveillance, housewares, baby products, and food and beverages. Clients from varying industries seek and heed Lee's advice and her peers respect her opinion because of her considered and precise legal analysis balanced against her practical and pragmatic approach to legal problems with real-life solutions.



**RODNEY LEE**  
Partner  
Loeb & Loeb

Rodney Lee, a partner in Loeb & Loeb's Trust & Estates Litigation practice, has always wanted to be a "fixer." He viewed a career in law as his opportunity to help people and become their trusted advisor. And, as an African American man, Lee's uncompromising advocacy for his clients was motivated by the fact that many Black individuals in the upper stratospheres of wealth didn't have someone like him who could forge a clear path to pass wealth on to their future generations. As a result, he made it his mission to fill this need.

Based in Loeb & Loeb's Los Angeles office, Lee brings more than 15 years of experience in general business and trust and estate matters, concentrating on estate, trust and fiduciary litigation, including disputes involving issues of undue influence, lack of capacity, breach of fiduciary duty, and elder abuse. He also has extensive experience advising clients on the removal of personal representatives and trustees.



**MARK Y. LIU**  
Partner  
Akerman LLP

Born in China but raised in the Midwest, Mark Liu started his legal career at Akerman LLP in the Miami office on 2005. After a three-year stint in Hong Kong, helping take Chinese companies public on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and focusing on cross-border Asia and US investment and M&A transactions, Liu returned to Akerman (in the LA office) in 2016.

Liu currently represents U.S. and international companies and financial institutions in a wide variety of public and private capital markets transactions, as well as in M&A, joint venture or private equity investment transactions. His experience includes leading offerings of equity in initial public offerings (IPOs), secondary equity offerings, pre-IPO and venture financings, Regulation D, Regulation S and Rule 144A offerings, exchange offers, and other public and private equity and debt offerings, as well as cross-border M&A and investment transactions.



Congratulations to our partner **Shadi Jahangir** on being named to the *LA Business Journal's* **2021 Minority Leaders of Influence: Attorneys.**

Shadi's commitment to the highest standards of achievement at work and in her community is outstanding and we are fortunate to call her our colleague.





## MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

**PAUL LOH**

*Managing Partner*  
Willenken LLP

Managing partner Paul Loh is a founding member of Willenken LLP. Founded in 2002, Willenken is an elite minority-owned, majority women boutique litigation firm. Loh is Asian American and a native Mandarin speaker. He has nearly 30 years of experience representing (mostly on the defense side) major leading American and Asian corporations in both civil and criminal litigation matters.

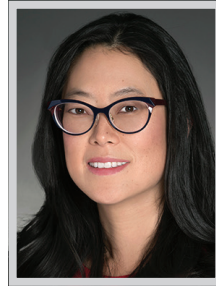
Loh represents Fortune 500 clients in high-stakes, complex commercial litigation matters, focusing on product liability and major torts, white collar defense and government investigations, and class actions cases. Paul is an outlier, compared to lawyers of his generation, in that he has spent much of his impressive legal career truly trying cases. In fact, he has tried over 120 jury trials, court trials, and arbitrations. As a result of his substantial trial experience, leading companies turn to him for some of the most challenging cases on their dockets.

**A. ALEXANDER "ALEX" LOWDER**

*Partner*  
Larson LLP

Alex Lowder is a partner at Larson LLP. He earned his A.B. from Harvard University. Lowder's practice focuses on white collar criminal defense and commercial litigation, including complex contract disputes and class actions. In civil matters, he has represented clients in complex breach of contract matters, product liability actions, and civil rights disputes. His criminal experience includes representing individuals and corporations in federal and state investigations and prosecutions, including at trial.

Throughout his career, Lowder has represented clients ranging from fintech and municipalities to media and entertainment companies and actors. He has defended clients against allegations of violating the California Unfair Practices Act, conspiracy to commit fraud, and breach of fiduciary duty. Outside of the courtroom, Lowder served on the Board of Directors of the University of San Diego School of Law Alumni Association for a decade.

**ANDREA LUCAN**

*Partner*  
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP

Akin Gump partner Andrea Lucan is a leading lawyer in Los Angeles and throughout the energy industry. She regularly shepherds highly complex transactions for clients – often major Southern California players such as BYD Americas and Southern California Edison – involving the sale, acquisition, development and financing of renewable energy projects.

Lucan's practice focuses on project development and finance, with a particular emphasis on representing companies engaged in the development, financing, construction and operation of solar power, wind power, energy storage and other alternative energy projects. Her experience extends to all elements of alternative energy development and finance, including merger and acquisition transactions, equity and debt financing, equipment purchase and sale agreements, and power purchase agreements. Lucan has spearheaded several significant renewable energy transactions for leading energy companies.

**MATTHEW H. MARMOLEJO**

*Partner*  
Mayer Brown LLP

Matthew H. Marmolejo is a Litigation & Dispute Resolution partner in Mayer Brown's Los Angeles office. His practice centers on representing automobile and motor vehicle equipment manufacturers in various contexts, including high-stakes litigation. His recent work in this area has included representing Nissan Motor Co. in a lawsuit in connection with the sale of two Southern California dealerships.

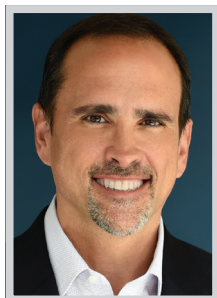
However, most of Marmolejo's work is behind the scenes, helping his clients navigate regulatory matters. He has extensive experience, for example, representing manufacturers in motor vehicle safety matters, including National Highway Traffic Safety Administration proceedings involving compliance with the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act and the Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability and Documentation Act. This area of law allows Marmolejo to operate at the intersection of technology and automobile safety, working with transportation and mobility issues that impact people's everyday lives.

**MERCEDES O. MARTIN**

*Shareholder*  
Buchalter

Mercedes Martin is an active participant in Buchalter's Diversity Committee and Women's Committee, and has been instrumental in implementing firm wide diversity events to shape the firm's culture across its growing number of offices in the West Coast. Last June, Martin was elevated to shareholder. She is one of the youngest females to be promoted to Shareholder at the firm.

In a short period of time, Martin has assumed a leading role in representing institutional banks as lenders and equity investors in low income housing tax credit projects nationwide. With a particular emphasis in California, she has developed an expertise in structuring and navigating the multitude of rules and regulations governing the subsidies and public funds required to finance these affordable housing projects. She now co-chairs the firm's Tax Credit Practice Group.

**DAVID MARTINEZ**

*Partner; Elected Member of the Firm's Executive Board; Member of the Firm's Diversity Committee; Firm Pro Bono Chair, California Offices*  
Robins Kaplan LLP

David Martinez is a partner at the national trial law firm Robins Kaplan LLP, and one of the firm's most prominent leaders. As an elected member of Robins Kaplan's Executive Board, he is a key decision-maker on all major policy decisions made by the 250-attorney, eight-office law firm.

He is also a leader in the eyes of his clients. Martinez represents a wide range of U.S. and international clients in all forms of dispute resolution and business counseling, with an emphasis in the areas of commercial, intellectual property, unfair competition, and class action litigation, as well as arbitration and mediation. While he counts members of the Fortune 100 among his clients, a great deal of his practice is done on behalf of small to mid-size companies – many of which count Martinez as their outside general counsel and sole legal advisor.

