2020 ANNUAL EDITION

THE TOP 100 ATTORNEYS OF 2020

FEATURING JOSEPH J. WILSON, MAISEL & ASSOCIATES

Learn How Joseph J. Wilson, Senior Trial Counsel for Maisel & Associates, Defends Complex and Challenging Legal Issues for Travelers Insurance and other High-Profile Clients.

-Story on Page 14

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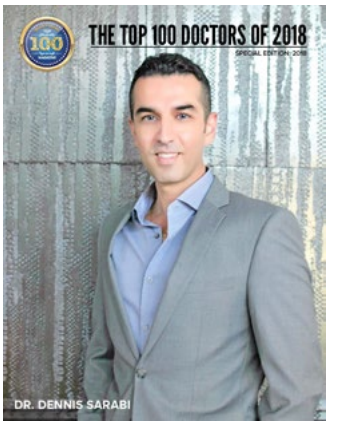

The staff of *The Top 100 Magazine* would like to express their gratitude for having the privilege of working with the brightest, most accomplished, and esteemed professionals in the legal profession.

Through the combined efforts of our account directors, writers, production staff, and artists, as well as the cooperation of everyone who is featured in this extraordinary edition, I believe we are presenting a publication that will serve as a standard for legal achievement for all time.

I know that our readers will be equally impressed by these stories and appreciate the tremendous fortitude, dedication, and perseverance of these individuals, along with the many sacrifices they have made in the pursuit of their dreams.

It is my sincere wish that each and every one of these amazing professionals continue to experience success and my pleasure to present *The Top 100 Attorneys Magazine*.

Joseph Nunziato
CEO, Redwood Media

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THE TOP 100 ATTORNEYS OF 2020

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Camila Medici

My primary area of focus is definitely workers' compensation, representing injured workers in New York, but I'm also a point of contact for clients who might need legal advice outside of my specialty in and out of NY.

What inspired you to be a lawyer? Is this something you always knew you wanted to do?

I was always one of those people who couldn't stay quiet in the presence of injustice. If someone was being mistreated or not getting what they were supposed to get, I couldn't just sit there and do nothing. I had to take some action! I think I was born an advocate. I've always been able to stand in other people's shoes and empathize with their situation, and I always had the courage to fight for them. Improving people's lives and making a positive impact always made me feel good, and I felt being an attorney was the best way to do that.

What made you specialize in workers' compensation?

Workers comp actually came to me. When I graduated law school in 2009, during the recession, there weren't a lot of jobs, except in few areas, and workers' comp was one of them, so I just fell into it. At first, I wasn't sure this was something I wanted to do because I knew nothing about it, but I learned quickly and I realized it was a field that really needed me. This is a volume industry and many firms are too large and have too many files assigned to each attorney, so those attorneys are not able to take the time to understand each client's situation and how to best help them. I knew that I was able to offer something different. I knew compassion, understanding, and hope could go a long way in not only bonding with the client to familiarize with the case enough to win big, but also in helping them heal emotionally from the toughest time of their lives. I offered what most attorneys can't or don't, and I stayed in this field because it was personally rewarding.

What is your specific area of focus?

My primary area of focus is definitely workers' compensation, representing injured workers in New York, but I'm also a point of contact for clients who might need legal advice outside of my specialty in and out of NY. I'm very well connected to many other attorneys in various fields and states, including personal injury, social security, etc. I help people, especially clients who speak Portuguese or Spanish—I'm fluent in both—by connecting them with the best attorney for their need and staying involved in the case as much as necessary.

What specific characteristics set you apart from your legal peers?

Firstly, my practice is intentionally small so that I can devote ample time to each individual client, and with that I give them unparalleled personal attention and optimal results. I started the company because I felt that I needed free range to really work on my rendition of what it means to be a great workers' comp attorney. My goal was to be the best in this field—a field in which lawyers are known for not providing enough attention. I know it may seem oxymoronic to be a boutique practice in a volume industry, but I was able to lower my overhead to successfully keep my practice small. This means I sometimes have to turn people away and refer them. My practice grows over 100 percent every year. But because I keep few files, I must maximize the value of each case, and since I'm only paid when I make my client money, this means my client gets the most for their case.

Secondly, by listening closely to clients and speaking fluent Portuguese and Spanish I am able to be a point of contact for many

> Because I'm a life coach as well as an attorney, I'm able to help my clients with both the emotional and the legal aspects of their claim.

clients who need a lawyer in different fields but do not know how to find the right one or who to trust. Attorneys are infamous for not making time to speak with clients, but I always take the time and clients who reach out to me always speak with me directly. After understanding their needs, I can connect them with the best possible professional in the field they need help in. That way I also network with other competent professionals and make myself memorable so that others think of me if they come across someone I can help.

You're also a life coach, which is unique among attorneys. Tell us more about this role.

I am, and I have a life coaching podcast called *High Vibe Advocate*. It has grown exponentially since I started it last February. I have four or five thousand listeners weekly. Because I'm a life coach as well as an attorney, I'm able to help my clients with both the emotional and the legal aspects of their claim. Getting hurt at work doesn't only have financial ramifications, people also get depressed, anxious, discouraged. They sometimes lose their homes, their relationships fall apart, and it can feel hopeless and scary. I'm there for my clients in a unique way because I have the training and ability to show them that there is a silver lining, and I can help them navigate some of the most difficult times in their lives. My podcast is free and available on all platforms, and I even started a new podcast channel in Portuguese called "Canal do Alto Astral" with the same goal of providing a positive perspective and lifting people's spirits.

What do you see for the future?

My future doesn't look different. I'm living it. But I want to help as many people as possible. I want more people to know that they can always come to me to be their point of contact, I definitely feel perhaps in the future I will become more and more a referral source and the bridge that connects people with a successful outcome for their case and a life of their dreams. It's important to have an attorney on your side, especially when selecting the right attorney in another field. I do that so incredibly well. Even if I won the lottery tomorrow, I would continue to do this because it's my passion. Nothing is more fulfilling to me than helping others succeed.

Your passion for helping people extends to your personal life. Can you share a few examples?

I believe that we need to be the change we want to see, and that all ships will rise. In trying to be of service to others and seeing how I could help them, I have in turn been

blessed with increasing success and connections to help even more people. My personal life includes plenty of volunteer work, and staying connected with the institutions that helped shape me. I am especially connected with The University of Maryland (Go Terps!) and I dedicate much of my time and money to them and their needs.

I also like to volunteer for causes such as Habitat for Humanity, doing some construction work. I get to help people in communities by providing them homes, and, by doing the work I also learn more about the work so many of my clients do, and with that I also learn how their work injuries impact their lives so they can be sure I understand what they are going through.

Do you have a motto that drives you?

Yes, going along with my experience doing construction work with Habitat for Humanity, I like to say: "In order to understand the work, you need to do the work." A lot of times, lawyers are so detached that they can't understand the impact of what their clients are going through and how it affects their lives. I've done the work. I know. And I am their bridge to success after a fall.

Camila was also included in *Top 40 Under 40* and *Top 100 Attorneys in America.* To learn more about her, visit : https://www.thetop100magazine.com/camila-medici

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Q&A with Kim Lisa TAYLOR

We recently had the pleasure of meeting with Kim Lisa Taylor, the founding attorney of the nationwide corporate securities law firm, Syndication Attorneys, PLLC located in St. Augustine, Florida. In addition to her responsibilities as a licensed attorney, Kim is a highly regarded speaker, author, syndicator and entrepreneur. She shared with us the latest updates about her company, the offerings available on her website, and the release of her book: *How to Legally Raise Private Money; The Definitive Guide to Syndication and Raising Private Money for Real Estate and Small Business.*

Q: First, please begin by telling us about syndication. How do you explain it?

A: Syndication is basically people pooling resources together for a common purpose. For example, it could be to buy real estate, a new business, or anything else an individual may need to pool resources to obtain. In the context of what we're talking about, it is when someone has an idea that they would need to raise money to achieve. Their first step would be to consult with us so we could provide them with options for legally raising the money they need from private investors. Then they would hire our firm to draft the appropriate offering documents.

Q: Syndication Attorneys, PLLC is a corporate securities law firm. What are securities offerings?

A: Securities offerings may also be called "Private Placement Memorandums," "funding rounds" or "investment rounds." A securities offering is a way for businesses to legally raise money by selling securities in exchange for investor funds. Additionally, it provides the corporate structure that allows a business to share profits with investors and, at the same time, comply with applicable securities laws.

Q: How would you describe Syndication Attorneys?

A: Syndication Attorneys is a virtual law firm. We primarily practice under federal securities laws, so we can help clients nationwide. Our practice areas are corporate structures combined with securities compliance as our primary focus. Our mission is to help entrepreneurs create successful investment companies so they can achieve their business objectives while helping their investors achieve their own financial goals. We show our clients how to confidently and effectively raise money from private investors for their real estate investment businesses or

startup companies, but even more than that, we teach them how to leverage their time, become more efficient, and manage risks as their companies grow. If anyone would like more information on our company, I encourage them to please visit our website www.SyndicationAttorneys.com.

Our practice areas are corporate structures combined with securities compliance as our primary focus. Our mission is to help entrepreneurs create successful investment companies so they can achieve their business objectives while helping their investors achieve their own financial goals.

Q: What makes your company unique?

A: Other firms may draft securities offerings documents for people who are raising money from private investors, but something that makes us unique is that we also have an affiliated company called InvestorMarketingMaterials.com. We create professionally edited and designed marketing materials for the same people who are raising money for private investors. These materials are available through the company's webstore.

Additionally, we offer free educational opportunities. There is a lot of valuable information on our website (accessible through the Library tab), and we have ongoing teleseminars and monthly webinars (often with guests) where we discuss topics that can help prospective clients gain confidence, knowledge and expertise in raising private money.

Q: What specific educational resources are available on the website?

A: Currently, we have approximately, 40 articles on different aspects of raising private money as well as a section of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). In addition, I frequently speak at live events around the country discussing the principles of syndication, and those are often shared. We host virtual Clients-Only Syndication Masterminds multiple times per month.

Q: To whom or to what would you attribute most of your knowledge in this field?

A: I have been an attorney since 2002 and have been practicing securities law since 2008. Throughout the years, I have been responsible for hundreds of securities offerings. When I first started doing this, I went to every training event I could find on syndication, and I read every book I could find, and I found a mentor. I also read the laws relating to it as well as articles written by others. I went to a lot of training events where I could learn the kinds of things my clients needed to raise money for, essentially learning what my clients were being taught about buying residential and commercial real estate, or creating startup businesses. I also did some of my own investing through group investments and created my own syndicate. So, I would attribute most of my knowledge to having the drive to pursue my training and research independently, which I continue to do today.

Q: How would you describe the staff at Syndication Attorneys?

A: Our staff consists of highly experienced securities attorneys, paralegals/law clerks, and other support personnel. We all work closely together to collectively provide an excellent experience for our clients and adhere to the highest standards of quality control in the offering documents we create. We also have relationships with other professionals who can provide the types of services our clients need to help them grow their businesses.

Q: What can we expect from your new book *How to Legally Raise Private Money*?

A: The book provides the step-by-step process of setting up and running (or investing in) a pooled investment structure. It has gotten great reviews, and people say it really helps them understand the process of organizing and conducting a securities offering as well as their legal obligations under securities laws. The book is available on Amazon, Audible, and Kindle, and a digital flipbook copy is currently available at InvestorMarketingMaterials.com.

We show our clients how to confidently and effectively raise money from private investors for their real estate investment businesses or startup companies, but even more than that, we teach them how to leverage their time, become more efficient, and manage risks as their companies grow.

Syndication Attorneys PLLC

Kim Lisa Taylor — Founder & Securities Attorney

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Jarod Buna

Silicon Valley Attorney & Tech Investor

Way back in 2004, Jarod Buna had just graduated from UCLA School of Law and landed as a fresh-faced associate at Latham & Watkins, LLP, in San Francisco. Nearly 20 years later, he has ascended to the top of the tech world. From Apple to the biggest brand in the ridesharing/gig economy, Jarod has worked with some of the best and most innovative companies in the world. While the bulk of his time is focused on navigating the legalities of IP rights and strategic transactions, community service and fighting social injustices remain at the core of his practice—and a fundamental value that has driven him for over two decades. We sat down with Jarod to learn about his take on the current state of the legal profession, his brush with basketball legends, and his determination to help change society for the betterment of all.

Which future technologies do you anticipate will be most lucrative for the legal sector?

Machine learning and AI, cybersecurity and fintech. What's great about supporting tech clients is that they are finding ways to use new trends in the tech field to change old industries. I've worked with great companies that turn technology into tools that can help people realize their dreams and change the world for the better. Today, the world is in your pocket. The age of the machine is almost here. Not here yet, but it is coming. Many Silicon Valley companies are in this space, and the applications of artificial intelligence are essentially limitless. Companies are developing AI solutions for governmental bodies, financial institutions, and large corporations. We will continue to see significant investment in the AI space as we find new ways to analyze end-user data.

What advice would you give to young attorneys looking to go into tech?

To succeed in the legal tech space, you need to bring energy, creativity, and an innovative spirit to your practice. Tech clients demand it. Know your client's products and services inside and out. You can't effectively advise and counsel on strategy, compliance, or legal risk, without fully understanding how your client's product or service works in the marketplace. Lastly, law and sales are oddly similar professions; like a great salesperson, a great attorneys needs to know how to sell. The best salespeople I know are never "selling" people on anything; instead they are teaching and educating. Great attorneys appreciate this nuance.

How does working with technology clients differ from those in traditional companies?

Startups often have a greater appetite for risk and respond quickly to market conditions. The traditional players are often less risk adverse and evaluate market behavior over longer periods of time. Startups are often founded by a small team, who are looking to quickly take their great idea to market. More mature companies may be in the public eye or focused on sustaining shareholder returns. The priorities and goals for each are often very different. As an in-house attorney, you need to understand that and counsel accordingly. Self-awareness, EQ, feeling the room, and knowing what is important to leadership is 99% of the battle. Understand that and the corner office will have your name on it.

Who do you love to work with?

I really enjoy working with early-stage startup clients and venture funds that invest in those companies. I love standing shoulder to shoulder with talented and hungry

> Now is the time for change. Returning to normal isn't good enough, we need to aim higher.

teams looking to change the world in a small or large way. No greater high than trying to make the world a better place.

I have to ask, is it true you were a ball boy for the Golden State Warriors during the Run TMC days?

Man, you did your research. Yes, I did—Mitch Richmond, Tim Hardaway, and Chris Mullen. During high school in the early nineties, I worked home games for the Warriors, met Michael Jordan, Shaquille, Barkley, Magic, all the greats. Also, met Ben and Jerry, the ice cream guys. It made for long nights but a lifetime experience that I will never forget.

You mentioned community service and fighting social injustices are core to your practice. Tell us about this.

I have been committed to using my legal knowledge to help people since the day I received my law degree. Since graduating from UCLA and serving as a Thurgood Marshall Fellow post-law school, I've actively participated in pro bono services in disadvantaged communities for over two decades now. From immigration and asylum work to public housing advocacy and public defender support, community service has been and will continue to be a big part of my practice. Seeing events and protests of this summer, I know I need to do more. Now more than ever, attorneys need to give back to their communities and help solve many of the challenges facing our nation. Our country is hurting right now. We need to stand up for one another and recognize the fear and pain provoked by the needless killing of George Floyd and others. Deeply rooted discrimination still exists in America today. We see it in our criminal justice system. We see it in education and in public services. As attorneys, we have a duty to eliminate discrimination; it has no place in America.

What can the legal profession do to help drive change?

While our laws have slowly changed over the decades, the reality is that their protections are still not universally applied. As attorneys, we need to recognize that more needs to be done. We, the legal professionals, must all commit to creating a better and more just world for everyone. Now is the time for change. Returning to normal isn't good enough; we need to aim higher.

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JOHN EVEN

Arizona Estate Planning & Probate Attorney

John Even is an estate planning, probate, and business attorney in the Grand Canyon State of Arizona. When he is not hiking the Grand Canyon or traveling to one of his favorite get-away spots, John is busy serving his family, his clients, and his community.

Following in his father's path, John focuses his law practice in the areas of estate planning, business planning, probate, trust administration, and guardianships/conservatorships. Since obtaining an engineering degree from **Stanford** and a J.D. degree from **Arizona State University College of Law,** John has served his clients regarding Arizona legal matters for almost 30 years.

Recently, John was named in ***Best Lawyers in America*** for Trusts and Estates, and he has consistently received an **AV Rating from Martindale-Hubbell** for his high legal and ethical standards. Moreover, John has also received over **100 five-star client reviews** that testify to his accomplishments. When asked, John states that he always strives to give each of his clients **"an EVEN BETTER legal experience."**

How Does Your Estate Plan Affect Your Family?

One of the greatest gifts that you can give your family is the gift of a personalized, well-drafted estate plan to provide for the family members you love, to protect the assets you have worked a lifetime to accumulate, and to pass on the values that are so important to you.

As an attorney who has helped hundreds of families through the estate planning process, John knows firsthand the peace and comfort that completing an estate plan can bring to each family. And besides peace of mind, a well-drafted plan also provides each family with many other benefits as well, including tax savings, avoiding probate, and customized distribution plans for your family (which can last for generations).

How Does John Help Out-of-State Clients?

Arizona is a huge retirement state, and many clients retire here from other states. As Arizona's economy expands, many clients also move to Arizona for employment opportunities. Each year, John helps several of these clients update their estate plan after moving here from another state.

John also helps many out-of-state family members each year with probate and trust matters after the death of a loved in Arizona. In addition, if out-of-state families are dealing with an incapacitated loved one in Arizona, he can help them to get a guardian or conservator appointed for their loved one as well.

Since John started practicing law in 1992, he has successfully helped hundreds of families tackle these difficult issues with confidence.

★★★★★

John was a complete professional in the handling of our estate. His standard and dedication to the details was just what we needed. The entire staff worked with great precision and respect.

Client Review - Lawyers.com 2/24/17

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Avvo Clients' Choice Award 2020 John B. Even

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How Does an Estate Plan Help Your Community?

Although charitable giving looks different for every family, John believes that **charitable giving should be part of every estate plan.** In addition to passing on your legacy for your family, you can also pass on a legacy for your community both during your lifetime and in your will or trust after you pass away.

John believes that one of the greatest gifts each of us can give our community is the gift of a strong legacy of service and a sustainable financial commitment for the future. In his words: "Our community needs each one of us to not only leave a legacy for our families, but also to leave a legacy for our communities."

John has served the Catholic Community Foundation for the Diocese of Phoenix for over 20 years and recently completed his term as chairman of the board. Over the years, his firm has also helped hundreds of 501(c)(3) organizations expand their mission by providing them with top-quality legal representation.

What John loves best about estate planning is seeing his clients' wishes come to life through leaving loving legacies for their families and communities.

★★★★★

Trust is the foundation of any relationship, and John has earned my trust! John's a true professional, and has provided excellent guidance to our family.

Client Review - Lawyers.com 4/24/19

Trusted Legal Advisors with Decades of Experience

John Even

Tim Casey

James Williams

Bob Brown

Esther Sivak

Michael Edgell

Keegan Healy

Abigail Mills

- Adoptions
- Church/Ministry
- Civil Litigation
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- Personal Injury
- Probate
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For a complimentary consultation, contact John Even at 602-663-9263

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Adam M. Moskowitz

A distinguished trial lawyer with over 25 years of experience, attorney Adam M. Moskowitz has received national recognition for delivering justice to millions of class action plaintiffs throughout the country and for generous contributions to his community. His exemplary record includes both courtroom successes and large class action settlements, as he has devoted his entire professional life to advocating for all consumers' rights. As the founding partner of The Moskowitz Law Firm in Coral Gables, Florida, he leads his team's participation in numerous state and national cases, involving teams of different law firms, joined together from throughout the nation. We sat down with him to learn more about him and his new firm.

Tell us a little bit about your background.

I grew up here in Miami, with my mother and my sister, Beth, who is also lawyer. My mom, who passed away last year, did everything she could to give us every opportunity. I attended a great local private high school, the Alexander Muss High School in Israel Program, and studied abroad in London all because of my mom's hard work and efforts. She was really a great role model.

How did you end up at the University of Miami School of Law?

I actually did not get into any of the top-tier law schools to which I applied, which was an extremely humbling experience. However, I took advantage of that year by working as a waiter and giving back to programs that I loved, such as the High School in Israel Program, and AIPAC in Washington, D.C. When I started at the University of Miami School of Law, I loved it so much that I even sometimes slept in the *Law Review* office. I also worked for the dean of students, who offered me an adjunct professor position right out of school, teaching class action litigation.

After graduation, I worked for my prior law firm for about 24 years, running the class action practice and serving as managing partner for many years. As a first-year associate, I represented farmers across Florida and Costa Rica who had used a DuPont product that killed their plants. One of my first assignments was to visit the hospital where our client was being deposed, although he was suffering from what we alleged was health damage from the product. It was very sad to help defend his deposition by holding up "yes" and "no" signs because he couldn't speak. Such rage and sympathy helped me build my passion for class action litigation as my device for justice. My first just trial resulted in one

His exemplary record includes both courtroom successes and large class action settlements, as he has devoted his entire professional life to advocating for all consumers' rights.

THE MOSKOWITZ LAW FIRM

of the largest RICO jury trials in Miami-Dade County. We continue to follow the simple lessons: "Always be ethical, never cut corners, and always have a long-term approach. There is no such thing as a quick win by cutting corners, because your reputation lasts a lifetime."

Have you continued to teach law school in addition to serving as an attorney?

I've taught class action litigation at the University of Miami School of Law for more than 26 years now. I continue to hear from many of my former students, which is extremely gratifying, and I donate my salary back to the law school for scholarships. I teach a seminar on the Multi-District Litigation Panel with the Honorable Judge David Proctor, which has been a great honor for me. One of my greatest honors was donating $1 million from my firm to the Miami Law School with my co-counsel and friends at Podhurst, Orseck and Harke & Clasby to create the first annual University of Miami Class Action and Mass Action Forum. Next year will be our third annual conference, with some of the best lawyers and judges from around the country. Numerous class action settlements have also allowed me and my team to direct court-approved millions of dollars in *cy-pres* contributions to many national and local organizations.

Attorney Adam M. Moskowitz has received national recognition for delivering justice to millions of class action plaintiffs throughout the country and for generous contributions to his community.

What is the most difficult obstacle you've had to overcome during your career?

To be honest, it was dealing with my alcohol abuse. I met my best friend and wife, Jessica, about 15 years ago, and she helped me deal with my personal demons. She's the best thing that ever happened to me, along with our four great children: Serafina, 10; Michael, 8; Samantha, 6; and our youngest daughter, Morgan Grayson, who is eight months old. The legal profession accepts, and even encourages, drinking as a sign of celebration. As a husband and father, I had to decide what direction I wanted my life to take. Over the last eight years, I have built a grounded, solid base, and I now live by the expression from the popular TV show *Friday Night Lights*: "Clear eyes, full heart, can't lose."

Last year, I organized a national town hall meeting sponsored by Duke University Law School and the University of Miami School of Law. The most respected experts on the issues of addiction in our profession spoke on how to deal with anxiety and choose options to live a great life. We raised over $2 million to help many people and various causes.

Why did you start your own law firm?

There are times in our lives when we are faced with circumstances that provide us with a dramatic, different path. It is in those scary, uncertain times when we are really tested, and we either rise to the occasion or fall. I decided that I was not going to fail. With my wife's help, we built a great firm and created a healthy environment with people from our community. My partner, Howard Bushman, is a great balance to me, and is very meticulous and a loving father to three daughters. We're honored to use the class action device as a weapon for consumers to take on the even the largest giants and get our clients justice. There is simply no substitute for hard work, clear ethics, and honesty, and I would put our small firm against any in the country.

What sets The Moskowitz Law Firm apart from other legal practices?

We wanted to keep our firm small, with only about five lawyers, a CFO, a few paralegals, and law students that we continue to hire from Miami Law School. I want to continue the close, healthy, family-style culture that we've developed. Success requires long-term relationships among our co-counsels and other professionals that we deal with, and we're grateful to all the banks and experts that we've worked with for over 25 years, because they're not only professionals, but also very good friends.

What cases are you most proud to have won?

Certainly, our force-placed insurance class action cases that made a real difference in society, and still continue today. Over the past 12 years, we have litigated and settled 32 class cases against the largest banks and mortgage servicers in the country and collected settlements on behalf of more than 1.7 million homeowners for almost $1.8 billion, plus important injunctive changes that ended those practices forever. I will never forget all those calls that I had with homeowners who were facing foreclosure. In just two years, our new firm has litigated and settled almost as many cases, helping hundreds of thousands of consumers with types of important cases.

Don't you represent Native American tribes as well?

We do. We hired an attorney based upon a call from a very good friend who is a professor at the law school. He was the first Miccosukee Native American to graduate from law school, and he's now a great friend and a real role model to his community. As a result, we represent the Miccosukee Tribe and the Seminole Indian Tribe of Florida.

Are you currently involved in any community or civic organizations?

I'm involved with some local organizations, such as my local synagogue, where our children attend day school. Professionally, I sit on various state and national class action groups, such as the Duke University Class Action Board. I'm honored to be featured and to share my personal story so that maybe I can inspire just one person to take the right path and live a great life.

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Joseph J. Wilson

Senior Trial Counsel

As an attorney who has been practicing law for the past 35 years, Joseph J. Wilson is among the countless in-house lawyers who serve as the unsung heroes of the legal profession. In his career alone, Joseph has taken a significant number of cases to verdict and has been involved in numerous successful appeals. As senior trial counsel for Maisel & Associates in downtown Chicago, Joseph litigates complex high exposure claims in various types of civil cases and prepares for trial through the development of strategic, aggressive, and persuasive litigation strategies.

Joseph graduated from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, with a bachelor's degree in political science before going on to obtain his Juris Doctorate from DePaul University's College of Law. Today, Joseph credits his higher education with providing him with the knowledge, discipline, and moral clarity necessary to achieve success in both his professional and personal life.

As in-house attorneys for Travelers Insurance Company, Maisel & Associates hold a reputation for providing high quality legal representation and excellent client services as a dedicated team. The lawyers at Maisel & Associates are not only extremely capable legal technicians, but also have business acumen and expertise in process and project management experience. Their attorneys keenly understanding the role technology plays in the delivery of legal services. Due to the devastating nature of the coronavirus pandemic, the legal services industry has had to act swiftly to minimize disruptions to business continuity. Years before the pandemic hit, Maisel & Associates embraced technology in unparalleled ways, allowing them to mobilize a remote work force of attorneys and support professionals in response to work-from-home directives without missing a beat. Remote collaboration tools such as web-based video conferencing platforms have been ingrained in attorneys work processes prior to Covid-19. The innovative technology processes at Maisel & Associates set their lawyers up for success in ways that are tangible and extremely important to job satisfaction and performance.

Joseph's primary area of focus at the firm involves defending complex civil claims with an emphasis on wrongful death, transportation negligence, product liability, construction defects, and all aspects of tort liability. For example, in his last jury trial, Joseph defended a trucking company involved in a significant contested liability case that took place in Cook County, Illinois. The trucking case's rare no liability finding in Cook County was featured in *The Chicago Daily Law Bulletin.*

According to Joseph, it is his passion for the law, tireless advocacy, and steadfast integrity that sets him apart in the legal industry. He explains, "The legal discipline is intriguing, and the litigation arena can be fast-paced and stressful. My passion for the law drives me to excel as an advocate for my clients and to achieve favorable jury verdicts or successful case resolutions before trial. My focus and persistence drive me to develop cohesive, convincing litigation strategies."

Joseph's primary area of focus at the firm involves defending complex civil claims with an emphasis on wrongful death, transportation negligence, product liability, construction defects, and all aspects of tort liability.

Joseph credits his parents with teaching him the importance of hard work and staying humble. "These lessons fostered a mindset of continuous learning and growth, which motivates me to continually strive for higher levels of performance. In addition, these core values have helped me to persevere, to find ways to appreciate all that I have achieved, and to take action instead of waiting for things to happen. Hard work builds dignity, helps you overcome your doubts, and encourages others to perform at a higher level," states Joseph.

Explaining how he decided to become a lawyer, Joseph says, "America is a society based on law and justice. I gravitated to the legal profession because it provides me with the opportunity to be of service to others. Throughout the course of my legal career, I have always asked myself what I can do to help my clients. The ability to provide legal guidance to my client's faced with challenging situations provides me with motivation and a feeling of satisfaction."

Over the course of his far-reaching legal career, Joseph has had the opportunity to work at large private law firms and in-house legal departments. He believes that the knowledge and litigation experience of in-house attorneys has increasingly equaled and even exceeded their peers at private firms. Joseph explains, "In-house attorneys are typically assigned exclusively to a case file from initial referral to conclusion. At private firms, assignments are typically delegated to less experienced attorneys before senior counsel steps in. Having a dedicated lawyer assigned to a file from the start allows the in-house attorney to develop a superior working knowledge of the intricacies of the case, resulting in enhanced preparation and significant advantage at trial. Moreover, this allows in-house counsel to develop closer relationships with their clients while instilling trust and confidence in the scope of our vigorous defense. The end result is the delivery of superior legal services to our clients."

Joseph is also passionate about educating his peers on how to become aggressive trial lawyers and how to develop advanced skills to effectively handle different types of cases. For instance, he has been a frequent speaker at internal training programs on a variety of topics impacting areas of civil litigation and is an active member of several committees for various industry organizations such as the Trucking Industry Defense Association (TIDA), the Claims and Litigation Management Alliance (CLMA), as well as state and local bar associations.

As a litigator involved in cases with complex and challenging legal issues, Joseph has developed significant skills in the areas of problem solving, negotiating, relationship- building, and creative thinking, which allow him to accept the challenge of each new case with the same tenacity and zeal. "A person becomes a better human being when he is sensitive to the needs of society and strives to contribute to social justice in every way possible," says Joseph. As a lawyer focused on civil litigation and trial work, Joseph finds the following quote by Thomas Jefferson to still hold true in the twenty-first century: "I consider trial by jury as the only anchor ever yet imagined by man, by which a government can be held to the principles of its constitution."

As senior trial counsel for Maisel & Associates in downtown Chicago, Joseph litigates complex high exposure claims in various types of civil cases and prepares for trial through the development of strategic, aggressive, and persuasive litigation strategies.

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Trucking company not liable in crash

Defense recreated 2012 collision on Tri-State Tollway

JORDYN REILAND
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A Cook County jury last week rendered a defense verdict in favor of a trucking company and one of its truck drivers after a 2012 crash on an Illinois tollway.

The case before Circuit Judge Ann Collins-Dole stemmed from a Sept. 20, 2012, collision between truck driver Russell Volkert, who was employed by Monterey Mushrooms Inc., and motorist Derrek A. Morris.

Apart from the plaintiff and defendant, there were no witnesses to the crash in the southbound lanes of the Tri-State Tollway near Lynwood Township. As a result, both parties disputed how it occurred.

Volkert, who drove trucks for more than 30 years, testified he saw Morris' vehicle spin out of control from his driver's side mirror. He contends Morris' car struck Volkert's 52-foot trailer before hitting a barrier wall.

Morris contends Volkert's truck rear-ended his car and that the force caused his vehicle to spin to the right and into a barrier wall. He also asserted the left side of his head hit the driver's side window causing him to briefly lose consciousness.

Volkert was represented by Joseph J. Wilson and Yolanda M. Ricke of Maisel & Associates.

An Illinois State Police trooper who responded to the crash soon testified that Morris stated he was changing lanes when the truck hit him, according to Wilson. The officer also testified that Morris declined an ambulance and never told the officer he lost consciousness.

While Morris did not go to the hospital the day of the crash, he alleged he woke up the next day with head pain, nausea and bleeding from his nostrils. His girlfriend took him to the hospital where he was treated over several months by a chiropractor, neurologist, orthopedic surgeon and pain specialist, Wilson said.

Joseph J. Wilson

In August 2016, Morris was treated by a pain specialist who administered radiofrequency ablation treatments.

That doctor testified as the plaintiff's medical expert and opined Morris would need the treatments twice a year for the rest of his life.