**MASAHISA MITSUNAGA**

*Shareholder*  
Buchalter

Masahisa (Masa) Mitsunaga is a shareholder in the Los Angeles office of Buchalter. He is chair of the Japan Practice group and a member of the firm's Corporate and Intellectual Property groups. His clients see Mitsunaga as a solution provider, and he has represented numerous Japanese clients in connection with their challenging legal matters including large business and strategic transactions and business disputes in the United States for over a decade.

In the early stage of his professional career, Mitsunaga developed particular experience in the entertainment industry by participating in media-related merger and acquisition and debt and equity finance transactions as well as handling litigation matters for clients within the industry. Since he joined Buchalter, Mitsunaga has regularly represented a wide range of Japanese clients through their start-ups, capital transactions, and mergers and acquisitions in the United States.

**VISHWANATH KOOTALA MOHAN**

*Associate*  
Frankfurt Kurnit Klein & Selz, PC

Vishwanath Kootala Mohan is an associate in the Entertainment Litigation Group at Frankfurt Kurnit Klein & Selz, PC, based in Los Angeles. He advises on a wide variety of entertainment and media law disputes. He has represented high-profile Hollywood celebrities, social media influencers, production companies, interactive entertainment companies, and publishing companies. He is also a thought leader, writing and frequently presenting on current topics in entertainment and media law.

In addition to representing significant entertainment and media industry clients, Mohan also provides pro bono legal services to clients in need. For example, he has represented clients pro bono on immigration and criminal law matters in the U.S. Immigration Court and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, where he presented oral argument. He has also authored Amicus Briefs and a Petition for Writ of Certiorari to the Supreme Court of the United States.



MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



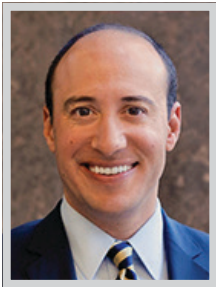
**ALI MOJIBI**

*Partner*

Covington & Burling LLP

Ali Mojibi is a trial lawyer. Leveraging his diverse background in electrical engineering, medical sciences, and technical sales, Mojibi focuses on patent, trade secret, product liability, and high-stakes commercial litigation. Mojibi has appeared as trial counsel for leading companies and conducted tens of hours of direct and cross examination. In 2019, for example, Mojibi served as trial counsel for Johnson & Johnson in a widely-reported trial initiated by the Office of California Attorney General that lasted nearly three months.

In addition to his trial practice, Mojibi helps clients solve legal problems that demand technical aptitude and business acumen. For example, he helps clients mitigate risk associated with the hiring and retention of executives and senior scientists in connection with alleged theft of trade secrets and violation of non-compete and non-disclosure agreements. Mojibi also helps clients resolve complex licensing disputes that threaten mission-critical applications.



**ENRIQUE A. MONAGAS**

*Senior Counsel*

Sklar Kirsh LLP

Enrique Monagas serves as senior counsel at the law firm, Sklar Kirsh LLP. Prior to joining Sklar Kirsh, he served as a deputy attorney general in the Government Law Section of the California Department of Justice and as an associate at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP. Throughout his professional career, he has used his skills and experience as a trial and appellate lawyer to work on many of California's most interesting and challenging cases, and has participated in the legal and policy decisions concerning important issues to California and the nation.

Monagas has successfully litigated several high-profile and landmark cases. He was a core member of the trial and appellate teams that secured the historic victories in the federal challenge to California's Proposition 8, *Hollingsworth v. Perry*. The case resulted in a landmark decision affirming the equal dignity of gay and lesbian Americans.



**JAMES I. MONTGOMERY, JR.**

*Partner*

Gibbs Giden Locher Turner Senet & Wittbrodt

James I. Montgomery is a partner, and a civil litigation trial lawyer with over thirty-six years of litigation experience in the practice areas of civil trial and appellate law, insurance defense, products liability, and commercial law. Montgomery specializes in the analysis, negotiation, and defense of civil litigation matters, including automobile accidents, premises liability, construction defects, land subsidence, landlord-tenant habitability, toxic torts, construction accidents, personal injury, professional liability, products liability, and major losses.

Montgomery also has a significant amount of trial experience with a high success rate. Notably, Montgomery was called upon by a client to replace ineffective counsel in a wrongful death action just prior to trial. Adding to the case complications, he inherited the case burdened with a terminating sanction order. Despite the obstacles, Montgomery was successful in achieving a defense verdict for the client.



**TRITIA M. MURATA**

*Partner*

Morrison & Foerster LLP

Morrison & Foerster's global co-chair Tritia Murata is a true star in the California labor and employment market. Her hallmark is her knack for obtaining court victories and developing innovative solutions to strategically dispose of high-exposure wage-and-hour class actions and representative actions brought under the California Labor Code Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 (PAGA). She is particularly well known for her impressive track record of defeating certification in wage-and-hour class actions, which continue to be a major concern for employers in California and nationwide. This submission period, she has notched significant victories for her clients.

Earlier this year, in *LaFace v. Ralphs Grocery Company*, Murata and her team secured a complete defense verdict in which the plaintiff claimed Ralphs owed significant PAGA penalties for not providing seats in check stands for cashiers. Murata and her team persuaded the court that the dynamic nature of the work that cashiers perform does not reasonably permit the use of seats.



We applaud our Partners Jerry J. Ruiz and Raul F. Salinas for being named two of LA's Minority Leaders of Influence.

DIVERSE

EXPERIENCE

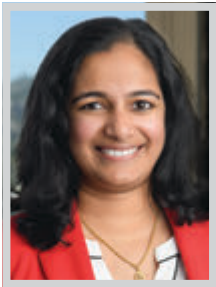


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Through their experience, strong leadership, and extensive non-profit board service of over three decades, Jerry and Raul have continued to advance diversity and inclusion opportunities in the legal industry and the business world.

“Excellence in practice - diversity in people” is more than a slogan at AlvaradoSmith. It is what guides our commitment to excellence and the unwavering conviction that differences among our professionals make the firm stronger and the client work better.

MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**POOJA S. NAIR**

*Partner and Chair of  
Food, Beverage and Hospitality Group  
Ervin Cohen & Jessup LLP*

Pooja S. Nair is a business litigator and problem solver with a focus on the food and beverage sector. She advises food and beverage clients, startups and other businesses on a comprehensive range of issues, including employment, trade secrets, partnership disputes, contract negotiations and intellectual property. She focuses on finding creative, long-term solutions to the business problems affecting companies of all sizes, from startups to publicly traded entities. Nair combines litigation experience with a strategic perspective, so that legal decisions make sense on a business level. Earlier this year, Nair launched ECJ's Food, Beverage and Hospitality Group, which provides a full range of legal services to clients across the food, beverage and hospitality industries.

Nair is actively involved in several community organizations, including serving on the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Music and Art School. She is also a Board Member for Inner City Law Center.



**DIANA PALACIOS**

*Counsel  
Davis Wright Tremaine LLP*

Diana Palacios' subject matter expertise in Latin America entertainment and strong belief in First Amendment litigation has made her an immutable force within the media industry. Palacios approaches each case with a strong First Amendment focus and ensuring that the rights of an individual always come first.