Wilson retained a neurosurgeon, accident reconstruction engineers and biomechanical engineers who all testified at trial.

The accident reconstruction engineers recreated the crash and path of Morris' vehicle by using the tire marks and impact points on the truck, Wilson said.

The biomechanical engineer presented an injury impact analysis based on the reconstruction and determined there would have been no significant tissue or structural damage to the plaintiff's spine in this incident given the three at which the crash occurred.

The neurosurgeon testified there was no evident spinal damage following the crash and that anything indicated on the scans was pre-existing.

Wilson said he was pleased with the result despite some initial concerns about trying the case in a venue like Cook County.

"Given the right set of facts with proper preparation we felt that a Cook County jury would respond properly," he said. "We were proven right."

Morris was represented by Benjamin B. Kelly of the Vedolyak Law Group LLC. He could not be reached for comment.

The case is *Derrek A. Morris v. Russell Volkert, et al.*, 17 L 4965.

Cook County Circuit Court
Derrek A. Morris v. Russell Volkert, et al.
17 L 4965
Circuit Judge Ann Collins-Dole

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Jesse A. Bernal & Peter Robbins

> We want to stay small and nimble enough to devote our full focus to each of our clients. he explains. I am deeply humbled by just how I have been able to be where I am and have my own firm. Not only that but being able to provide quality service for my clients.

Led by founding partners Jesse Bernal and Peter Robbins, two innovative legal minds with over 50 years of combined experience, Bernal & Robbins, APLC, is an insurance defense law firm specializing in representing employers and insurance carriers in some of the toughest workers' compensation cases and in all matters related to employment law, appeals, lien defense, SIU & fraud defense, case in chief, and 132a and serious and willful defense. Based in the greater Los Angeles area, the bulk of the practice is focused on workers' compensation, serving a diverse client base across California, from bakeries to health care, and staffing and manufacturing companies. They work hard for their clients, wielding an uncommon ability to handle tough cases and get results quickly and cost-effectively—all while working to advance their clients' positions.

With a well-known reputation as aggressive litigators and negotiators with an outstanding record of dismissals and settlements, Jesse and Peter lead a small but nimble group of knowledgeable attorneys that has saved their clients millions of dollars. They work with each of their clients personally, devoting their full focus and experience to each of their cases, and take a collaborative approach to develop the best strategies and approaches for the strongest defense.

While the legal landscape is littered with workers' compensation firms, what sets Bernal & Robbins apart is not just their invaluable experience and vast knowledge of the law, it is not only their record of legal victories, but the importance they place on relationships with their clients as well as their legal adversaries. "We have great negotiation skills because we maintain great relationships, even with our adversaries, and this is important. By knowing the adversary, we can pick up a phone and call and find a resolution quickly, without litigation," Jesse explains.

With 18 years of experience, **Jesse** has dedicated his entire career to the area of workers' compensation law. He entered the legal arena in 2002 as a paralegal. He moved on to serve as a hearing representative, gaining the experience of an attorney. As he took depositions and participated in trials, he worked closely with insurance carriers to minimize their exposure. In 2015, he hit the ground running as a lawyer—not as the typical wet-behind-the-ears law school grad, but as an attorney backed by insight and knowledge gained over 13 years of experience. In 2018, he co-founded Bernal & Robbins with a reputation as an aggressive lawyer who fights for his clients. "We're not only fighting against the applicant's attorneys; we're also fighting against a liberal system. We're in a position where we have to stand up to people and the law itself. We like to work hard for our clients, and we want to make our clients look good," he explains.

Often called upon to develop strategies for some of the toughest cases, Jesse draws from his experience to examine each case to determine what has and has not worked

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to develop an adequate defense for their clients. In his tireless efforts on behalf of his clients, he has made case law that benefits them as well as the industry. He leads a team of legal innovators who take a methodical approach to solving problems to develop unique strategies that have garnered them a reputation for not only getting dismissals, but for obtaining great outcomes for their clients.

Jesse places tremendous value on relationships, which is the reason for the firm's intentionally small size even as it is expanding into other practice areas, such as general liability. They have a personal relationship with each of their clients, and they strive to keep them, working cases themselves as opposed to handing it over to an associate or someone without the experience. "Most of our clients are leaving big firms because they lack the personal attention. We want to stay small and nimble enough to devote our full focus to each of our clients," he explains. "I am deeply humbled by just how I have been able to be where I am and have my own firm. Not only that but being able to provide quality service for my clients."

Jesse received his Juris Doctor degree from Abraham Lincoln University School of Law. Outside of his work, he plays in a workers' comp band with several judges, and they've hosted events for community organizations, including Kids' Chance.

With a well-known reputation as aggressive litigators and negotiators with an outstanding record of dismissals and settlements, Jesse and Peter lead a small but nimble group of knowledgeable attorneys that has saved their clients millions of dollars.

Jesse A. Bernal

A former workers' compensation judge with over 40 years of experience in handling complex workers' compensation matters, **Peter Robbins** is founding partner of Bernal & Robbins. He leads the firm as a well-respected legal mind and a certified specialist in workers' compensation law. His invaluable insight into the inner workings of the judicial process and the myriad personalities comprising it benefits his clients tremendously as he works aggressively on their behalf to secure dismissals and obtain settlements, saving them millions of dollars. He also serves as an arbitrator in the ADR system. Peter received his Juris Doctor degree from Loyola Law School, and he holds an undergraduate degree from the University of California at Los Angeles. Peter took the California Bar exam in 1980 and was sworn in as an attorney that year.

He has authored several editions of Research Guides pertaining to workers' compensation case law and statutory. Peter has observed the evolution of workers' compensation law from three different perspectives, initially as an applicant attorney and thereafter as a workers' compensation judge and defense counsel for numerous self-insured entities and insurance carriers—and always with an eye not only upon the never-ending barrage of often bewildering and sometimes contradictory case law decisions, but also upon the workers' compensation system itself and the underlying political and legislative intent that forms, shapes, and changes it.

Peter Robbins

Robert Hilliard | Founding Partner

Our mission statement is “Justice does not fight for itself.” I feel very strongly about social justice.

Tell us about your law firm, Hilliard Martinez Gonzales.

I launched the firm in 1985 with just a Radio Shack telephone, and we now have over 100 employees. I have seven children, and two of them practice with me. We try not to be pigeonholed. We take any cases that need taking—personal injury, automotive, social justice, and other areas. We have a long track record of standing up for those who have been financially bullied or are injured by negligence. For 40 years we have made sure we’re the voice for those who don’t have one in regards to litigation, social justice, and corporate greed. Our main office is in Corpus Christi, Texas, but we represent clients all over the country.

The culture of your firm is unique, given its size, as is your approach to the law and your clients. Can you give us some insight on this, and how it has fueled the success of your firm?

We have grown over the years, and I attribute that to my personal philosophy that life and law must always blend together. I don’t keep my firm separate from my family, and vice versa, and I expect the same for all that work for me. We’re trial lawyers, so we have to learn how to tell the stories of our clients, and my own life experience taught me that you can’t tell someone else’s story until you know your own story. This is because you tell someone’s story from your own perspective, and the ability to communicate feelings, fear and pain is based on how well you know yourself—and the jury knows authenticity when it hears authenticity.

We practice law with feeling. I disagree with people who say you can’t bring feeling into the law or the courtroom. The law was created out of feeling; decisions are made out of feeling. We make an important positive footprint in this world with good decisions made from true passion and feeling. I can sense artificiality in a second, and I can see when people aren’t transparent. I walk the walk, so everyone around me sees it, including judges, partners, and my family. If you look at the various national litigation we are part of, particularly the GM ignition switch in New York, we

were successful because of our philosophy, not despite it.

Can you share some of your most notable cases, and why you felt it was your duty to take them on?

Our mission statement is "Justice does not fight for itself." I feel very strongly about social justice. There are two cases that come immediately to mind in which I felt it was my personal and professional duty to represent these clients. The first was about eight years ago, when I defended a 15-year-old boy who was shot at the U.S. border. Our firm motto is, "If it's not right, we're going to fix it," so we make sure we're the difference people need, and he needed us. His name was Sergio Adrian Hernández Guereca. He was unarmed, playing with his friends near the U.S./Mexico border, when he was shot in the head by U.S. Border Patrol. The second is the case in Minnesota involving Koua Lee, an immigrant, who was wrongfully convicted of manslaughter after he was involved in an accident which, as it turns out, was the fault of his runaway Toyota. We got him out of jail after four years.

For 40 years we have made sure we're the voice for those who don't have one in regards to litigation, social justice, and corporate greed. Our main office is in Corpus Christi, Texas, but we represent clients all over the country.

You have a degree in English literature in addition to a law degree. How does the former inform your work and your personal life?

I do. I was a *summa cum laude* English lit major. In my home office, I don't have

We take any cases that need taking—personal injury, automotive, social justice, and other areas.

law books; I have tons of books on poetry, autobiographies, etc. Over centuries, everyone's trials and tribulations are similar, so I like to read about and try and understand how others have viewed their life's issues, including the great philosophers and writers of the world who struggled with these problems and attempted to make sense of them.

You were awarded the *Never Forgotten Award* for public justice, and you hold many National and State awards for your legal work. What other awards do you proudly display on your wall?

I received the *Never Forgotten Award* from The Innocence Project of Minnesota in recognition of my work to free Koua Lee. It was the organization's first award of its kind. I've won *Best Lawyer in the Country* by a national law journal, and I was a 2011 finalist for *Public Justice's National Trial Lawyer of the Year*. My home office, where I spend most of my time has a painting that says simply "LIBERTY." I have an original Theordore Roosevelt signed description of the American Boy and the values of that boy. And a photo of my wife, from whom all love in my life flows.

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Jennifer Jancosek

Q & A

What are your primarily responsibilities?

I am the founder and main attorney of Jancosek Law. I oversee operations, manage our employees, and assist clients with estate planning.

What areas does the firm focus on?

Our main focus, and the area I'm most passionate about, is estate planning. I do some probate as well, but my main focus is estate planning—protecting people with a plan that is unique to their family and assets. I've practiced in several areas during my 10+ years in the legal field, but I've found helping my estate planning clients to be the most rewarding. I went to law school in Chicago, where I began in criminal law, working at the Cook County State's Attorney's office. After realizing I didn't want to pursue a career in government, I moved to Los Angeles to work for a medium-sized firm doing estate planning, family law, and business law. Since estate planning has always been a passion of mine, I soon decided to make it my focus, by starting a firm of my own.

Why did you start your own firm?

I'm from an old-fashioned Midwestern family, and I've been working since the age of 14. My dad, a successful engineer, instilled a strong work ethic from an early age. When I moved to California, I was helping my employer grow their firm, but found my own capabilities limited by the processes that had already been put in place. I had significant experience in the workforce, and I didn't want to be held back by following law firm traditions that resulted in a lackluster client experience; I wanted to provide the best legal services possible, according to my own terms, and so I set out to start my own firm. Now, I have control over my process, and part of my policy is to respond to every client within 48 hours. I have brought on a law clerk and team of administrative assistants who share my vision, and our goal is to bring "Effortless Estate Planning" to everyone across the state of California.

You offer your clients virtual and mobile services. Tell us how this works.

With estate planning, there is always an assumption that we only work with the elderly, but that is not true. We do work with a lot of retirees, but we also work with health care workers, law enforcement, new parents, veterans, scientists, etc. I was always told that virtual services wouldn't work, but I was determined to find a way. People generally don't want to give out private information without getting to know someone first, even if it's their attorney. On the other hand, due to ethical concerns, the most important thing for me is a face-to-face meeting, so that I can ensure a person has the legal competency required before signing a will, trust, or other legal document. By using widely-available video chat systems, I can maximize the number of clients I can meet in a week, while making it an effortless process for them. This allows people to schedule time with me around their own schedules, and gives them a chance to get comfortable with our team before providing personal information. Some people also work odd hours, such as healthcare and security workers, and they still deserve the same level of service. By using these video meetings, our clients receive the same experience of meeting an attorney, but from the comfort of their own home. This allows them to easily get the process started, regardless of their schedule.

By providing great customer service, availability, and making people comfortable, I'm able to build trust with my clients so that we can work together to develop a strategy that is best for their family and property.

In addition to our virtual services across the State of California, we also serve the local Los Angeles community with mobile services. While we don't currently have the capacity to serve the entire State of California, our mobile services are geared toward those with mobility issues or a lack of computer access. When a virtual meeting isn't an option, we are happy to bring the office to our clients, to ensure that everyone has access to an effortless estate plan.

What makes you, as an attorney, unique from your legal peers?

First, what I do is different from my peers in that I have a unique background, being a Midwest transplant living in Los Angeles. I have a personable, Midwestern attitude, that drives me to provide exceptional customer service, while being savvy and leveraging technology to drive our office forward. By providing great customer service,

Our goal is to bring "Effortless Estate Planning" to everyone across the state of California.

availability, and making people comfortable, I'm able to build trust with my clients so that we can work together to develop a strategy that is best for their family and property.

Second, I am always looking to make improvements. I want my clients to feel comfortable with me, rather than just treating them as a number. We do a lot of surveys and feedback requests, and I'm always willing to take the time to answer questions and help people through difficult decisions. I am in this field to help people, and I am with my clients through every step of their estate planning journey.

Will you share some of the charitable causes you're involved with?

I have taken part in the L.A. Reading Partners program, where I read to children at Wilshire Crest Middle School who were testing below the target reading scores for their age. I am also a member of the Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, taking part in charitable opportunities across the city of Los Angeles, and I have donated time to the Los Angeles County Bar Associations domestic violence clinic.

We do a lot of surveys and feedback requests, and I'm always willing to take the time to answer questions and help people through difficult decisions. I am in this field to help people, and I am with my clients through every step of their estate planning journey.

JANCOSEKLAW
EFFORTLESS ESTATE PLANNING

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Randal Gaines

Q & A

What type of law do you practice?

I am a trial lawyer. I specialize in all types of personal injury cases, which include medical malpractice, auto accidents, industrial cases, toxic release cases, and class action toxic release. I've been practicing for 26 years, and I've always been a sole practitioner.

You also serve the citizens of Louisiana in a broader legal capacity. Tell us about these roles.

I do. I'm assistant city attorney for the City of New Orleans and associate director of the criminal justice department at Southern University. I've been a member of the state legislature for the last eight years. I served as vice chair for the civil law committee and as chairman for the Louisiana legislative committee, and I now serve as the chair for the judiciary committee.

What inspired your desire to become a lawyer and to specialize in personal injury?

The desire to become a lawyer was shaped by my childhood. I developed a passion at an early age because I always had a need to devote myself to public service and make a positive difference. When I was 12, I saw the movie *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and it inspired me to become a lawyer to make sure everyone, regardless of race or color, had access to justice. My primary ambition wasn't to do with financial security, but had to do with wanting to contribute to the moving forward of the cause of justice.

My desire to do personal injury just happened. It was to remedy situations where people sustained injury or were harmed. It was more aligned with my desire to help my fellow man by being able to replenish the loss someone suffered.

Tell us about your journey from law school to opening your own practice.

I grew up in the River Parishes, and I went to law school at Southern University Law School. After I graduated, I served in the military, and then went back to finish my law degree. My first job was clerking at the U.S. bankruptcy court in Houston. After that, I worked as a tax attorney with the IRS in the Dallas Fort-Worth office. I had gotten married that same year, and my wife was a student at LSU medical school in New Orleans. We were apart for a year, and being separated became too hard, so I left and came back to Louisiana. I was hired as an assistant city attorney for the City of New Orleans, representing the city tax department—working right across the street from my wife, who worked at the hospital. Five years later, in 1995, I left to start my private practice.

You were awarded the Louisiana Cross of Merit for leadership and bravery while in the military, and you played key leadership roles during Operation Desert Storm. Tell us about this.

I was a Lt. Colonel in the military at the time, and I received this honor for my leadership in the coordination of the rescue and evacuation effort of over 30,000 evacuees from the Louisiana Superdome during Hurricane Katrina. While serving as a captain with a MASH unit deployed to Iraq, I coordinated the evacuation of over 300 wounded American soldiers from the combat zone. I am honored to have served with such brave men and women in the service of my country.

What is your personal philosophy that drives you?

My personal philosophy is my work ethic. I believe you should give clients a higher level of service than they expect and always go above and beyond the call of duty, whether it is giving advice or looking out for their wellbeing, showing consideration to their personal life aside from providing legal service. It's about providing a comprehensive standpoint, encouraging them, helping them. Sometimes clients just need help and someone to care. I personally care about them. Over the years, I have recovered millions of dollars for clients through hard work and perseverance. I have been told by other people in the legal profession that I have always gotten my clients excellent settlements,

I over-prepare for my cases, always prepare every aspect and ensure every aspect is thoroughly evaluated. I don't leave anything to chance; I anticipate challenges and prepare for them.

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and have always been complimented on being a great trial lawyer, even by many judges. I think this is just a natural outcome of my work ethic and my passion for justice.

Can you share some of your most notable cases?

I'll share two that come to mind. A lady had her toe cut off by a tow truck when they were towing her car. She ultimately was awarded $480k, the largest I've seen in this state, the largest recovered at trial. I had another case in Baton Rouge. The defense lawyer offered $5,000, and my client had over $20k in medical bills. This made me even more passionate and more determined to make sure that the case turned out in my client's favor, and the court awarded $256k.

You've received multiple awards for your work with the community. Tell us about some of these.

I've always been passionate about public service. I was awarded the *Flame of Inspiration Award* and the *Champions Award* for community leadership and public service. Twice I've received the *Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Award* for my civil rights work, and I received the *Southern Christian Leadership Conferences National Chairman Award*.

To what do you attribute your success?

All of my cases are referral based, for the past 26 years. I've never advertised, and I've always had a flourishing practice. I believe this is due to the service I provide. I work my cases with a high degree of competence. I over-prepare for my cases, always prepare every aspect and ensure every aspect is thoroughly evaluated. I don't leave anything to chance; I anticipate challenges and prepare for them.

Randal L. Gaines Law Offices, LLC

Over the years, I have recovered millions of dollars for clients through hard work and perseverance. I have been told by other people in the legal profession that I have always gotten my clients excellent settlements, and have always been complimented on being a great trial lawyer, even by many judges.

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Niv V. Davidovich

Managing Partner

An experienced litigator and counselor boasting diverse legal experience, Niv V. Davidovich works as a construction, real estate, and business attorney representing private developers, landowners, property managers, architects, engineers, contractors, and investors. As managing partner at Davidovich Stein Law Group, LLP, he represents clients in trial, arbitration, mediation, and administrative hearings involving complex issues of fact and law, both within the state and federal courts. Niv also holds substantial appellate experience with the California Court of Appeal. Recently, we had the honor of speaking with him to learn more about his background, law firm, and plans for the future.

Because of the various other types of litigation we practice in the office, our legal team also holds more experience and well-rounded skills, which we apply to the personal injury aspect of the firm.

Let's begin with a bit about your background. How did you get started in the legal services industry?

My background is unique because I earned an electrical engineering degree from the University of Southern California in 2002 before receiving my JD in 2006 from Southwestern Law School. I was inspired to open my own practice by some of the mentors at the firms I'd previously worked for and because I felt it was the next, natural evolution of my career.

Where did you work before opening Davidovich Stein Law Group?

I began my legal career as an associate with an insurance defense firm where I worked for over two years. Then, in 2011, I accepted a position at a larger practice representing pubic agencies, such as the Los Angeles School District and the University of California, as well as numerous national private developers.

How did these positions help to prepare you for managing your own practice?

I saw litigation at the highest level where amounts in dispute were in the tens of millions of dollars. I also had the opportunity to see how high-risk cases are handled and to personally defend brokers, architects, engineers, and other providers in real estate. Learning about the different claims that are made against those people gave me a unique perspective on both sides of the business–defending and making claims.

Tell us about the Davidovich Stein Law Group.

I opened the practice in 2017 and serve as managing partner. Our team consists of six attorneys as well as four additional staff members. The firm's core is made up of real estate, construction, and landlord/tenant law, but we also recently opened a personal injury department. Although we are not licensed outside of California, we have been admitted in federal courts to represent clients in New York, Texas, and Arizona.

How did you expand into personal injury?

We had a few cases come in, and I saw that personal injury law held a lot of growth potential. As a result, I hired Mark Oknyansky, who comes from both a real estate and personal injury background. So far, we have won some impressive settlements. In December, we negotiated a settlement of $1 million for a construction accident, which was the policy limit for the defendant, as well as a settlement of $300,000 for a slip and fall in a condominium. We also won a $125,000 settlement for a slip and fall on a sidewalk against a municipal defendant, amongst myriad other settlements for a variety of different clients and circumstances. These great results early in our personal injury department's existence have made me really excited about the great potential and future for our new practice group.

How are you unique in the personal injury aspect?

We have attorneys, not just paralegals or case workers, working on every case from beginning to end where most other personal injury firms don't even get an attorney actively involved until litigation. We are also very selective to make sure we have sufficient resources for the cases we take on because we want to dedicate ample time to all aspects of each case. Because of the various other types of litigation we practice in the office, our legal team also holds more experience and well-rounded skills, which we apply to the personal injury aspect of the firm.

Does each attorney have a different area of focus?

Everyone works in some area of real estate, but we do have different specialties. For example, my partner, Charlie Stein, is head of the unlawful detainer department while our associate, Mark, is a licensed real estate broker and handles all cases pertaining to disputes involving brokers and agents that occur during real estate transactions. Mark is also in charge of the personal injury department due to his legal background in that area. Also, we're proud to have Edmund Sherman in our office, who is senior

counsel. Ed has a tremendous well of civil litigation experience, but also has deep knowledge in probate and bankruptcy law, which can frequently bleed into our other areas of practice. Our associate, Stephanie Drell, who also has a very diverse background, assists in the UD, real estate, and PI departments.

What is your personal area of expertise?

I am generally involved in all aspects of the firm's various practices, but I am more involved in construction matters because my family is in the construction business, and I hold a degree in electrical engineering. I have studied it, grew up with it, and have worked at a firm that focused on construction law for larger developers and public entities.

Is it more helpful to have team members with different specialties in comparison to everyone focusing on the same area?

Having a different area of expertise from each member is great because we can offer more than a single point of legal service, as well as a variety of different viewpoints on the same issue, allowing us to come up with the best solution instead of a repetitive or myopic view of numerous identically experienced attorneys. If you're a property manager, for example, you don't have to call different lawyers for different matters. We offer a one stop shop, particularly for real estate matters because we are well equipped to do everything that falls under the real estate umbrella, which includes landlord/tenant and construction issues.

What makes you stand out from other attorneys?

I'm passionate about what I do, but practicality and pragmatism are also top priorities. Clients can be, understandably, emotionally invested in their cases, which can make it difficult to make a hard decision based upon cold reason and rationality alone. Our clients also have a lot of resources at stake. So, what makes me different is that I analyze every case from a business perspective first and the actual probability of winning. I view every case realistically, setting aside my own desires to prosecute or win a case, or how I feel about the opposing side or their attorney. Every case is purely a business decision that targets my client's best possible business outcome and that how is how I advise my clients. Even personal injury clients are, in the end, looking for compensation for their damages, and this focused view can help them make the best long-term decision for them in a legal environment in which they might not be comfortable operating.

What do you see for future of the practice?

We are planning on expanding the group by targeting more property manager, landlord and developer clients, as well as expanding our roster of attorneys. We also plan to expand the personal injury and eviction areas of the practice.

We are also very selective to make sure we have sufficient resources for the cases we take on because we want to dedicate ample time to all aspects of each case.

DAVIDOVICH STEIN LAW GROUP

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Kristian Kraszewski

- Investment Loss Attorney;
- Securities Attorney,
- Managing Partner Securities Litigation Dept.

What area of law do you specialize in?

I represent investors, typically retirees, who have received unsuitable investment advice from their brokers. Most of my clients have been sold investments that have destroyed their financial well-being. All too often retirees are sold high commission products that stop producing income and cannot be sold in the open market. It is always a sad situation, but one that I am passionate about. As a small law firm, we are taking on some of the largest law firms and brokerage firms on Wall Street every day. These firms have never-ending resources to fight us in our quest for justice for our clients. We have overcome so many obstacles that Wall Street has thrown at us, and have a thriving practice representing aggrieved investors.

I manage the firm's securities litigation department. We represent investors in all fifty states in FINRA arbitration claims against financial advisors and brokerage firms.

You actually worked in finance before becoming an attorney. How does this experience help you represent your clients?

I've been an attorney for 13 years now. In my former career, I was a commodities trader in the World Trade Center, and a securities investor for about eight years. I knew when I went to law school that I would focus on becoming a securities litigator. I knew that my financial background would help my legal practice, so I tailored my focus in law school and my internships towards this area of law.

Tell us about Kyros Law.

Kyros law is a consumer advocacy law firm. Kyros Law was formed 22 years ago. I started with the firm in early 2012. I manage the firm's securities litigation department. We represent investors in all fifty states in FINRA arbitration claims against financial advisors and brokerage firms. My partner in Boston represents victims of financial and consumer fraud, toxic torts, defective drugs, defective medical devices, and professional athletes in concussion cases. As a whole, we represent the little guy against corporate America and Wall Street.

Contingency basis means that we do not take any money from our clients unless we are able to get our clients a recovery.

You work on a contingency basis. What does this mean, and how does it help your clients?

Contingency basis means that we do not take any money from our clients unless we are able to get our clients a recovery. Our clients have already faced financial hardship due to unsuitable investment advice, so paying money to lawyers out of their own pocket is not an option.

What qualities separate you from your legal peers?

My background as a commodities trader and securities investor helps me to understand the products that damaged our clients' financial well-being. It is not just understanding the legal logistics of a case, but also the financial aspects of the investment products. I went back to law school at 30, so I came into law as a young lawyer, but as an experienced investor.

Two people in your life were instrumental to your success in law, including being named multiple times in *Florida Super Lawyers*. Tell us about this.

My wife and my former soccer coach have been instrumental in my decision to go to law school and in my success. My wife, Jessica, has made personal and professional sacrifices that have allowed me to pursue my dream of becoming an attorney. She supported our family while I went to law school, and continuously prioritized my career as we moved around the country to further my experience. My legal career and achievements would be impossible without her constant support.

Charlie Curto was my college soccer coach. He is like a father to me. He pushed me to become the captain and MVP of our Division I soccer team at Siena, and eventually to play for a professional team in Albany. Charlie kept me on the right path personally, professionally, and athletically. Charlie always encouraged my goals by demanding more from me on and off the field. He is someone I have relied upon for advice throughout my adult life, and he has been an instrumental influence in many things I have accomplished.

What is your life's philosophy or motto?

There is no short cut for hard work. I get up at 4 a.m. every week day to start working. You have to put in the time and effort no matter how long it takes. You have to move forward every day, with purpose, passion, and dedication, no matter how difficult. I hope that living this way sets a positive example for my son Porter.

KL KYROS|LAW

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JOEL W. BARUCH

Attorney, Owner, & President

With an established reputation for being tough and aggressive, Joel Baruch has always done what it takes to get results. In fact, his track record shows over four decades of successful personal injury, employment law, business litigation, general tort, criminal defense and civil rights law practice. As the owner and president of the Law Office of Joel W. Baruch, he has led his team in winning more than 200 trials, scores of civil case victories, and millions of dollars in settlements. Recently, he sat down to talk with us about his background, what it means to be a lawyer, and his thoughts about the future.

Let's start with the early years. Describe your life before you became an attorney.

Well, before I started my career, I spent 9 months serving in Vietnam. I would have been there longer, but I got wounded and ended up spending a year in the hospital. I served the remainder of my 4 years in the states, and then in 1972, I completed my bachelor's degree in sociology at UCLA. From there, I enrolled in Hastings College of Law in San Francisco and graduated with a Juris Doctor degree in 1976.

How did you get your start in the field after law school?

I was admitted to the California Bar in 1979 and got my first job as a public defender for Orange County's Public Defenders Society. I remained there for 7 years trying homicide and death penalty cases before I decided to go into private practice with Jack Earley in 1985. Jack was a well-known defender, so as his partner, I had 150 criminal cases and tried to jury 25 more homicide and death penalty cases.

Representing helpless clients has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my life, and I know it would be rewarding for countless others who have the strength and courage to pursue the job.

Is this when you decided to stop practicing criminal defense?

Yes. By then, I was 45 years old, and I'd made up my mind not to waste any more time in that area. I wanted to do civil litigation. However, I knew that making the transition was going to come with some challenges. Doing criminal defense in Orange County was always high profile, and I was going to be representing victims that I would have cross examined in my former role.

So, how did you go about transitioning into civil litigation?

In 1992, I decided to open my own practice. I knew that transitioning to civil litigation was going to be different, but I flew under the radar and gradually made a name for myself. Over the years, I've been a plaintiff's attorney and a contingent fee attorney. However, my primary practice is in employment discrimination, civil rights, some constitutional law, personal injury, and some business litigation. I've been doing this for 28 years as a sole practitioner and have had various attorneys working for me throughout the years. In fact, one of my paralegals, Jamie, was once a client of mine, but I still don't join groups, and I don't care about accolades. I'm just proud of the firm's success because few people today can make that kind of transition.

As the owner and president of the Law Office of Joel W. Baruch, he has led his team in winning more than 200 trials, scores of civil case victories, and millions of dollars in settlements.

Would you explain the major differences between criminal defense and civil litigation to give us a better understanding of the two areas of law?

Of course. The difference is that in criminal law, a person is charged with a crime and presumed innocent until proven guilty. So, as a criminal defense attorney, if you make a mistake, you could cost someone their life. However, in civil litigation, the person has already been injured or has already had their civil rights violated. Therefore, as a civil lawyer, you can't ruin that person's life or make it worse than it was before the case began. Essentially, civil cases are only about money. Nevertheless, it is nice to know that the process was set up by the founding fathers to figure out people's problems.

Did gaining experience in both criminal defense law and civil litigation affect your opinion of what it means to be an attorney?

Absolutely! I was given the opportunity to take a close look at the difference between criminal and civil law as well as the Seventh Amendment. The Seventh Amendment right to a civil jury trial is one of the most important amendments as per Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, and there is a reason for that; having a jury of your own peers to decide upon disputes allows for a civilized society and thus for a democracy. It makes me feel good to be a part of that process.

What do you think it takes to be a genuinely good lawyer?

I am a "good" lawyer, but there are a lot of other "good" lawyers out there, too. I think it's really about integrity. Being a lawyer is so much more than meeting with clients, going to trial, writing a will, etc. A lawyer can do anything. That's why learning the law should always come first. Then, being a lawyer and approaching all relationships with integrity is of the highest importance. Integrity is the key to success.

What are your thoughts about the future? Where do you see the field of law heading?

At 73 years old, I'm concerned about the next generation of lawyers because our democracy is being tested, and I see a proliferation of conservative right wing judges. It will take certain types of people coming out of law school with an intestinal fortitude to take on this government. It is always a good area of practice for anyone coming into law to go into public defense, but if they don't want to make government law a part of their career, then I encourage them to open their own practices. Representing helpless clients has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my life, and I know it would be rewarding for countless others who have the strength and courage to pursue the job.

Throughout his highly esteemed 41-year career, Joel Baruch has been the recipient of numerous honors and awards. The most recent are as follows: Super Lawyers (2013, 2015-2020); National Associate of Distinguished Counsel (2015-2018); Top Lawyers of Southern California (2015); Top Attorneys of Orange County (2017); American Institute of Personal Injury Attorneys (2017-2019); National Trial Lawyers Top 100 (2014, 2015, 2017, 2018); American Top 100 Personal Injury Attorneys (2019); Martindale Hubbell AV Preeminent Rated (2000-2020); The National Trial Lawyers Association (2017); Top 100 Registry of Lawyers in America (2020).

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Augusto Mantilla-Serrano

> We truly live by our mission statement: Every day, governments, companies and millions of people rely on us to protect the integrity and value of their currency, personal identity, products and brands.

Tell me a little bit about your background.