Palacios first joined DWT in 2011 as a summer associate for the firm, and has since grown and emerged as a leader in her practice group. Her efforts and recognition have led to her elevation to contract partner within the firm. She focuses her practice on media, First Amendment, and intellectual property litigation and counseling. She works on a range of matters, including defamation, records and courtroom access, privacy, right-of-publicity, false advertising, copyright, and trademark issues. She also provides pre-publication and pre-broadcast counseling in both English and Spanish for studios, television networks, production companies, and newspapers.



**KELLY PERIGOE**

*Partner  
King & Spalding*

King & Spalding partner Kelly Perigoe is an appellate and brief-writing specialist who is regularly tapped to lead appellate strategy in clients' most critical matters. A former Ninth Circuit clerk, Perigoe has over a decade of experience in federal and state courts. Her practice covers a wide variety of substantive areas, including complex commercial litigation, intellectual property law, and class actions. She has first-chaired a number of appeals, including most recently obtaining reversal of the trial court's exercise of personal jurisdiction over a California-based technology company in Texas. Perigoe is also handling the Ninth Circuit appeal following her team's successful motion to dismiss a copyright infringement action claiming more than \$300 million in damages.

A leader in the LGBT community, Perigoe has also worked on pro bono matters relating to transgender rights, including obtaining withholding of removal for a transgender woman who had been persecuted in her home country of Belize.

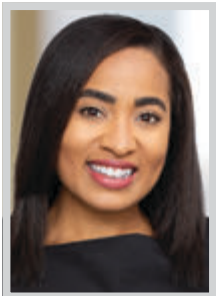


**MADHU POCHA**

*Partner  
O'Melveny & Myers LLP*

Madhu Pocha is a steadfast leader of O'Melveny's diversity and inclusion efforts. As co-chair of the Century City office's local Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee, he has led the firm's efforts in this year of racial reckoning to advance issues of racial and social justice affecting the office, firm, and broader community.

A versatile litigator, Pocha counsels corporate, government and pro bono clients on high-stakes matters spanning disparate disciplines, from antitrust and bankruptcy to environmental and entertainment law. He is currently representing the Government of Puerto Rico in litigation as part of its historic bankruptcy proceedings – the first time for a US territory – which will impact the future of the island's three million residents. He is also advising the country's largest homebuilder in a constellation of complex environmental and regulatory cases concerning the redevelopment of the former Hunters Point Naval Base in San Francisco.



**BUNNIE POULLARD**

*Associate  
Barnes & Thornburg LLP*

Driven to guide and support clients through the various challenges businesses face as they strive to get off the ground or expand, Bunnie Poullard brings significant knowledge and skills in assisting them through a wide range of business, finance and real estate matters. Poullard counsels early stage growth companies on equity and debt financings including drafting convertible notes and simple agreements for future equity, and she also advises private companies on recapitalizations, strategic investments, mergers and acquisitions, as well as joint ventures and Regulation D offerings.

Poullard represents both entrepreneurs and established businesses – family offices, institutional investors, real estate investment companies and cannabis retailers – in entity formation, governance, and complex corporate and investment transactions. Namely, she assisted in representing firm client, Karamo Brown, the Emmy-nominated Star of "Queer Eye," in his endorsement and equity partnership with skin care company, Mantl; among other high profile work.

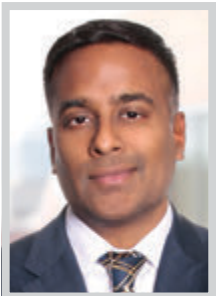


**HAMID R. RAFATJOO**

*Partner  
Raines Feldman LLP*

Hamid R. Rafatjoo has over 20 years of experience representing clients in complex transactions and reorganizations throughout the United States. He counsels companies and individuals in a variety of industries, including healthcare, retail, restaurant, manufacturing, entertainment, real estate, and hospitality. He has represented entrepreneurs, small family owned businesses as well as companies with over a billion in revenue.

Rafatjoo advises clients on a wide array of matters including business formation and corporate restructuring, debt and equity transactions and workouts, acquisitions and sales, and structuring and amending key contracts. He has extensive experience assisting clients across a broad spectrum of legal issues relating to corporate transactions, shareholder disputes, and litigation management. Rafatjoo is recognized as an aggressive results-oriented practitioner. He has also served as the court appointed Chapter 11 trustee in various cases in the Central District of California.



**ASHWIN J. RAM**

*Partner  
Stephoe & Johnson LLP*

An experienced first-chair trial lawyer, Ashwin J. Ram has 15 years of experience encompassing white-collar criminal investigations and prosecutions and complex litigation, which often pose potential criminal or regulatory implications. As a defense attorney and former federal prosecutor, Ram has handled more than a dozen criminal trials and negotiated and successfully resolved more than 100 criminal matters involving cumulative alleged losses exceeding \$1.5 billion. Banking on this experience, Ram has led clients to a series of significant white collar and dispute resolution victories. He also has the unique distinction of leading major investigations for both the government and private clients at Steptoe.

Ram is also heavily invested in the South Asian community. He previously served as president of both the South Asian Bar Association and the Network of Indian Professionals, which is one of the largest South Asian networking organizations in the United States.



**ARJUN RAO**

*Partner  
Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP*

Arjun Rao has built a national reputation for handling high stakes consumer class actions and financial services litigation including regulatory matters and government investigations, as well as defending companies in a wide range of actions.

Last year, Rao worked with JPMorgan Chase, HSBC, American Express and BMW Financial Services in a range of individual and class actions relating to various consumer protection statutes and alleged unfair business practices, with many of the issues in question at the cutting edge of law. Rao is part of the team representing Discover Bank in a putative California-wide class action. In September 2019, Rao secured the dismissal of a nationwide putative class action against Capital One on a motion to dismiss. Also, Rao is lead defense counsel and nationwide coordinating counsel for multiple prominent financial services companies in cases alleging violations of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act.



MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**ANGELA REDDOCK-WRIGHT**  
*Employment Law Attorney, Mediator,  
Arbitrator, Investigator  
Reddock Law Group*

**A** practicing attorney for nearly 25 years, Angela Reddock-Wright is regarded as a go-to attorney and human resources professional when it comes to any issues dealing with the workplace. She is the founding and managing partner of the Reddock Law Group, a boutique, minority, and woman owned dispute resolution and investigations law firm based in downtown Los Angeles, focused on the resolution of employment and labor law, Title IX sexual assault, hazing, and bullying legal claims through the alternative dispute resolution, investigation, and other neutral processes.

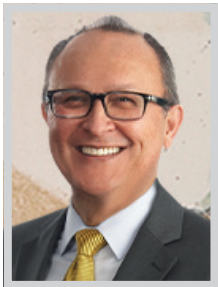
Prior to opening the Reddock Law Group in 2011, Reddock-Wright was an employment and labor law litigator for 15 years, representing clients in the full gamut of employment and labor law cases, including wrongful termination, harassment, discrimination, public policy and wage and hour claims. She also developed specialties in handling sensitive hazing and bullying cases involving K-12 schools, colleges, and universities.