After completing high school with the Jesuits, I joined the Naval Academy, where I studied Naval Engineering. Belonging to a family of globally well-known attorneys and realizing the importance of knowing the law in order to enforce it, I became an attorney. Then, I understood the importance of business and law, and I got an MBA and LL.M. -Master's in Law- from Harvard University. Academy and studying are some of my passions. I am a Knight (Sir) of the Catholic Military Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem under the authority and protection of the Holy See. I am a master scuba diver and enjoy hiking-trekking and the great outdoors. I have lived in several regions where I had the good fortune of trekking most of the top mountains in Europe (Mulhacen, Montblanc, Peaks of Europe), Africa (Kilimanjaro, Toubkal) and South America (Aconcagua). I've walked the Road of Santiago (Spain) in two different opportunities; I am Colombian-Spanish provenance and my wife, Alysson, is Irish-American, born and raised in Boston. We have two beautiful daughters, Alexandra and Charlotte, who are the perfect embodiment of raising a family with multicultural backgrounds and languages. Having a brilliant career with a beautiful family, it is part of the "American Dream" that comes true. I love the U.S.A., and we are doing great, in the greatest country of the world.

I've been involved in the corporate world for over 20 years, working in both legal and business roles with multinational companies in Latin America, Europe and North America. In 2014, I joined SICPA and since the very first moment, I realized the importance of ENABLING TRUST for governments by providing secure, robust and comprehensive solutions for their issues that affect national security. My academic background and professional skills have been valuable assets to contribute in the identification of opportunities and appropriate solutions.

Tell me about SICPA. What does your company do?

Founded in Switzerland in 1927, SICPA has been protecting banknotes globally since the 1940's and is the global leader in product authentication, identification, and secure traceability solutions and services. SICPA's products and services integrate material and digital security, enabling our clients worldwide, governments, and brand owners alike, to create an environment where markets are secure and people can be confident in their products. With an active presence in more than 180 countries, SICPA solutions deliver value to most of the world's population by protecting currencies, identity credentials, government tax revenues, and the legitimacy of products from many different fields.

In North America, SICPA's headquarters are in Virginia. SICPA also has operations in Illinois, Texas, and New Mexico. SICPA provides tax stamps and supports tobacco tax programs for 46 of the United States. Also, SICPA provides cannabis control solutions for California and Canada. The company also provides comprehensive digital platform for managing and electronic filing, payment, audit and reporting of excise taxes for tobacco, liquor, and fuels. SICPA Excise Tax Solutions (SETS) are currently being deployed in Virginia, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Oregon. SICPA has successfully partner with state government to provide revenue protection for excise taxes. In Latin America, SICPA's presence and experience for deploying tobacco control systems and track and trace include five successful projects at a national level for Ecuador, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic. In addition, SICPA has permanent offices in Mexico and Argentina. From a global perspective, SICPA provides fuel marking systems and track & trace solutions and services for the governments of Albania, Georgia, Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Morocco, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, India, Philippines, Turkey, Russia, and Malaysia, just to name a few. The list is larger, but I am just mentioning what I have on top of my head. In addition, SICPA contributes to institutions such as the European Central Bank, the US Federal Reserve, the World Customs Organization, and the World Bank, among others.

How do you combine all your skills -Harvard attorney, MBA, military- in your role as VP of National Security for SICPA?

In my current role of executive VP for National Security solutions, having a military background and understanding of both, the legal framework and the business perspective, gives me some of the most valuable skills in today's business world and especially for my role at SICPA. These skills are leadership, decision-making, effective communication, negotiation, and resilience. Understanding clients' needs and the challenges for fighting illicit activities is key to provide national security solutions. Illicit trade is a global threat, with worldwide transnational crime organizations impacting the stability of governments. These illicit activities are putting at risk the public safety and the confidence needed for the global economy in the exchange of goods and services, free trade, interchange of information and data, and financial transactions.

SICPA's main competency is providing unique solutions that help governments and citizens to protect themselves from these threats and fight against them. As a matter of fact, drug cartels exchange their illicit drugs for guns and explosives, fuel and chemical precursors are diverted to the illicit drug laboratories, illegal mining is under the control of terrorist organizations that control underground markets, and counterfeit products are destroying brand reputations and putting life at risk. Illicit activities are destroying everything in their path; global economy, environment, countries, brands, and human life. People don't realize that everything that is purchased from informal or illegal markets, counterfeit, or illicit products, such as aviation parts, cellphones batteries, pharmaceutical products, download a movie, a song, a book, a fake watch, you name it, no matter how harmless it could look, that money is supporting criminal activities around the world. All these activities impact the national security worldwide at all levels, governments, companies and individuals.

SICPA solutions help governments collect the right taxes and prevent the smuggling and counterfeiting of goods, protecting consumers and leveling the playing field for economic operators in the market.

Our unique physical markers, track and trace solutions, blockchain, and digital platforms help governments fight illicit trade, tax evasion, fuel smuggling, contraband of explosives, weapons, ammunitions, cannabis, chemical precursors, pharmaceutical products, and human trafficking, to mention some of the most relevant ongoing activities.

Tell me more about "SICPA track and trace platforms - SICPATRACE". How does this work, and why is it important to national security?

SICPATRACE is a unique platform that is composed of material security, hardware, and software, including digital security that provides secure serialization and identification of each sensitive product that can be easily integrated to any legacy system. It includes a blockchain solution to provide information to government authorities, consumers, and distribution chain operators, in order to protect and secure the legitimacy of the product, the health of consumers, and fiscal revenues, helping authorities to deter the illegal activities related to the illicit trade of goods. SICPATRACE platform enables governments to secure products in production lines at ports of entry, facilitating the government's capture of accurate information for collecting tax revenues and enabling consumers to validate the authenticity and legal origin of each marked product. By implementing our platform, governments can increase their inspection capabilities to verify products in the market and identify illegal products. SICPA solutions help governments collect the right taxes and prevent the smuggling and counterfeiting of goods, protecting consumers and leveling the playing field for economic operators in the market.

Given the critical importance of national security, how do you keep your technology developments secure?

SICPA technology is a proprietary solution and exclusively custom made for each one of our customers. We have some of the best technological minds developing our solutions. We have a very strong R&D team responsible for creating and developing new technologies in order to provide top of the line solutions. We must improve and innovate every single day to be competitive. Today better than yesterday, tomorrow better than today. We must keep moving to stay ahead of counterfeiters, adapting our solutions faster than criminals evolve trying to defeat governments, companies and individuals wherever they can. We truly live by our mission statement: "Every day, governments, companies and millions of people rely on us to protect the integrity and value of their currency, personal identity, products and brands."

I'd like to end this interview with a personal question. What do you think makes you unique, Augusto?

I don't consider myself "unique," I am just a resilient, passionate, focused professional, with a background in different activities that gave me special skills to always keep going forward no matter what, no matter how difficult the situation is, or could be. I will never stop until the mission is accomplished. Saint Ignatius of Loyola said, "Let us work as if success depended upon ourselves alone, but with the heartfelt conviction that we are doing nothing, and God everything." I truly live by his statement.

On the other hand, I always find happiness and positivity in everything – personal and professional – in life. Maintaining always a sense of humor and gratitude to God, gives me extra energy to stay focused and work harder, handling any situation or challenge and walk the extra mile. As Robert Frost wrote on his poem, *The Road Not Taken*, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." That is probably the secret of my success.

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Jon Papin, Attorney

About

Jon Papin is an attorney with Vrdolyak Law Group, a law firm that for over 50 years has been dedicated to assisting those who have suffered death or injury from accidents or medical malpractice. Based in the firm's Chicago office, Jon is a civil lawyer with over 30 years of legal experience who specializes in representing clients in cases involving medical malpractice and commercial trucking. Committed to social justice, Jon has delivered some of the highest verdicts and settlements in the state of Illinois. In recognition of his work and his dedication to his clients, he holds the highest possible peer review rating, *AV Preeminent*, from Martindale-Hubble. Further, he is ranked among the top five percent of attorneys in Illinois, is a member of the Illinois Leading Lawyers Network, and was selected for inclusion in Illinois Super Lawyers. He was also inducted into the Illinois Society of Trial lawyers.

You have countless accolades as a civil attorney. What drives you to continue to fight the "good fight" on behalf of your clients against massive corporations and insurance companies?

What gets me up in the morning is helping people who deserve and need my help. Many clients have suffered devastating injuries or have lost family members. I help them find their way out of the darkness to a better place, by changing the trajectories of their lives. I do not believe in accolades. I do believe that you are only as good as what you did yesterday. For me, this is personal, in that I work only on a few select cases --so that I can give each of my clients personalized attention. Most have my cell number, and I try to be available 24/7.

It is not always about being a lawyer; sometimes it is about being a counselor. Once, my paralegal was concerned that one of our clients was going to kill himself. He was profoundly depressed because he had been in an accident, suffered chronic pain syndrome, and could not work. I went to his house to check on him. He was in the bedroom with the lights off and a gun next to him. I took the gun, emptied the clip, and helped get him the money needed to improve his life. Helping people is why I continue to fight the good fight every single day.

You began your career as a civil defense attorney before becoming a plaintiff attorney. How does this dual insight help your clients?

I started my career as a civil defense attorney in 1989, and for 13 years, I defended hospitals, corporations, etc. In 2002, while I was working for one of the biggest and best firms in Chicago, a plaintiff lawyer asked me to work for his firm, and I loved it—the feeling that I could help people and make a difference. For the past 18 years, I've been working on behalf of real people against the very corporate entities that I once defended. My ability to see both sides of a case gives me, and my clients, an advantage. Having been a defense lawyer, I understand what the defense may do, and I try to take away those defenses in pre-trial discovery.

Tell us about Vrdolyak Law Group and your work there.

The company was founded over 50 years ago by Edward Vrdolyak, who was once one of the most powerful politicians in Chicago. His son, Eddie, Jr., runs the firm now. It's a one-stop shop and a great place to work. Vrdolyak Law group specializes in personal injury, medical malpractice, wrongful death, and other areas. Our firm also handles commercial trucking cases, a very specialized niche. I have extensive knowledge and experience in this area, so I was brought in to focus specifically on commercial trucking cases.

Jon is a civil lawyer with over 30 years of legal experience who specializes in representing clients in cases involving medical malpractice and commercial trucking.

Can you tell us more about your specialization in commercial trucking litigation?

I think that I have handled most every type of trucking case possible in both state and federal courts. More than 4,000 people a year are killed by tractor-trailers. There are 750,000 trucking companies in America, 500,000 of which have a heartbeat with the DOT. There are reputable trucking companies, but many are not and will hire anyone. Sometimes even great drivers are pushed beyond their limits and bad things happen. It is not uncommon for trucking companies to create shell corporations to hide money from plaintiff attorneys, like myself. This is fraud, plain and simple. But I have been doing this for a long time, and I will usually find the "happy shell family" and their holding companies where the cash is stored.

Further, when I discover trucking companies who knowingly hire "dirty drivers" (with a history of accidents, tickets, drug abuse or all the above), I make them pay personal money to settle the case, above their insurance limits. Because if I don't, these accidents caused by

Committed to social justice, Jon has delivered some of the highest verdicts and settlements in the state of Illinois. In recognition of his work and his dedication to his clients, he holds the highest possible peer review rating, *AV Preeminent,* from Martindale-Hubble.

unqualified or "dirty" truckers will never—*never*—stop. The trucking companies will keep hiring them.

You've recorded many record-breaking verdicts and settlements for your clients. Will you share the details of the case you just mentioned?

Records aside, my most memorable commercial trucking case was *Estates of Lindner,* a federal court case in 2006. *Lindner* involved multiple deaths caused by a fatigued trucker with a sketchy background, which was known to the trucking company. The trucking company hid documents regarding the trucker's background and claimed it only had $5 million in coverage. When, they had $11 million in coverage --so they hid coverage and lied. I found the additional $6 million in coverage by subpoenaing the trucking company's insurance broker. As a result of their lying, I made the trucking company pay an additional $2 million of their own money. The case settled for $13 million. It was featured in 2016 on MSNBC 's, *Morning Joe*.

Since then, I've worked on many more trucking cases and become more sophisticated in trucking litigation and in trying those cases. I learn something new most day doing commercial trucking. However, one constant seems that some trucking companies will take chances with the lives of the public and hire questionable drivers. I am working on cases now where trucking company lied about its policy limits and tried to obscure the background of the trucker, whom they hired and keep on despite multiple accidents and in violation of their own internal hiring and retention standards.

You work outside of your career to help "clean up the highways" and protect people from trucking accidents. Can you tell us about this?

Sure. I am a past president of APITLA, the Association of Plaintiff Interstate Trucking Lawyers of America, and I work with them to reduce the number of injuries and deaths across America caused by unsafe and illegally operating trucking companies. The association works with the federal government and runs educational seminars for other plaintiff lawyers to teach them about trucking law.

Vrdolyak Law group specializes in personal injury, medical malpractice, wrongful death, and other areas. Our firm also handles commercial trucking cases, a very specialized niche. I have extensive knowledge and experience in this area, so I was brought in to focus specifically on commercial trucking cases.

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Logan C. Marcus

General Counsel

ABOUT

Logan Marcus is a progeny of legal minds whose deep-seated sense of justice is at the core of her being. As general counsel and chief compliance officer for Appreciation Financial, she is a young, female powerhouse determined to bring fairness to all. In her words: "Impartiality is a business skill that can be learned by anyone with the commitment to justice and equality."

Tell us about your work for Appreciation Financial and how this sense of justice plays into your roles.

I have many duties and responsibilities, but everything I do, every decision I make is a guided by my profound sense of objectivity. I view it as my duty to support our agents, and I believe that an environment in which all are treated equally allows them to focus on helping our clients. In-house, I'm a Jack-of-all-trades. I negotiate contracts, M&A with executive teams, and dispute resolutions, which spans across diverse areas. I am the liaison for outside counsel on litigation matters, and I represent the CEO as well as our subsidiary and parent companies in contract negotiations. I basically do everything that comes my way, whether it falls under the rubric of "legal" or not. As the chief compliance officer, I travel the country to our different offices and give legal/compliance presentations on the "do's and don'ts," titled "How to Keep Your Job and Avoid Jail Time." When I joined the company in 2015, I designed the infrastructure of our legal and compliance departments based on what made sense to me and implemented new processes. Prior to that, our company relied on outside counsel for legal work. The regulations and protocols that we follow are derived from putting into place guidelines that mesh with our structure and our culture. I ensure the foundation we build upon is substantial and strong.. I ensured the foundation upon which we built was substantial and strong.

Appreciation's mission is to help protect people and provide solutions for unforeseen circumstances that may arise as they do throughout life.

What does Appreciation Financial do?

We're a nationwide financial services agency. The company was founded in 2008, and we have more than 1,000 independent agents in our sales force. We have offices in almost every state. We focus on retirement planning and life insurance sales, primarily in the K-12 sector. Our CEO started the company with a clear intention to help our educators retire with dignity. When teachers retire, typically their pension is about 57% of their working income, which is a travesty. Our primary function is to ensure the teachers and staff retire with their full pre-retirement income. After all, these are the people who tirelessly educate our children, and they are underpaid and underappreciated as it is.

One of the products our agents sell is called a 403(b), it is an annuity that helps public employees put away money now for when they retire to bridge the income gap. We are number one in the country in this space, and we are very proud of the more than 100,000 teachers we've helped. Our agents also sell life insurance products, which provide living benefits, so it's helpful for people of all ages. Appreciation's mission is to help protect people and provide solutions for unforeseen circumstances that may arise as they do throughout life.

You won the *Servant Leadership Award* for your selfless devotion to the company, clients, and relationships. How does the importance you place on fairness inform your leadership style?

I've always made a conscious effort to practice fairness in my daily life, personal and professional. People come to me as a resource, even in areas unrelated to the law, because I've established myself as someone with a deep-rooted level of trust with our sales force. I'm grateful that I have been exposed to many cultures and people throughout my upbringing, education, travel experiences, and social circle, and I pride myself on making sure everyone feels heard. I consider myself to be the resource and the voice for people that don't have a voice. This ideal is ingrained in me. As general counsel, I handle a multitude of issues that don't necessarily *always* pertain to "law" as the construct most people think it is. It is for this reason that every day of my past five years with this company has been radically different from the day before and from the next day. And I love that! The CEO puts a lot of trust in me and is comfortable knowing that I am protecting the business that provides for his family. This is an incredible vote of confidence that allows me to straighten up and do my job with the vigor and strength I do. I receive tremendous support from the CEO as well as our leadership team and the field.