**NAEUN RIM**  
*Principal  
Bird, Marella, Boxer, Wolpert, Nessim, Drooks,  
Lincenberg & Rhow, P.C.*

**N**aeun Rim possesses over a decade of experience as a litigator and is particularly known for her expertise in trial work. She received her B.A. from Columbia University and her J.D. from Harvard Law School and is conversationally fluent in Korean. Rim focuses her practice on criminal defense, complex civil litigation, and internal investigations. She has won arbitrations and secured multimillion-dollar judgments in civil cases, and secured acquittals, dismissals, and favorable sentencing results in a multitude of criminal matters.

As lead trial counsel in March 2020, she defended the CEO of a movie financing and production company accused of felony mail and wire fraud in a federal jury trial and was able to achieve dismissals and acquittals of all 19 counts for a complete defense victory. Rim was also on the trial team that successfully defended Plains All American Pipeline in one of the largest environmental trials in California history.



**JERRY J. RUIZ**  
*Equity Shareholder  
AlvaradoSmith*

**T**welve years ago, Jerry Ruiz returned to private law practice with AlvaradoSmith, where he is co-chair of the firm's Real Estate Practice and is active in community and economic development initiatives across Southern California. He represents some of the region's most recognizable companies.

In his practice, Ruiz most recently negotiated and documented a 10-year \$10 million renewal of its lease of about 165,000 square feet of office and industrial premises in the San Fernando Valley for a global leader in connected car technology. He also recently represented a global aerospace and defense technology company in the negotiation and documentation of 10 separate lease renewals for office, research and development, and warehouse space. The timing and coordination of multiple ongoing transactions, totaling about 1,500,000 square feet throughout the West Los Angeles/South Bay region and among various landlord parties, was vital.



**NEEMA SAHNI**  
*Partner  
Covington & Burling LLP*

**N**eema Sahni is a litigation partner with deep media industry expertise. Through her work at the firm, and her prior experience in-house as Corporate Legal Counsel: Distribution at The Walt Disney Company, Sahni has developed a sophisticated understanding of the legal issues facing clients in the sports, media, and entertainment industries. Alongside an active litigation docket, Sahni maintains a robust counseling and advisory practice, assisting sports teams and leagues, television networks, and film studios to assess and mitigate their litigation risk in the context of high-stakes business transactions.

Sahni's diversified litigation experience includes trials and appeals in state and federal court, arbitration proceedings, and agency adjudications. Most recently, she obtained a pro bono victory securing the release of two clients from the Adelanto Immigration and Customs Enforcement civil detention facility in Southern California, whose health conditions put them at a high risk for complications arising from COVID-19.

**We join the *Los Angeles Business Journal* in honoring the 2021 Minority Leaders of Influence: Attorneys**

including our partner and friend

**Rodney Lee.**

We salute your dedication to your clients and your commitment to enhancing diversity and inclusion at our firm, within our community and throughout the legal profession.

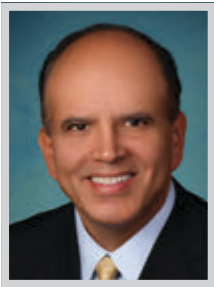


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MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**RAUL F. SALINAS**  
*Shareholder*  
AlvaradoSmith

Raul Salinas is a bilingual Los Angeles-based lawyer representing private sector clients, such as middle-market, Fortune 500, and multi-national Latin American-based companies. Salinas serves as the managing shareholder in Los Angeles of AlvaradoSmith. Before joining the firm, he handled complex litigation matters involving international intellectual property disputes as an attorney with New York based Rogers & Wells (now Clifford Chance). Over the course of his 30-year career as a trial attorney, he has appeared in federal and state courts throughout California, including before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeal, the California Supreme Court, and various other state appellate courts.

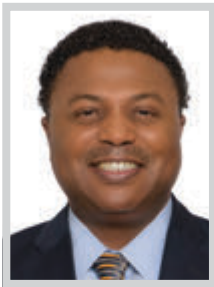
As a trusted advisor to senior corporate executives, Salinas is equally comfortable in the courtroom as he is in the boardroom. Raul draws upon his extensive experience to help his clients create opportunities and overcome challenges in a wide range of areas, including business, employment, healthcare, government, and international affairs.



**SARINA SALUJA**  
*Partner*  
Fisher Phillips LLP

A partner with Fisher Phillips in Los Angeles, Sarina Saluja is a true business partner for her clients. She maintains a thriving practice, working side-by-side with employers of all sizes through a variety of employment law disputes. When these companies face a perilous employment lawsuit, they turn to Sarina for guidance – and she has an outstanding track record of success.

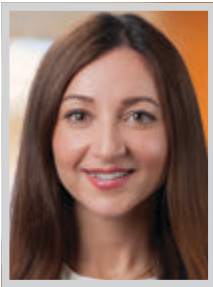
Saluja tackles workplace-related issues from inception through dispositive motion, settlement, arbitration and trial. She defends employers against claims of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, wage and hour violations, and wrongful termination. A significant portion of her practice is focused on issues involving workplace privacy, data security, unfair competition, and trade secrets theft, which include drafting and implementing appropriate policies to curb employee theft related issues as well as litigating against employees who violate the covenants with their employers.



**ALFRED SMITH**  
*Chair, Water Practice Group*  
Nossaman

Alfred Smith, chair of Nossaman’s Water Group, is a recognized expert in water and environmental law. A graduate of the Harvard Law School, he has successfully litigated multiple water right adjudications, and he has secured more than \$750 million worth of contamination settlements in favor of his clients.

Smith is a trusted advisor on matters involving water rights, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), Colorado River and Pueblo rights, recycled water, water resource development, contamination remediation, groundwater adjudications, water transfers, desalination, conjunctive use, climate change, and environmental regulatory compliance. Smith has also developed Urban Water Management Plans, water supply assessments and environmental impact reports for a wide range of residential and commercial developments. He is also an expert on all aspects of public agency governance.



**PRIYA S. SOPORI**  
*Partner*  
Greenberg Glusker LLP

Priya Sopori is an equity partner with Greenberg Glusker, the founder and chair of its Cannabis Industry Group, and a member of the firm’s Litigation Group. Her diverse civil practice is an outgrowth of her years of working at the U.S. Attorney’s Office in the Central District of California. As an award-winning federal criminal prosecutor, she indicted dozens of diverse cases, ranging from white-collar fraud and cybercrime to interference with aviation and sex crimes.

Since joining Greenberg Glusker, Sopori’s clients have included entertainment companies as well as high-profile and high-net-worth individuals in a wide variety of disputes ranging from breach of contract, employment discrimination, marital dissolution, intellectual property, international film financing and distribution, securities, wrongful death, white-collar crime, licensing agreements for music and internet and television rights. Many of her matters involve counseling clients through sensitive issues involving confidential and private information, requiring attention to media issues as well.



**PATRICK HARDER**  
*Chair*  
Infrastructure Group



**ALFRED SMITH**  
*Chair*  
Water Group

Congratulations Patrick & Alfred on being recognized as two of Los Angeles’ **Minority Leaders of Influence** by the *Los Angeles Business Journal*.



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**SCOTT SUGINO**  
*Partner*  
O'Melveny & Myers LLP

Partner Scott Sugino is a true O'Melveny trailblazer. The firm's Tokyo office, opened in 1987, was its first office in Asia and became a stepping stone to the firm's award-winning practice across Asia. A decade ago, Sugino was dispatched to that office to help develop a corporate practice in that important market. Using his Japanese language skills, knowledge of intricate corporate transactions and affinity for both leadership and creativity, Sugino was able to serve as a bridge across the Pacific for clients, helping Japanese investors capitalize on opportunities in the Western high technology and media sectors and assisting US multinationals with their operations in the sophisticated Japanese market.

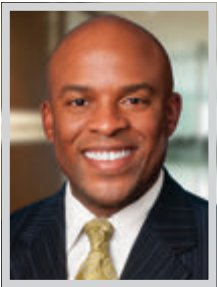
Now back in Los Angeles, Sugino's work alongside Japanese clients continues; in the past two years, he has worked on more than two dozen deals for Mitsui alone – a testament to the excellence of his work.



**PAUL W. SWEENEY, JR.**  
*Partner*  
K&L Gates LLP

Paul Sweeney's practice focuses on complex business disputes, both individual and class action lawsuits, involving unfair business practices, false advertising, consumer fraud, trade regulation, privacy violations, breach of contract, and violations of various federal and state statutes and regulations. He has also handled a number of employment arbitrations and lawsuits involving claims of discrimination, wage-hour violations, wrongful termination, and theft of trade secrets. He represents clients primarily in the manufacturing, retailing, technology, financial services, food and beverage, medical device, and entertainment industries.

Sweeney recently prevailed for the broker-dealer subsidiary of a global financial institution in a one-year FINRA arbitration. In that matter, the claimant sought in excess of \$7 million plus punitive damages and penalties in a proceeding that took more than one year to finally conclude. The final decision by the arbitration panel was that the claimant should receive nothing on her claims.



**DELMAR S. THOMAS**  
*Partner*  
Yukevich | Cavanaugh

Delmar Thomas is an experienced trial lawyer. He has also been successful in briefing and arguing key motions in state and federal courts across the country. Thomas' effective advocacy skills have led to significant victories through summary judgment, appellate motions, and various post-trial matters in high exposure cases. While Thomas is often viewed as a relentless advocate for his clients, he is also respected for his negotiation skills and pragmatic approach to alternative dispute resolution. Thomas has effectively negotiated many favorable settlements for his clients through mediation, mandatory settlement conferences, and, in some cases, voluntary settlement.

Thomas' practice currently focuses on litigation, with extensive experience in product liability, construction defect, premises liability and general negligence. In recent years, his practice has expanded to entertainment litigation, insurance coverage, general negligence, and other complex litigation matters.



**JASON H. TOKORO**  
*Partner*  
Miller Barondess, LLP

Jason Tokoro is a complex commercial litigator with extensive experience in the entertainment, professional sports, real estate, and financial industries. He has represented a multitude of movie studios including Warner Bros. and Sony Pictures, and Fortune 500 land development companies, Lennar Corporation and Toll Brothers. He also has represented a variety of pro-sports companies and promoters.

Among his many high profile clients, Tokoro serves as outside litigation counsel for LA County and its Board of Supervisors. He spearheaded county enforcement of Gov. Gavin Newsom's emergency health orders and defended lawsuits challenging these orders amid COVID-19, including contact-tracing, stay-at-home and indoor service restrictions. His victories have ensured the protection of county residents and set precedents that will be followed statewide, including a case in which an escape room company sued the State of California and Los Angeles County. The shutdown remained in place after the business was deemed non-essential.

**Pillsbury** congratulates **Stacie Yee** for being  
named to the **2021 Minorities of Influence** list.



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MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**JULIA Y. TRANKIEM**  
*Partner*  
Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP

With the challenges to California employers brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent business shutdowns and workforce reductions, Julia Trankiem’s clients are more reliant on her than ever as a go-to practitioner in California on a range of workplace-related matters. She has been helping clients to comply with new and complex laws and regulations emerging in response to COVID-19. Trankiem also continues to be involved in significant, high-stakes employment class actions and single and multi-plaintiff litigation, where she develops and sets a strategic charge, striving to position matters for the most effective and efficient outcome.

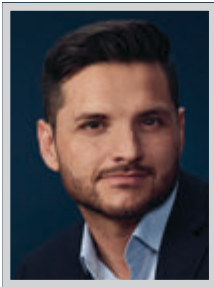
Trankiem has extensive experience advising companies on the unique aspects of California employment law, while keeping the clients’ business goals firmly in mind. She is a trusted advisor and does a significant amount of counsel for everything from employee discipline to large-scale terminations requiring notice under the WARN to recent COVID-19 regulations.



**ELLISEN TURNER**  
*Partner*  
Kirkland & Ellis

Ellisen Turner is an Intellectual Property partner at Kirkland & Ellis LLP. He is a well-known IP strategist and litigator who combines business acumen with a deep knowledge of intellectual property law to support his clients’ business goals and maximize the value of their technology. He has helped clients secure victories in patent and trade secret litigations that have led to billions in total client compensation, and has successfully defended matters with billions in revenue at stake. A seasoned negotiator as well, he completed more than \$320 million in patent licenses and technology transactions in 2020 alone.

Turner has long blazed the trail for attorneys of color and has led the way on strategies and initiatives geared at advancing diverse attorneys in his law firms and the broader legal profession. He is now co-chair of Kirkland’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee and serves on the firm’s Diversity and Inclusion Task Force.



**GIANCARLO UREY**  
*Counsel*  
Davis Wright Tremaine LLP

Giancarlo Urey is a leading litigator who understands that, while employment cases often share similar themes or patterns, every employment case comes with its own unique challenges and opportunities. A creative and strategic trial attorney, Urey collaborates with his clients to develop the most effective, cost-efficient solution to their litigation problems.

Urey first joined DWT in 2013 and immediately impressed the firm with his hard work ethic, exceeding his requirements in all litigation matters. From small family-owned companies to large multinational corporations, Urey has built his practice to encompass his extensive experience guiding companies as they face potentially high-exposure claims from current and former employees. A creative and strategic trial attorney, Urey’s practice specializes in defending against claims of wage and hour violations, discrimination, retaliation, harassment, wrongful termination, defamation, and misappropriation of trade secrets.



**ALBERT C. VALENCIA**  
*Partner and Co-Chair of the Real Estate Department*  
Ervin Cohen & Jessup LLP

Albert Valencia’s practice is focused on real estate and general business matters. His clients include developers, operators, private equity investors and commercial banks in a broad range of real estate transactions, including acquisitions and dispositions, joint ventures and syndications, commercial leasing, financing, loan modifications, workouts and restructurings. Clients look to Valencia for his experience in a broad range of real estate asset classes including multi-family, office, retail, mixed-use and industrial properties. He regularly represents clients in forming joint-ventures and syndications, negotiating structured finance transactions (including obtaining CMBS loans, mezzanine debt and preferred equity), and assisting property owners in asset management.

Recent representative matters include his work representing a multi-family developer in the purchase of at least ten residential properties for redevelopment in Los Angeles County. He led the purchase of 7651 and 7501 Esters Blvd., a 176,700 square foot office complex located outside of Dallas.





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**NICOLE RODRIGUEZ VAN DYK**  
*Principal*  
Bird, Marella, Boxer, Wolpert, Nessim, Drooks,  
Lincenberg, & Rhow P.C.