The law seems to be your natural calling. Tell us about your journey and how it led to Appreciation Financial.

I come from a family of lawyers and after Syracuse University for undergrad, I worked for four years in the legal field before going to law school. After getting my J.D., I started my career in criminal defense—interning with the California Innocence Project at my law school—and then worked in civil litigation for about five years. Before I joined Appreciation Financial, I was working for a renowned firm specializing in copyright infringement for high-profile musicians. The cases I worked on were extremely interesting, and one led to a precedent-setting ruling in the court. However, it led me to realize that litigation was not where my heart was. After I figured out what I *did* want to do, which was to be more involved in the business and transactional side of law, I made a career leap and found the perfect fit as general counsel with Appreciation Financial.

You are a young, successful woman in both a role and an industry traditionally dominated by men. How do you navigate this unique position?

Being a woman in a male-dominated industry—not only financial services, but also as a general counsel, which is known to be a position held by more senior men—is unique. I think one of the reasons that I am an effective leader and comfortable in my role is that I'm not afraid to have an unpopular opinion. In my career, I've been in a room with men who were not used to being in the room with a female leader. There is a double standard for men and women. Men are lauded for speaking their mind and regarded as "determined" and "strong" whereas women who assert a strong opinion can be labeled as confrontational or the "B" word. One of my strengths is not being intimidated and having the confidence to speak my mind. This confidence comes from my dad, who was a litigator and passed away when I was 18. He instilled in me a sense of purpose and fight, to always stand up for what I believe in, even if that opinion is unpopular. Another important element to navigate in this male-dominated industry is the ever-present dichotomy between being a strong woman and still having a soft side, which is the ultimate tug of war.

We focus on retirement planning and life insurance sales, primarily in the k-12 sector. Our CEO started the company with a clear intention to help our educators retire with dignity.

Logan has been featured in Modern Counsel and Vanguard Law Magazine. She is licensed in Nevada and California.

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Marlo Greer

Attorney & Managing Partner

As an accomplished personal injury trial lawyer, Marlo Greer has been providing clients with aggressive and compassionate representation for over 19 years. Her practice is centered around those who have suffered injuries as a result of motor vehicle collisions, sexual abuse, nursing home negligence, medical malpractice, and hospital negligence. According to her team as well as her former clients, one of Marlo's most renowned qualities is her ability to understand the needs of those she represents. For instance, she never uses the term "accident" when referring to the hardships of clients because she believes that hurting another individual, whether intentional or not, is never a simple mishap. Recently, we had the pleasure of speaking with Marlo as she shared with us the responsibilities of her role as an advocate, counselor, and trial attorney.

Let's start with your firm. Tell us about The Greer Law Group.

I started The Greer Law Group in 2015 with my partner, Kevin Van Donselaar. The idea was to provide a different type of service to clients. Instead of a mass law firm with a case manager, we envisioned a small firm that specialized in automobile collisions and sexual harassment cases. However, it has grown a bit since 2015. We've also made a few changes. Kevin's wife decided she wanted to be in warmer weather, so he moved to California. So, although he's on counsel, it's primarily my firm now. Kevin still takes on cases in the Denver area but only takes on a handful in order to provide specialized attention.

Have the changes at the firm affected the way you manage your cases?

Not at all. Even though I now handle most of the cases, I still handle the practice the same way I always have- by making sure I'm there whenever a client needs me. Since starting the firm, I've consistently been selective about the cases I take in order to make sure the client is a good fit for me and for the firm, so clients are still receiving the same personal, specialized attention. I also have an amazing staff who makes sure they are available to help clients, even if that means working after business hours. It's all a matter of knowing our clients and what they need.

Why did you decide to become an injury lawyer?

I actually started out practicing criminal defense in 2001, but the reason why I went into law is because I have always wanted to help people. So, when I was given the opportunity to defend clients who had dealt with issues such as racism, I saw that I could make a difference and give back to society, and that was really important to me. That's why I ultimately decided to become a plaintiff personal injury attorney. I wanted to be an advocate for people who have been discriminated against due to their race or sexual orientation. The problem is so prevalent that I have never met a woman who doesn't have a story, and plenty of men have them, too. In fact, I currently have a client who was at work, and a female coworker followed him out to his car and harassed him both verbally and physically.

You once suffered a personal injury that gave you first-hand experience in dealing with greedy insurance companies and inept medical care. Will you share what happened?

Of course. When I was still in law school, I obtained a spinal injury during a horseback riding incident. As a result, I had to undergo several invasive medical procedures, including a 5-level fusion in my back. Although that was one of the most difficult times in my life, I firmly believe what makes every individual unique is how they apply their past experiences to their current life and work. Therefore, I'm grateful that I can use my personal perspective as someone who has been injured to not only provide legal advice to my clients but to show them genuine understanding and compassion. I've been there, so I know how difficult and frightening it is to transition from being in perfect health to being injured and in need of constant medical attention. In fact, many of the procedures my clients are facing, I've gone through myself. I specialize in representing clients with serious brain and spinal injuries because I understand their need for an advocate.

According to her team as well as her former clients, one of Marlo's most renowned qualities is her ability to understand the needs of those she represents.

In 2018, you were named one of the Top 10 Verdicts in Colorado. Would you tell us about that case?

That case was extremely challenging, but, fortunately, we still came out on top. It involved an automobile collision, and it was a tough situation because my client was a passenger in a vehicle being driven by a friend. The friend turned left, and an oncoming vehicle went through the light and hit the passenger side backseat where my client was sitting. The case was filed because there was a disagreement over who was at fault: the driver who was the friend of my client or the driver of the car who ran the light. Well, of course, the other driver said it wasn't his fault; he didn't run the light. So, they were not able to settle the case because each driver

Her practice is centered around those who have suffered injuries as a result of motor vehicle collisions, sexual abuse, nursing home negligence, medical malpractice, and hospital negligence.

said it was the other person's fault. However, one thing was for certain; it was definitely not my client's fault as a passenger.

The friend driving had her insurance company settle her portion of the case, but they didn't cover my client's medical bills, which included lower spinal surgery. We ended up going to mediation in an attempt to resolve the case, but the offer was only $100,000, which I could not accept. We knew that someone saw the other driver run the red light, but no one could locate the witness. At one point, my client was ready to give up and settle, but I knew I had to keep fighting until we found that witness. Once the witness was finally located, we went to trial, and the verdict was $1.5 million. The other part that was interesting is that the insurance company, State Farm, knew the witness was a 911 caller who had nothing at risk, but they were counting on us not being able to find the witness. They knew my client was injured and that their client was either wholly or partially at fault. State Farm's decision to offer $100,000 was strategic, and it is a perfect example of an insurance company trying to take advantage of an innocent person in order to save money instead of doing what is right. The case is also a perfect example of why I chose this profession. I fight for the rights of the individual, and that is what drives the firm and the decisions I make.

> I also have an amazing staff who makes sure they are available to help clients, even if that means working after business hours. It's all a matter of knowing our clients and what they need.

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Kevin E. Thorn | Managing Partner

About

Known as an ultimate Washington, D.C. insider, Kevin E. Thorn is one of the area's most popular "go-to" tax attorneys —representing a vast range of clients across the United States as well as throughout the world. As managing partner of Thorn Law Group, PLLC, he assists high net worth individuals, businesses, professional athletes, artists, banks, corporations, and many others in both civil and criminal matters and in resolving complex tax and legal issues. Recently, we had the pleasure of speaking with Kevin and learning more about his leading practice.

Let's start by going back to the founding of Thorn Law Group. What motivated you to establish your own firm?

Early on in my career, I recognized that most of the larger firms were assigning cookie cutter cases to their attorneys and the clients were being treated as numbers. The impersonal (and sometimes inadequate) service I witnessed inspired me to become more client-centric. In other words, I wanted to open a boutique firm that offered proactive, individualized services that would meet the specific legal needs of each client. That's why I personally selected each member of the dedicated, passionate team of professionals who make up Thorn Law Group. Our attorneys hold prior government, private law firm, and accounting firm experience in order to best serve the interests of both our national and international clients. We are also selective in who we represent, so everyone is guaranteed the full service of our firm.

Thorn Law Group has offices in Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, so why choose Washington, D.C. as your headquarters?

I strategically chose to maintain my office in D.C. for a home field advantage and to further develop and grow our professional relationships. Washington, D.C. is where all the major government headquarters and policy makers reside, and the in-person accessibility helps the Thorn Law Group to successfully navigate the complex legal landscape for the benefit of our clients. As a result, our attorneys have

gained significant exposure and experience practicing before the Internal Revenue Service, the United States Tax Court, the Department of Justice, the Court of Federal Claims, state courts, the IRS's Office of Professional Responsibility, and the IRS Whistleblower Office.

What are the firm's primary practice areas?

We have an amazing team of former government attorneys, so there are very few firms that can offer our level of experience. We are jacks of all trades. My partner Mary Elizabeth Rinaldi and I take a collaborative approach doing IRS work and government work, both civil and criminal. Then, we add in the international tax planning on a super high level. Our attorneys also focus on representing sensitive federal tax disputes, tax controversies, and tax litigation problems. They consult with counsel on business and employment tax, criminal tax investigations, IRS audits and appeals, international tax issues, and offshore account issues.

Our team also works with high net worth individuals and does estate planning both nationally and internationally with the ability to do tax planning and tax planning succession on a global scale.

What are your personal areas of expertise?

I'm highly sought after to represent attorneys, CPAs, both U.S. and international businesses, and other tax professionals in ethics audits before the IRS, the IRS Office of Professional Responsibility, the IRS Whistleblower Office, the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Tax Court, and state licensing boards. I frequently handle cases involving IRS audits, agreements, investigations, and criminal examinations, IRS voluntary disclosures, administrative appeals and protest of IRS determinations, Department of Justice investigations, and litigation of tax, and tax-related cases in U.S. district and appellate courts, the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, and the U.S. Tax Court. I also receive referrals for clients considering estate planning, wealth management, asset protection, and business planning transactions as my unique perspective brings benefits to them as well.

As managing partner of Thorn Law Group, PLLC, he assists high net worth individuals, businesses, professional athletes, artists, banks, corporations, and many others in both civil and criminal matters and in resolving complex tax and legal issues.

Tell us a bit more about the range of clients your firm represents.

Thorn Law Group serves clients in all 50 states and U.S. territories as well as most countries around the world. Our clients include individuals, tax professionals, partnerships, trusts, banks, closely held businesses, accounting firms, law firms, artists, sports teams, athletes, entertainers, and corporations. We even represent other attorneys, which is unusual, but we have a lot of connections and are effective in getting results in a private manner. Our international clients include U.S. citizens living, working, or earning money abroad; U.S. taxpayers with international trusts; non-U.S. taxpayers with U.S.-sourced income; U.S. businesses with operations in other countries; international businesses with U.S. tax reporting requirements and tax liabilities; U.S. and non-U.S. entertainers with worldwide income; and expatriates. Our team also works with high net worth individuals and does estate planning both nationally and internationally with the ability to do tax planning and tax planning succession on a global scale.

How does Thorn Law Group give back to the community?

My partner, Mary Elizabeth, is heavily involved with several women's rights groups, and the entire firm works with the Washington Kastles tennis team in D.C., the Washington Ballet, and the Bill Belichick Foundation, which provides coaching, mentorship, and financial support to future professionals. The Thorn Law Group also supports local animal organizations and frequently contributes to local women's shelters, athletic organizations for the youth, and the arts. Since we all work with artists, athletes, and entertainers we take pride in staying involved with the community.

TLG
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Michael Mierau

Michael Mierau is an attorney with The Law Offices of John P. Mahoney, a legal firm specializing in the representation of federal employees. With 22 years of experience as an attorney and nearly three decades of service in the United States Army, he represents clients on a wide range of employment matters, including claims of discrimination, misconduct, performance-based adverse action appeals to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), administrative misconduct investigations, prohibited personnel practice complaints, and whistleblower retaliation claims.

Having served as a senior litigation attorney on behalf of the Army and as an attorney for the government against employees, Michael brings valuable insight from both sides of the courtroom to serve federal employees now. "I once represented the government against employees. Now I do the opposite because it's important to me to represent those people making sacrifices for our country and provide them with the best legal advice they could have," he shares.

Michael joined the firm in 2019, after retiring from the Army, for precisely this reason—to be part of a practice with a stellar reputation for representing people who devote themselves daily to working for our country. "John Mahoney's firm is highly rated nationally for representing federal employees. John has built a wonderful reputation for its expert ability to practice in that area," he explains. Prior to joining the firm, Michael served as an attorney for both the Army and for two large law firms in Cleveland, Ohio. While in the Army, he served as chief of the Army's litigation division, in charge of all civil litigation. Prior to that role, he was senior attorney for a combat division at Fort Stewart, Georgia, responsible for 120 legal personnel. He was deployed to Afghanistan, where he served as senior attorney in charge of the national support element, and served tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Michael received his law degree *magna cum laude* from the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law in 1998, where he served on the Moot Court Board of Governors and the *Law Review*. He holds a master's degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College, a Master of Laws in Military Law from the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's School, and a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Akron.

Michael represents clients on a wide range of employment matters, including claims of discrimination, misconduct, performance-based adverse action appeals to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), administrative misconduct investigations, prohibited personnel practice complaints, and whistleblower retaliation claims.

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John P. Mahoney

Founding and Managing Partner

As a preeminent rated federal employee lawyer, former federal government vice chair, executive, and administrative judge, John P. Mahoney has effectively represented thousands of federal employees and contractors in both security clearance appeals and federal employment law matters. For over 27 years, he has utilized his extensive legal experience to protect, defend, and enhance the federal careers of clients in all 50 states as well as around the world. As a founding and managing partner of The Law Firm of John P. Mahoney, Esq., Attorneys at Law, headquartered in Washington, D.C., John specializes in the practice of federal sector employment, labor, and national security clearance law and continues to uphold the highest possible standards in legal ability and ethics.

Known as the "caring federal employment lawyers," the majority of the firm's legal team are former federal employees themselves. Consequently, these top-rated federal employment law (FEL) attorneys not only hold an in-depth understanding of employment law, but they also stand ready to protect and defend the rights and careers of their clients. Whether their federal employee clients are under investigation, facing allegations of misconduct, or need to appeal for security clearance decision, or file an EEO or whistleblower retaliation complaint, all clients are offered the experienced legal counsel and advocacy they deserve.

> John specializes in the practice of federal sector employment, labor, and national security clearance law and continues to uphold the highest possible standards in legal ability and ethics.

According to John, it is his team's professionalism, experience as former federal employees, client advocacy, and in-depth understanding of federal employment law that sets them apart from all other firms. In fact, as a result of their quality legal services and impressive performance record, the attorneys have received numerous awards. Most recently, they were included in the 2020 *Bar Registry of Preeminent Lawyers* and were named as a *Preeminent AV Rated Law Firm* by *Martindale-AVVO* in 2020. They also have received a *Superb 10.0 AVVO* rating.

The D.C. community recognizes the firm's recognition by Martindale-AVVO as evidence of John's "preeminent legal ability, expertise, experience, integrity and overall professional excellence." Among his many other honors and awards, John was selected as a 2019 *Top-Rated Lawyer in Labor & Employment* and as a 2020 *Top-Rated D.C. Metro Lawyer in Labor & Employment Law* by *The National Law Journal*, *Corporate Counsel Magazine*, and *American Lawyer Magazine*. The firm's attorneys were recently named *Top Lawyers of Washington DC*, as published in the *Baltimore Sun*, in recognition for their excellent client service and overall satisfaction. *Corporate International* named Attorney Mahoney its 2020 *Federal Employment Lawyer of the Year* in Washington, DC and *Global Law Experts* awarded The Law Firm of John P. Mahoney, Esq., Attorneys at Law, its *Federal Employment Law Lawyers of the Year* in Washington, DC for 2020.