Since joining Bird Marella in 2012, Nicole Rodriguez Van Dyk has routinely demonstrated her expertise in solving some of the most complex and intricate problems on behalf of her clients. Van Dyk possesses extensive experience defending clients in criminal matters related to government contracting fraud, mortgage fraud, and labor violations, as well as civil qui tam actions and business disputes.

In recent years, Van Dyk has secured a string of victories related to her representation of health care providers in state and federal criminal prosecutions and parallel civil proceedings, as well as complex civil litigation. She has also successfully defended clients in a variety of related areas, including workers' compensation fraud, false billing, improper referrals, compound medications, and physician-owned distributorships through victories both in and outside the courtroom, rightfully earning a reputation as one of the best lawyers in America for health care law.



**BELINDA M. VEGA**  
*Partner*  
Venable LLP

Belinda Vega is a partner in Venable LLP's Los Angeles office. She focuses her practice on complex commercial litigation, including matters involving unfair business practices, securities litigation, intellectual property, contract disputes, and fraud. Belinda also advises clients on corporate compliance and conducts internal investigations in response to government inquiries and allegations of misconduct.

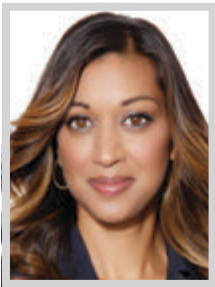
Vega's career has allowed her to develop a deep familiarity with – and an all-encompassing approach to – litigation. This past year, she was a key member of a team that obtained a complete defense verdict in a \$25 million California jury trial alleging breach of duty and fraud against a hospital-ity company and its CEO. She also played a crucial role in obtaining summary judgment for a refrigeration services company that was sued for vicarious liability and negligent supervision, hiring, and training when an employee drove his vehicle while intoxicated, causing a serious accident.



**BEN WANG**  
*Partner*  
Russ August & Kabat

Ben Wang is a partner at Russ August & Kabat. He is member of the firm's general litigation, intellectual property litigation, trial and appellate groups. His practice focuses on representing clients in complex business and intellectual property disputes, particularly in patent and trade secret trials and appeals.

Wang, in the last year, served as lead trial counsel in a patent jury trial that resulted in a verdict in favor of his client on all issues and damages, and found willful infringement. He was second chair in another patent jury trial where the jury also returned a verdict in favor of his client on all issues and damages. He also won an appeal before the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals, reversing a summary judgement ruling against his client; and obtained summary judgment in favor of a client, while defeating the opposing party's summary judgment motion; among other successes.



**NIMALKA R. WICKRAMASEKERA**  
*Partner*  
Winston & Strawn LLP

Nimalka Wickramasekera is a trusted intellectual property litigator with a thriving medical device and technology practice representing clients in connection with patent and licensing disputes. With nearly 15 years of trial and counseling experience, she pairs her strong technical background, including her degree in Molecular, Cell & Developmental Biology, with significant stand-up courtroom and trial experience to best serve her clients. She also serves as co-chair of Winston's Patent Trial and Appeals Board practice and is a member of the firm's Technology, Media and Telecom and Healthcare industry groups.

Wickramasekera is a trial lawyer who focuses on patent, trade secret, and commercial litigation in the telecommunication, computer hardware, healthcare, medical device, and biotechnology industries. Her courtroom experience includes having served as trial counsel – lead, co-lead, and second chair – in several patent disputes, one of which resulted in a \$101 million verdict.



Congratulations to our Partners  
**Pooja S. Nair** and **Albert C. Valencia**  
and to all those named  
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MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**BART H. WILLIAMS**  
*Partner*  
Proskauer

Head of Proskauer’s Los Angeles office, Bart Williams is a strategic, diligent and dignified litigator with a wealth of experience across commercial litigation, white collar criminal defense and internal corporate investigations, and is equally expert at counseling clients on the management of their most complex litigation crises and trying their most important cases before juries and judges.

A member of the American College of Trial Lawyers, Williams has compiled an impressive list of victories in jury and bench trials throughout the United States. He has served as lead trial counsel for numerous companies in bet-the-company trials, and as a litigator and counselor for many Fortune 500 corporations across industries: media and entertainment, banking and financial services, technology, pharmaceutical and private equity. Recent notable clients include Johnson & Johnson, the “Power 5” college athletic conferences, Gilead Sciences, NBCUniversal, and Mattel/Fisher Price.



**JASON WILSON**  
*Partner*  
Willenken LLP

Partner Jason Wilson joined Willenken LLP shortly after the firm’s formation in 2002. Willenken is a boutique minority-owned, majority women elite trial and litigation firm. With over 30 years of practice at the trial and appellate levels, Wilson, who is Asian American, is a winning force in the courtroom. He draws on a unique background that combines substantial trial experience (including trying 15 civil matters) with deep appellate experience (including 25 appellate matters). He has extensive experience untangling his clients’ knottiest legal problems and is equally skilled in creatively and effectively telling his clients’ stories to trial courts, juries, and appellate panels.

Wilson’s extensive experience, in both trial litigation and appeals, provides significant advantages to his leading clients which include Southern California Gas Company, Jan-Pro Franchising International, Walgreens, Starbucks, Hilton, and McDonald’s, to name a few.



**ALECIA W. WINFIELD**  
*Shareholder*  
Littler

Littler shareholder Alecia W. Winfield skillfully guides clients through workplace compliance challenges, serves as an early career mentor for the firm’s diverse associates and devotes significant effort to advancing her community and the legal industry.

Winfield works with in-house counsel and human resources to provide advice and counsel on challenging personnel and policy-related compliance issues. She performs audits on the full spectrum of wage and hour issues, including payroll practices and overtime exemptions. Winfield defends employers wage and hour class actions, and single-plaintiff discrimination, harassment and wrongful termination lawsuits. Her tested and credible legal skills contributed to a complete class decertification and Private Attorneys General Act summary adjudication for a security services company client – a career highlight. As a core member of the firm’s Employment Practices Audits practice group, Winfield conducts employment practices audits using the firm’s innovative technology product, Audit QB.



**JEN C. WON**  
*Counsel*  
Larson LLP

Jen Won, a bilingual trial attorney, is counsel at Larson LLP. Her practice focuses on high-stakes civil litigation and white collar criminal defense. Ingenious and earnest, Won is especially apt to tackle a complex legal problem and develop a winning strategy. Since joining Larson LLP, she has taken on many of the firm’s high-profile, sensitive investigations for corporate clients facing regulatory challenges. She regularly defends individual clients in federal and state criminal investigations, and she has successfully negotiated favorable outcomes with the government on her clients’ behalf. Won has also litigated asset forfeiture cases before the U.S. and international tribunals and recovered assets for her clients.

Won currently manages a portfolio of litigation matters for Fintech and energy clients, including Renovate America, a company that provides Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE)-loan financing for home improvement projects related to installing renewable energy sources or making energy-efficient upgrades.

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**CHRISTINE WOOD**  
*Director of PRA Services and E-Discovery Counsel*  
Best Best & Krieger LLP

As Best Best & Krieger LLP’s director of PRA services and eDiscovery counsel, Christine Wood leads a unique client service team focused on providing an alternative, cost-effective and efficient approach to records-related matters. Serving public agencies throughout California, from cities to school districts, Wood and her Advanced Records Center (ARC) team have become a pivotal service for agencies struggling with increased California Public Records Act requests and ever-changing laws mandating how electronic records are collected, stored, maintained and shared.

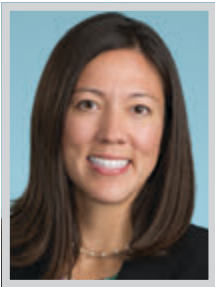
While run by taxpayer dollars, public agencies are like any other business in that they provide much-needed services while trying to maintain budget and efficiency. As stewards of public money, public agencies must hold the purse strings responsibly, and Wood and her ARC team prioritize efficiency and affordability in acknowledgment of that duty.



**MENG XI**  
*Partner*  
Susman Godfrey LLP

Meng Xi is a true trailblazer who regularly litigates and tries big ticket cases in California and across the country. Xi focuses her robust practice on patent infringement and business contract disputes. She has a proven track record of successfully representing both plaintiffs and defendants and has spearheaded every phase of a matter from inception through trial.

Xi has represented well-known, industry-leading clients such as Nasdaq, Skybell, Bitdefender, Rockstar Consortium, Personalized Media Communications, Sentius, and Vaporstream in high-stakes patent litigation. Xi has obtained favorable settlements and achieved significant successes for these clients against industry giants such as Google, Samsung, Vizio, Microsoft, Haier, NRG, and Snap. Xi most recently represented Personalized Media Communications at an in-person jury trial in Texas against Google for patent infringement in November of last year. Xi regularly takes on and secures wins for clients in cutting-edge, complex litigation.



**STACIE YEE**  
*Partner, Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer*  
Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman

After a long and successful career as a prominent employment and litigation partner representing executives and in-house legal counsel at global Fortune 500 clients, Stacie Yee embarked on a new endeavor in 2020. She was appointed Pillsbury’s first ever full-time C-Level executive responsible for Diversity & Inclusion. As chief diversity & inclusion officer, she remains a partner and is a member of Pillsbury’s board of directors.

So far, the initiative has included more than a dozen aspects, including grassroots efforts to encourage 2020 Census participation among communities of color; a partnership with the DC Lawyers’ Committee in litigation challenging the use of gang databases by law enforcement; the launch of an innovative Pillsbury program dedicated to the success of Black-owned startups; a partnership with numerous Innocence Project organizations to prevent and correct wrongful convictions; and client partnerships focused on criminal justice and racial equity issues.



**JACK S. YEH**  
*Partner*  
Sidley Austin LLP

Jack Yeh is a seasoned trial lawyer and key member of Sidley’s Complex Commercial Litigation practice in Sidley’s office in Century City. He regularly represents both publicly traded companies and emerging businesses in a wide range of industries, including energy, oil and gas, real estate, media and entertainment, advertising and technology. He is considered a go-to trial lawyer for disputes involving environmental issues, governmental regulations, the California Environmental Quality Act, conflicts of interest, political contributions and similar governmental-related matters.

Yeh is also the Diversity & Inclusion co-chair of Sidley’s Greater Los Angeles offices and Greater Los Angeles chair of the Recruiting Committee, as well as a firmwide co-chair of Recruiting. He also is a member of the Summer Associate Programs Committee. He has been nationally recognized for his leadership in advancing the diversity of the legal profession and for developing successful diversity initiatives and organizational relationships throughout the country.

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**Sean Andrade & Henry Gonzalez**

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MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS



**STEVEN YODA**  
*Equity Partner*  
Walzer Melcher LLP

Celebrity divorce lawyer Steven K. Yoda draws upon his diverse experience as a corporate litigator to offer clients exceptional representation in family law cases. He spent 10 years as a corporate and white-collar criminal litigator at some of California’s most prestigious law firms, where he represented clients, in both state and federal court, in a wide array of cases relating to business torts, insurance recovery, intellectual property, securities, antitrust, professional malpractice, employment law, and real estate. This experience, coupled with his energy and attention to detail, helps his clients obtain successful outcomes in complex family law matters. Yoda is a certified family law specialist and a high net worth divorce attorney.

Actively engaged in the legal community, Yoda has served as president of the Japanese American Bar Association, a trustee of the Los Angeles County Bar Association, and a board member of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association.



**ANNITA ZHONG**  
*Partner*  
Irell & Manella LLP

A partner at Irell & Manella LLP, Annita Zhong focuses her practice on patent litigation, contested patent office proceedings and licensing in the United States, the European Union and China. She has deep experience litigating before federal and state courts, the International Trade Commission, arbitral panels and the Patent Trial and Appeal Board.

Dr. Zhong earned her J.D. from Yale, her Ph.D. in chemistry from California Institute of Technology, and her B.S. in Chemistry and Chemical Engineering from MIT. Her background in engineering and research has proven valuable in helping her deliver significant victories for clients in complex litigation battles. She is well versed in technical areas such as semiconductor fabrication and packaging, computer architecture, telecommunications, artificial intelligence, renewable energy, and chemicals and materials. Dr. Zhong was a principal member of the Irell team that obtained a \$506.2 million jury award for PanOptis in a patent infringement suit against Apple.



**JULIA ZHU-MORELLI**  
*Partner*  
Reed Smith

Julia Zhu-Morelli is a partner in the Los Angeles office of Reed Smith. She has extensive experience in transactional matters with Chinese and U.S. companies across a wide range of industries and represents clients in mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures and strategic alliances, expansion strategies, cross-border transactions, private equity deals, capital market transactions, entity structuring, regulatory compliance and general corporate matters.

Fluent in both Mandarin and English, Zhu-Morelli advises Chinese and U.S. companies and Chinese funds on various corporate and transactional matters, and provides counsel to U.S. companies involved in establishing Wholly Foreign-Owned Enterprise structures (WFOEs) or joint ventures with companies based in China. She serves as an ambassador of investment promotion and trade representative for Jiangsu Province and assisted the government of Jiangsu with various investment projects. Zhu-Morelli began her legal career assisting in judging scores of diverse business, civil and criminal cases.

# State Bar of California’s October 2020 Bar Exam Pass Results are Highest Since 2008

Earlier this month the State Bar released results of the October 2020 California Bar Exam and announced that 5,292 people (60.7 percent of applicants) passed the General Bar Exam. If those who passed satisfy all other requirements for admission, they will be eligible to be licensed by the State Bar to practice law in California. The October 2020 General Bar Exam pass rate is the highest in more than a decade, since July 2008.

“We heartily congratulate the 5,292 applicants who passed the General Bar Exam and the 323 candidates who passed the Attorneys’ Exam in this tremendously challenging year. We are pleased that the first-ever remote bar exam will result in such a large influx of new attorneys at a time when more people than ever need legal help. We hope to welcome all those who passed to California’s legal profession very soon,” said Donna Hershkowitz, Interim Executive Director of the State Bar.

The October bar exam was unprecedented in several ways:

- It was administered to a near-record number of examinees, 9,301, the largest cohort since 2013.
- It was the first-ever to be administered online remotely. Of the total cohort, 8,920 took the exam online.
- It was the first exam graded under the new cut score of 1390, reduced from 1440 by the California Supreme Court on July 16, 2020.
- It was the first exam graded under a streamlined two-phase grading system,

approved by the Committee of Bar Examiners in August 2020 to increase efficiency and shorten the grading timeline

The pass rate for the General Bar Exam exceeded expectations and predictions.