Prior to founding his own law firm, John served as an expert witness on FEL and was appointed to serve as the statutory vice chair and administrate judge (ES-IV) of the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) Personnel Appeals Board (PAB). He has also served as general counsel to various unions, as senior associate to the general counsel of the Senior Executives Association (SEA), outside employment or national security law counsel to multiple federal agencies, private federal contractor companies, and other corporations. John also notes that he holds first-hand experience as a federal employee serving as a manager within a federal agency as well as a federal agency administrative judge interpreting federal employment and labor law, which is rare within the industry. Because he can offer such a diverse and unique perspective, John is a frequently published author and a regular public speaker on federal employment and labor law issues.

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Raymond R. Ferrell, CEO & General Counsel

Raymond ("Ray") Ferrell has consistently developed and implemented cutting edge solutions by synthesizing elements of business, technology, and law. Among his primary areas of expertise are software as a service (SAAS), licensing, digital advertising, financial services, mergers and acquisitions, litigation management, and compliance. As the chief executive officer and general counsel at June Six Ventures, LLC, Ray is committed to understanding the drivers and industry dynamics of every business he supports.

Founded in August 2019, June Six Ventures is a legal and business consulting firm based out of Dallas, Texas. Taking a friendly and dynamic approach, Ray and his team members work to provide high impact solutions for the unique issues often faced by startups in the SAAS, fintech, insurtech spaces and other disruptive technology industries, as well as by private equity portfolio companies. Through its network of professional alliances, June Six Ventures works directly with emerging companies and private equity firms. The firm's mission is to address each client's most pressing needs by offering high quality, results-oriented expertise that can ignite and further their success.

As the firm's CEO and general counsel, Ray works to help new companies transition into their next stages of development. As part of Ray's responsibilities, he provides legal consulting advice on equity distribution among founders, intellectual property protection and commercialization, industry strategies and perspective, and proactive preparation for any potential legal issues the companies may face.

Ray got his start as a corporate and securities lawyer at law firms in NYC and NJ in the early 1990s after earning a bachelor's degree in political science from Yale University and a law degree from the Columbia School of Law. He then transitioned into doing intellectual property transactional work before he went in-house, becoming a senior counsel, vice president in the American Express general counsel's office, where he supported the Amex interactive division as well as its global commercial card division.

After leaving American Express, he joined DexYP ("aka" former predecessor entity names, currently known as Thryv, Inc.) as vice president, associate general counsel responsible for the company's commercial operations, before ultimately becoming executive vice president, general counsel, and corporate secretary. Ray remained in that role for over 6 years.

In addition to his impressive work experience, Ray is a recognized speaker and leader in emerging issues related to Big Data, SAAS, social media, and company websites.

Ray is also an advocate giving back to the community, currently serving as a board member for Medical City Las Colinas, in Irving, Texas. He is also a member of the Dallas Assembly, the board of the Dallas Zoo, and is active in fraternal organizations involved in mentoring and other community works.

As part of Ray's responsibilities, he provides legal consulting advice on equity distribution among founders, intellectual property protection and commercialization, industry strategies and perspective, and proactive preparation for any potential legal issues the companies may face.

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Jennifer Pafiti

Jennifer Pafiti is a partner with Pomerantz LLP, a New York-based law firm with offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Paris specializing in securities, antitrust, consumer litigation, and corporate governance, representing some of the largest institutional and individual investors around the world. Her reputation as a skilled attorney has earned her a cache of industry awards, including designation as a *2020 Southern California Rising Star* by *Super Lawyers*, an award bestowed upon less than three percent of attorneys in the region. A formidable litigator, she was an integral member of the firm's litigation team in one of its biggest cases, *In re Petrobras Securities Litigation*, involving a multi-billion-dollar kickback and bribery scheme at Brazil's largest oil company. She was instrumental in retrieving the historic settlement of $3 billion for Petrobras investors as one of the largest class action settlements of the decade and the largest settlement ever in a securities class action involving a foreign issuer.

Jennifer joined Pomerantz's Los Angeles office in 2014 as an associate, and quickly rose to partner and head of client services less than a year later. As an attorney passionate about helping clients who have been victims of financial fraud, Jennifer shares the firm's dedication to protecting shareholder rights through securities litigation, and its vigorous pursuit of corporate governance reform. As part of its tireless efforts, Pomerantz holds an annual Corporate Governance Roundtable Event, where institutional investors and corporate governance professionals from around the world gather to discuss the evolving role of institutional investors, ESG risk, and governance challenges. The next roundtable is scheduled for October 14, 2021, in Beverly Hills, California, with special guest speaker President Bill Clinton.

Qualified as both a U.K. solicitor and a U.S. attorney, Jennifer takes an active role in complex securities litigations, representing clients in both class and non-class action cases and advising clients throughout the U.S. and Europe on to how to best handle their investment portfolios, creating monthly reports for clients using their investment portfolios, and calculating clients' losses. Prior to joining the 80-year-old firm, she served as an associate with Robbins Geller Rudman & Dowd LLP in San Diego.

An award-winning attorney, Jennifer has garnered legal accolades for four straight years. In 2019, she was recognized by *Lawdragon* as a *Leading Plaintiff Financial Attorney*, honored by *Super Lawyers* as a *Southern California Rising Star in Securities Litigation*, named in *Benchmark Litigation*'s exclusive *40 & Under Hot List* of the best young attorneys in the United States, and recognized by *Los Angeles Magazine* as one of *Southern California's Top Young Lawyers*. In 2018, she was recognized as a *Lawyer of Distinction*, an honor given to less than 10 percent of attorneys in any given state, and in 2017, she was honored again by *Super Lawyers* as both a *Rising Star* and one of the *Top Women Attorneys in Southern California*. In 2016, she was selected by the *Daily Journal* for its *Top 40 Under 40* list of the best young attorneys in California.

As an attorney passionate about helping clients who have been victims of financial fraud, Jennifer shares the firm's dedication to protecting shareholder rights through securities litigation, and its vigorous pursuit of corporate governance reform.

A passionate advocate of women and girls, Jennifer not only works in securities litigation protecting trust funds and shareholders, but takes part in the Honorary Steering Committee of Equal Rights Advocates, working to protect and expand economic and educational access and opportunities for women and girls. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Thames Valley University in England, and she earned her law degrees from Thames Valley University (G.D.L.) and the Inns of Court School of Law (L.P.C.) in the U.K. Jennifer is admitted to practice law in England, Wales, and California.

POMERANTZLLP

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Jean Smith Gonnell

Managing Attorney

"My goal is to provide my clients 24-hour care and clear, upfront communication."

Jean Smith Gonnell is managing attorney with Gonnell Law, a Denver-based law firm that specializes exclusively in advising clients in the cannabis arena about medical, recreational, and retail marijuana, and industrial hemp. As one of the nation's leading cannabis attorneys and litigators, Jean is a powerful advocate with an unwavering commitment to her clients, working closely with them as she ushers them through the legal process. "My goal is to provide my clients 24-hour care and clear, upfront communication," she shares. With a reputation for extensive legal knowledge and skill in the cannabis area, Jean is a formidable presence in the courtroom—standing as an undefeated trial attorney in district courts.

As a skilled civil attorney with a decade of legal experience and an expert in Colorado marijuana regulatory law, Jean assists cannabis businesses by ensuring compliance through administrative law actions, handling all litigation needs, navigating business transactions, providing regulatory guidance, and offering extensive cannabis licensing services. A Colorado native, Jean was introduced to cannabis law in 2010 while serving as a law clerk at another Denver firm that once specialized in this area. Since 2012, she has dedicated her entire career to serving cannabis clients, working diligently to stay updated on the marijuana laws and regulations, both locally and nationally. "I actually read the law—hundreds of pages each legislative session," she states.

Jean opened her own practice in 2018, after an eight-year career in positions of special counsel, senior attorney, and partner, focusing exclusively and specifically on cannabis law, for several Denver law firms. Through Gonnell Law, she and her team of attorneys and paralegals, each with expertise in marijuana law, cater to cannabis clients in multiple states, helping them navigate the complexities of contracts, licensing, litigation, and the universe of Colorado regulations governing the industry. "We are one of the only firms dedicated solely to cannabis counsel. For these ventures, we can be the difference between getting into the business and staying in the business," she explains.

With extensive understanding of the cannabis industry, Jean's work has been featured in the *Denver Post*, Colorado *Springs Independent*, *Westword*, and on "Fox 31 News." In 2016, she was selected as a member of the Colorado Department of Revenue Marijuana Enforcement Division Legislation Implementation Work Group. In 2011, she lent her knowledge to the development of an article entitled, *Colorado's Emerging Medical Marijuana Legal Framework and Constitutional Rights*, for *The Colorado Lawyer*, a publication of the Colorado Bar Association. Jean has also been referenced in numerous other news articles and scholarly publications.

Jean graduated from the University of Colorado Denver in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in political science. She received her juris doctor in law in 2011 from the University of Denver, Sturm College of Law, where she served as a member of the *Criminal Law Review* and the Moot Court Board. Outside of the office, Jean enjoys traveling and yoga.

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Daniel D'Costa

Attorney

As managing partner for D'Costa Law, P.C., a leading litigation law firm specializing in securities fraud and no-fault, Daniel D'Costa specializes in stock loss recovery, no-fault and personal injury law. As an expert in the areas of FINRA and the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, and as one of but a few attorneys who concentrate on stock broker misconduct, Daniel has assisted his clients in obtaining the highest recovery possible—and for him, it's personal. When Daniel's family endured significant financial loss from broker misconduct and financial manipulation, he chose to leave the comfort of a large firm to dedicate his life to helping other investors who have suffered the same injustice. To him, these clients are like family.

Daniel opened the firm two years ago in Hicksville, New York, after working as an attorney for an AM100 and top-ranked law firm, Shearman & Sterling, and global behemoth BNP Paribas. He wields the valuable insight and knowledge gained from representing hedge funds, banks, and other financial institutions to now serve clients on the other side of the trade who have been harmed by fraud, churning, excessive trading, over-concentration, and other types of broker misconduct.

Whether assisting clients with obtaining recoveries resulting from stockbroker wrongdoing or representing clients in no-fault or personal injury cases, Daniel and his firm do so with a singular mission—to protect clients and their families. "I go after the brokers who have committed these violations and hurt my clients as a result of their misconduct, misrepresentation, or misuse of their money," Daniel explains. As an expert in securities law, financial law, and derivatives law with experience in New York State and U.S. Federal Courts, Daniel ushers clients from the initial pleadings stage through their FINRA arbitration hearings.

In the area of no-fault or personal injury cases, Daniel represents both accident victims and medical service providers, such as doctors. He assists them in collecting their rightful payments from insurance companies and third parties, including denied and outstanding no-fault and workers' compensation claims.

Daniel began his legal career in 2010 as a paralegal and law clerk with a New York firm while pursuing his bachelor's degree in business with a concentration in legal studies and finance from Hofstra University, where he graduated with honors. He served as an intern for Judge Marcy Friedman in the New York State Commercial Division while working toward his doctor of law degree from Brooklyn Law School in 2015. Before joining BNP Paribas, Daniel worked as an ISDA negotiator for Quadrangle Consulting, where he focused on trading agreement negotiations, and was also legal extern at NYC Transit Authority. He is a member of the Nassau County Bar Association.

As an expert in securities law, financial law, and derivatives law with experience in New York State and U.S. Federal Courts, Daniel ushers clients from the initial pleadings stage through their FINRA arbitration hearings.

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Jane Wagner & Allison Rule

Marashlian & Donahue – The CommLaw Group, is a boutique law firm located in Washington, D.C., specializing in telecommunications in addition to an array of diverse practice areas within the communications and information technology sectors, including privacy issues, regulations, and broadcasting. The firm also has a robust transactional practice involving merges and acquisitions, due diligence, and regulations, and serves a wide client base, from satellite providers to start-ups to Fortune 500 companies. Its clients benefit from a unique fee structure that renders them competitive against larger firms, which continues to attract clients from its bigger legal counterparts.

Jane Wagner

Allison Rule

MARASHLIAN & DONAHUE, PLLC
THE COMMLAW GROUP

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Jane Wagner is partner with Marashlian & Donahue. She has been practicing with Jonathan Marashlian for over two decades.

As an experienced litigator with a law degree from George Mason Law School, she serves as the firm's primary litigator for right-of-way access and related land disputes. She is well versed in eminent domain law and advises clients on their rights to condemn private property. A significant portion of her practice involves advocating for her clients' right to access and install their facilities in public rights-of-way and railroad rights-of-way. This necessarily includes the negotiation of license agreements and easements. Jane is frequently before the Illinois Commerce Commission fighting for her clients' right to install their lines in Illinois communities.

Though her practice is focused in the Midwest, she represents nationwide telecommunication, broadband and cable providers. This has provided Jane with the opportunity to assist clients in their efforts to lobby various state legislatures to implement state-wide broadband strategies. Working to help expand her clients' footprints in rural and underserved markets is a passion for Jane. She is always looking for ways to bring together industry leaders and government officials and promote affordable broadband access and utilization.

Allison Rule is a partner with Marashlian & Donahue and heads the Firm's communications taxes, and fee practice, where she focuses on advising clients regarding a variety of state and local taxation and regulatory fee issues. She advises clients across the country about mechanisms to optimize services to reduce the taxes they owe and about general tax compliance strategies.

She also helps clients navigate the tax and regulatory fee audit process and tax remediation programs. She has defended clients in a number of federal regulatory fee audits and in state and local audits involving tax jurisdictions across the U.S. She has also worked with clients in multi-jurisdictional taxability and remediation projects involving hundreds of state and local judications over the course of her career.

Allison joined the firm in 2008 as a senior attorney and became partner 2014. While Allison, and many of Marashlian & Donahue's attorneys, hail from "big firm" backgrounds, they share a common affinity for the firm's unique entrepreneurial tenor. "We have a lot of flexibility within a huge firm, which is a huge attraction to the employees, especially for someone like me, as a working mom," she explains. "They're very modern and accept all new ideas. This is how my tax practice emerged. It was becoming more prevalent among my clients, and then it grew from there."

THE LAW OFFICE OF JASON CARR PLLC

> Although Jason's practice primarily focuses on domestic and offshore tax resolution work, he also represents a select number of entrepreneurs, artists, and athletes as well as individuals who are facing issues with the IRS after investing in cryptocurrencies.

As a tax controversy and litigation attorney, Jason Carr works to achieve significant savings for clients through effective tax planning. By defending against assessments and pursuing refund claims, he has been successful at helping numerous individuals overcome their tax problems. At The Law Office of Jason Carr, PLLC, located in Dallas, Texas, Jason focuses on representing individuals in domestic and foreign tax compliance issues, reporting foreign assets and defending against penalties.

Established in June 2019, The Law Office of Jason Carr offers a three-step process for tax relief, which includes a free consultation, investigation, and defense against the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). During the client's scheduled consultation, Jason and his team answer the person's initial questions and determines if they can help based upon his or her tax situation.

Once the client's case has been accepted, the firm initiates protection on his or her behalf and establishes communication with the IRS. Then, a thorough review of the client's situation is conducted to determine which options are available to resolve the problem. Once a tax defense plan is established, Jason immediately becomes the client's advocate and begins working to achieve the best possible outcome

Although Jason's practice primarily focuses on domestic and offshore tax resolution work, he also represents a select number of entrepreneurs, artists, and athletes as well as individuals who are facing issues with the IRS after investing in cryptocurrencies. No matter the situation, The Law Office of Jason Carr guarantees professional, competent, and confidential service for every client who comes to them with a problem.

Prior to opening his own firm, Jason worked for a company that developed specialty coolants for technology and energy companies. Specializing in operations and marketing, Jason was responsible for daily operations, overseeing marketing, partners, and manufacturing. Starting on the floor and working his way up, he remained with the company for over 13 years.

In 2010, Jason started a side business, which offered a social network for energy professionals. As a result of the business's success, he was able to go back to school, earning a Juris Doctorate from Texas A&M University School of Law and later obtaining his Master of Laws (LL.M.) from Georgetown University Law Center. While in law school, Jason completed an externship with the United States Department of Justice Tax Division (DOJ) and published a number of tax articles.

No matter the situation, The Law Office of Jason Carr guarantees professional, competent, and confidential service for every client who comes to them with a problem.