The Attorneys’ Examination is open to those who have been admitted to the active practice of law and are in good standing for at least four years in another U.S. jurisdiction. Of the 578 attorneys who completed the Attorneys’ Examination, 323 (55.9 percent) passed.

A pass list from the exam was published on the State Bar website on January 10, 2021. More detailed statistics about exam results will be available in four to six weeks on the State Bar website.

Successful applicants who satisfy all requirements for admission may take the Attorney’s Oath individually or participate in admissions ceremonies held by their law school or others. Due to the current COVID-19 restrictions, the State Bar’s Office of Admissions will not hold its typical admissions ceremonies and has posted instructions for individuals to be sworn in remotely.

If they have satisfied all other requirements, applicants are eligible to practice law in California after taking the Attorney’s Oath and submitting their oath card to the State Bar. Approximately two weeks after forwarding the oath card to the State Bar, their names will appear on the agency’s roll of licensed attorneys accessible on the State Bar website.

OCTOBER 2020 GENERAL BAR EXAM  
PRELIMINARY STATISTICS

COMPLETED THE EXAM:  
8,723 applicants

FIRST-TIME APPLICANTS:  
4,990 (57.2 percent of total)

PASS RATE FOR FIRST-TIME APPLICANTS:  
74.0 percent overall

REPEAT APPLICANTS:  
3,733 (42.8 percent of total)

PASS RATE FOR REPEAT APPLICANTS:  
43.0 percent overall



MINORITY LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: ATTORNEYS

# Closing the Justice Gap Working Group Holds First Public Meeting

A State Bar working group studying innovations that could increase access to justice for all Californians held its first public meeting Thursday, January 14, 2021. The State Bar’s Closing the Justice Gap Working Group, created by the Board of Trustees to carry on with important recommendations from the State Bar’s Task Force on Access Through Innovation of Legal Services (ATILS), is charged with:

- Investigating the development of a regulatory sandbox to foster experimentation with innovative systems for delivery of legal services in a manner that protects the public and allows data collection to assess the impact of possible regulatory changes governing the practice of law in California;
- Exploring amendments to the Rules of Professional Conduct regarding the ability of lawyers to share fees with nonlawyers as a way to promote collaboration, innovation, and investment in new delivery systems that lower costs and increase access to legal services;
- Examining the addition of rule 5.7 to the Rules of Professional Conduct addressing the delivery of nonlegal services by lawyers and businesses owned or affiliated with lawyers; and

- Considering amendments to the Certified Lawyer Referral Service statutes and Rules of the State Bar to enhance efforts to expand access to legal services.

The task force is chaired by Justice Alison M. Tucher, Associate Justice of the California Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, Division 4, in San Francisco.

“The immense challenges of the past year have only heightened the needs that this group’s work is intended to address,” said Justice Tucher. “Fortunately, meeting virtually enables us to bring together a truly remarkable working group, all of whom are volunteering their expertise to help California move forward. We are honored and excited to get started.”

The 20-member working group includes state, national, and international experts whose work focuses on the nexus of legal services, technology, and regulatory reform. It also includes members from important practitioner groups as well as members continuing from ATILS—who bring deep experience in California’s legal services community and expertise in legal ethics—to provide continuity with that foundational effort.

*‘The immense challenges of the past year have only heightened the needs that this group’s work is intended to address. Fortunately, meeting virtually enables us to bring together a truly remarkable working group, all of whom are volunteering their expertise to help California move forward. We are honored and excited to get started.’*

The agenda for the working group’s first meeting provided members with important background to set the stage for the in-depth discussions at future meetings. Working group members shared presentations on how consumers grapple with civil legal problems, how the United Kingdom has approached closing the justice gap, how Utah is using a regulatory sandbox to experiment with new types of legal businesses aimed at reducing the justice gap, and on several areas of legal ethics that the working group will probe.

The public meeting took place via Zoom, and an online recording will soon be made

available at: [board.calbar.ca.gov/Video.aspx](http://board.calbar.ca.gov/Video.aspx).

The working group is expected to submit its recommendations to the Board of Trustees no later than September 2022. Each recommendation is expected to balance the dual goals of public protection and increased access to justice.

*The State Bar of California’s mission is to protect the public and includes the primary functions of licensing, regulation and discipline of attorneys; the advancement of the ethical and competent practice of law; and support of efforts for greater access to, and inclusion in, the legal system.*

# Diversity of California’s Legal Profession Continues to Improve

The State Bar’s “First Annual Report Card on the Diversity of California’s Legal Profession,” published last summer, provides baseline data on the diversity and workplace satisfaction of California’s attorney population across multiple demographic groups and employment sectors. The report brings into stark reality that despite significant growth in the proportion of attorneys who are women and people of color over the past 30 years, California’s attorney population remains far from reflective of the state’s diversity.

“The State Bar has committed to concrete objectives to help the profession move toward greater diversity and inclusion, and developing this annual Report Card is among them,” said Donna S. Hershkowitz, interim executive director of the State Bar. “By creating a snapshot in time based on the most inclusive data available, we provide a tool for accountability for ourselves and a stimulus for others to take action. We know that the lagging growth of diversity in the legal profession limits progress to eradicate inequities in the justice system. By working to diversify the profession, we do our part to address those inequities and help to shape the California we wish to see.”

Among the Report Card’s key findings:

- White attorneys account for nearly 70 percent of California’s active licensed attorney population, while people of color constitute 60 percent of the state’s population.
- Latinos are particularly underrepresented in California’s legal profession, accounting for a mere 7 percent of active attorneys.
- In the last three decades, the proportion of new attorneys who are Asian or multiracial has more than tripled, and the proportion of new Latino attorneys has doubled, but the proportion of new attorneys who are Black has

remained stagnant.

- Nearly three-quarters of California attorneys work in the private sector. Increasing the diversity of this sector alone will have a transformative impact on the profession.
- The government and nonprofit sectors, which together make up only 17 percent of the profession, are the most diverse, but women and people of color remain underrepresented at leadership levels in these sectors.
- Women, people of color, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities consistently report lower levels of satisfaction with workplace experiences, such as salary and opportunities for advancement and career development, than their white male counterparts.

The Report Card draws upon 2019 data from the State Bar’s groundbreaking online Attorney Census. Launched in January 2019, this ongoing voluntary annual survey captures key demographic information as well as information on employment, workplace environment, and issues key to recruitment, advancement, and retention. The Report Card’s analyses were based on responses by approximately 95,000 active attorneys.

The Report Card includes calls to action for employers and attorneys, with prompts and recommendations derived from a review of best practices in inclusion and diversity that the State Bar has engaged in over the course of the development of the Attorney Census and this Report Card. Similar recommendations were raised in a recent national study by the American Bar Association, *Left Out and Left Behind: The Hurdles, Hassles, and Heartaches of Achieving Long-Term Legal Careers for Women of Color*.



Two years ago, the State Bar commenced a tradition of annual diversity summits to bring leaders in key legal sectors together to discuss how to improve inclusion and diversity in the legal profession. Later this year, the State Bar

plans two sector-specific summits—focusing on the private and nonprofit sectors. Early last year, the Board of Trustees committed to concrete objectives to advance diversity and inclusion within the legal profession.