According to Jason, going back to school at a later age and having more life experience has given him a unique perspective, which has allowed him to see more clearly from each client's point-of-view. As a result, when individuals arrive at his office feeling lost and discouraged due to tax problems, Jason is able to effectively relieve their stress and anxiety. He not only helps people in Dallas but also works with individuals throughout the United States, including low-income taxpayers to whom he frequently offers pro bono tax preparation work.

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Donna Purcell

Donna Purcell effectively provides every aspect of personal injury, employment law, insurance, and corporate/commercial representation.

Boasting over 30 years of experience in the legal industry as well as a queen's counsel (QC) designation, Donna Purcell effectively provides every aspect of personal injury, employment law, insurance, and corporate/commercial representation. As president and founder of Donna Purcell QC Law in Alberta, Canada, she has successfully appeared at all levels of court within the province and before various administrative tribunals. Donna's ultimate goal is to provide timely and cost-effective solutions to her clients, including alternative dispute resolution processes.

DONNA PURCELL QC
LAW

After earning her Juris Doctorate degree at the University of Calgary, Donna was admitted to the bar and began practicing law in 1989. She first articled at the Alberta Court of Appeal as well as the Court of Queen's Bench before joining the Civil Litigation Department at a successful Calgary law firm. During her three years at the firm, Donna represented oil and gas companies, financial institutions, insurance companies, and individuals in various civil disputes.

In 1992, Donna made the decision to relocate to an Edmonton law firm focused on representing insurance companies and individuals in serious personal injury and other insurance related matters. She remained at the firm as a trial attorney until 1995 when she accepted a position at a civil litigation practice in Red Deer, Alberta. At that firm, Donna began to focus primarily on insurance and serious personal injury, employment law, and corporate/commercial disputes and gained valuable experience working with senior litigation counsel.

Because Donna has run a remote practice for 20 years and has been fully digital for 10 years, she has the flexibility to spend half of her professional time volunteering and serving as a leader within her profession. For example, she is a former president of the Alberta Civil Trial Lawyers Association as well as on the Leader Development Committee for the Canadian Bar Association, Alberta Branch. Donna has also served on the Legal Archives Society of Alberta as well as many other professional and civic organizations.

Donna also strengthens her profession by teaching seminars and holding presentations for fellow members of the bar. Most recently, she and a group of attorneys developed a webinar package addressing remote or virtual litigation-from meeting the client to attending trial. The webinar also included a virtual resiliency component to deal with court closures such as those being faced due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Due to her first-hand experience and personal success with running a remote practice, Donna is also currently involved with an initiative to assist the courts in returning to full capacity. As such, she has been part of a working group that put together the first remote questioning protocol for Alberta. After receiving approval from the courts, the initiative has allowed lawyers to continue to conduct their cases via remote questioning.

As a result of the exemplary client service she provides, Donna has received numerous honors and awards. These include the *Women in Law Leadership Award*, the *Central Alberta Pro Bono Prism Award*, and the *Gary J. Bigg Champion of Justice Award*.

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Barney Balonick, Attorney

It all started with L.A.'s premier litigation boutique firm, Liner LLP. Mr. Stuart Liner had access to a war chest of lawyers, but he wanted a lawyer with grit, a former criminal prosecutor – or, a street fighter. One day he called Barney and said "...I've got an idea for you. There are some files here that I want you to take and if you do what I think you can do, then this may be the door you walk thru..." With just one phone call, Mr. Liner changed everything (as he's known to do). Barney's law firm went from business litigation to having a sliver-laser focus - pursuing a law firm's clients that refused to pay their legal fees. Once this started, these same law firms handed Barney their judgments for additional enforcement. Blessed with guidance from his other mentors, lawyers known for their stellar achievements and peerless intellect, Fred Fenster, Esq., Henry David, Esq., and the esteemed Barry Hirsch, Esq., it began. Since then, Barney's firm has recovered more than $9,000,000.00 in just over six years.

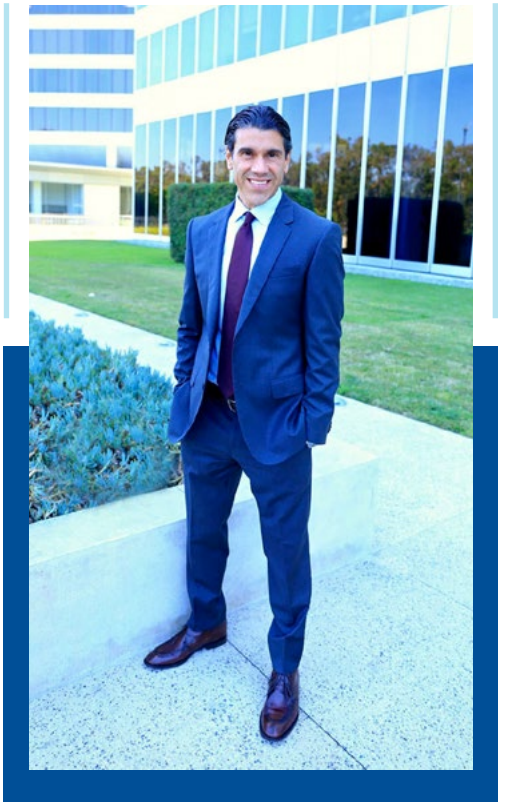
> Barney's areas of practice include judgment enforcement, creditors' rights, asset recovery, business litigation, and professional responsibility.

"I always wanted a civil practice where I could keep my prosecutor mentality. To use investigation tactics instead of just regular discovery. When a firm retains us to recover their fees, we look at it with the eye that we will go beyond mere preponderance of the evidence - we make sure that we bolt the case down, forcing the defendant to pay no matter what. It's a privilege to represent these incredible firms and corporations - we run down the defendants and drain them because these firms and corporations deserve this level of undaunted service."

Known for finding his opponents' weaknesses and for using his own brand of guerilla warfare to win, Barney Balonick holds an established reputation as a Los Angeles lawyer never afraid to fight for his clients. At his firm, the Balonick Law Office, Inc., Barney's areas of practice include judgment enforcement, creditors' rights, asset recovery, business litigation, and professional responsibility. When people ask him how his firm continues to leap forward, he says "pure will."

Barney was on Chicago-Kent School of Law's trial team, won regionals, and went right from law school to the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, where he was on trial the very first day. Barney knew his prosecutor's mentality would never ebb and it led him to loving what he does even today. "From the minute I got out of school, I started chasing bad guys and trying cases in court," he quips. He may have started in Chicago but when prominent entertainment lawyer Barry Hirsch invited him to Los Angeles, Barney jumped. As his career grew, he became one of the few lawyers admitted to the big three: New York, Illinois, and California.

About six years ago, Barney opened his own practice but what seemed right, what made the most sense, was the sense of purpose. That purpose came from representing law firms and other companies to get their bills paid. As a result, Barney's primary focus is now enforcing the rights of creditors, pre- and post-judgment. In fact, he has become a great option for law firms to retrieve the money owed to them. Working as L.A. law's vengeful enforcer, Barney and his team recovered over $9 million within their first five years and in April 2020 alone, they brought in over $600,000 from debt collection. "Since the door opened, we have been so lucky to get these chances," says Barney.



Today, the firm's practice has grown to represent corporate clients in addition to law firms, to go after debts on their behalf. Interestingly, however, Barney is seeing a similar pattern between those who do not pay their legal bills and those who latch onto corporate debt. For example, in a typical case, people refuse to pay the amount they agreed upon, but it is not because they lack the funds. According to Barney, it is because they are career welchers, who essentially steal for a living by taking his client's services and then not paying. According to Barney "the refusal to pay is always the defendant's last mistake."

Recently, one of L.A.'s most successful trial firms had judgments against a defendant now doing decades in prison. Using some of his favorite techniques (e.g., grilling a defendant as if he were going to read the *Miranda* warnings), not only did he recover 100% of the judgment but Barney also managed to retrieve an extra $130,000 in interest. A hard-fought victory. Although everyone on the case got paid, he says that it was the vengeance that felt great. In the end, the most important thing for Barney is to never forget where he came from, what made him, and to always remember and respect those that believed in him.

BALONICK – LAW – OFFICE
PROFESSIONAL GRADE

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Svetlana Couture

With her extensive knowledge and versatile skills, she takes a wholesome approach to legal issues and works with clients through all stages of case resolution, each on a case-by-case basis, tailor-making each case's plan and strategy, or "couturing" each case...

Svetlana Couture is owner of Couture Law Practice, a private solo law firm based in Carlsbad, California, with focus on real property, estate planning, fraud and fiduciary duty violations and complex family law matters. With over two decades of hands-on experience, she has been a champion of the smaller clients, the underdogs—small business owners, individuals, and families. She is the Carlsbad lawyer who takes care of her people, a community-minded coastal attorney with a passion for problem-solving, on a mission to right the wrongs.

After moving her Northern California law practice founded in 1997, Svetlana re-opened Couture Law Practice in 2014 in San Diego area with a motto that embodies the fundamental principle that drives her: "Advocacy with Passion." With her extensive knowledge and versatile skills, she takes a wholesome approach to legal issues and works with clients through all stages of case resolution, each on a case-by-case basis, tailor-making each case's plan and strategy, or "couturing" each case, as she puts it, often advising on multiple areas of the law while taking a 360-view with her clients. "For me, it is not a matter of stepping out of the box, it is a matter of never getting into the box in the first place."

As a transplant from Ukraine, she is no stranger to challenges, and her individual exposure to the world brings unique awareness of what the world is going through. In the midst of COVID-19, it is this rare perspective that has allowed her to continue to serve her coastal clients uninterrupted, prepared to handle the growing crossovers she is seeing in legal areas. Svetlana is accessible to her clients via virtual services and secure Internet platforms so that they don't have to go into the office. "In this day in age with the virus going on, altering everything we know, I see crossovers happening—crossovers of areas of law that are blurring the lines and converging upon each other, such as, for example, real estate crossing with family law issues and vice versa, because everyone has been either staying at home or working from home. As lawyers we are obliged to advise on all legal issues and not just those in which we choose to specialize", she explains.

Svetlana's ability to pivot nimbly emphasizes the value of diversity and the ways in which it enriches both the legal profession and our society. She sees the world, and its people, through a broader lens, and one shaped by challenges that inform her deep compassion for people, her drive to succeed, and her commitment to community. Raised in the former U.S.S.R. during the Cold War, after receiving her undergraduate education, in 1989, at the age of 23 she traveled West of the then still standing Berlin Wall for the first time ever, setting her sights on California, arriving with a single suitcase and $300 in her pocket.

Her first career in the U.S. was at KPFA radio station in Berkley, California, where she also became a radio DJ. That gave her media understanding of what it takes to present information accurately and to tell stories that inspire. It led her to become an editor and a co-producer of a bilingual newspaper and later she got involved in TV and theater productions. She learned a lot during these experiences, but her greatest challenges were yet to come. "When I started to apply to law schools, I had to face a lot of bias, prejudice and, on top of that, I also had to overcome problems with basic application requirements. A lot of my Ukrainian undergrad education was not initially recognized by the Committee of Bar Examiners for the State Bar of California, and so I had my first hurdle of having to persuade the Committee, in writing, to exercise its broad discretion in accepting ALL of my Ukrainian undergraduate credits required for law school admission, even those based on ideological studies. And they did!"

COUTURE LAW
- EST. 1997 -

She attended law school full time while raising her two-year-old son, and working at a law office part-time, still finishing law school in just three years. She graduated from New College of California School of Law in 1996, was admitted to the State Bar of California a year later, and hit the ground running as a court-appointed private public defender in Alameda County, representing indigent persons in juvenile, criminal, and family courts of Northern California. Since that time, she has spent her career helping others, staying in the realm of civil litigation and civil harassment. These days, especially now, during COVID-19, we are seeing more discrimination and bias within home-based systems and organizations, such as HOAs, among others. Svetlana is offering services to tenants and owners who are experiencing discrimination in HOA setting. "I believe the community makes us, as professionals, and our work in the community is essential. In the words used by Martin Luther King, Jr., 'Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream!"

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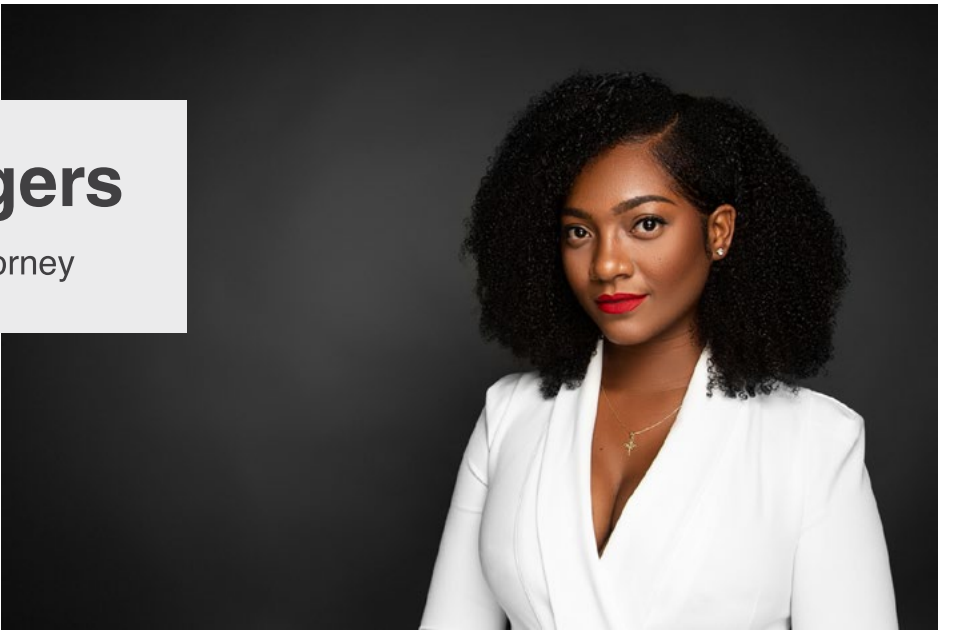
Natlie G. Figgers

Founder & Managing Attorney



Natlie specializes in the practice areas of commercial litigation and personal injury, proving skilled representation to all individuals and businesses who seek her services.

As a vibrant, tech-savvy attorney, Natlie Figgers understands that she is as vital to the cases of her clients as her clients are to her own livelihood. That is why, unlike the big firms, Natlie always makes herself available to those she represents, day or night, weekdays, or weekends. Currently, as the founder and managing attorney at the Law Office of Natlie G. Figgers, LLC, in Coral Springs, Florida, Natlie specializes in the practice areas of commercial litigation and personal injury, proving skilled representation to all individuals and businesses who seek her services.

Natlie stands firm on her commitment to not only passionately advocate for her clients' rights in the courtroom but to also seek the best possible outcome during settlement negotiations.

Prior to becoming an attorney, Natlie first earned a Bachelor of Arts in criminal justice with a minor in political science from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, a top-ranked, historically black university. She then went on to enroll in Nova University Shepard Broad College of Law, where she earned her Juris Doctorate and served as an intern for one of Florida's top commercial litigation firms.

In addition to her academic achievements, Natlie also boasts an extensive technical and business background. While still a full-time undergraduate student, she served as chief operating officer at Figgers Wireless, a family-owned telecommunications company. In that role, she was responsible for negotiating contracts as high as $26 million. Throughout her time at Figgers Wireless, Natlie helped to establish the company by putting together a team, and she subsequently saw the company's revenue increase by 400%. Today, as a result of her efforts, the company is worth $65 million. Natlie's five-years as COO equipped her with both business experience and technology acumen that has translated directly into distinctive advantages for her clients. For instance, unlike many of her competitors, Natlie is able to quickly assess electronic devices, which may contain valuable information vital to cases.

Once Natlie began law school, she was promoted to chief human resources officer, where she remained for the next four and a half years. Natlie reflects upon her time at Figgers Wireless as a valuable learning experience, which helped to prepare her for her legal career. She credits her prior work experience for strengthening her ability to argue settlements competently and confidently.

After graduating law school, Natlie opened her own law practice where she focuses on personal injury, slip and falls, auto accidents, commercial litigation, and wrongful deaths. She represents clients throughout Broward, Dade, Palm Beach, Hillsborough, Alachua, Leon, Gadsden, and Orange counties. Natlie takes pride in investigating every detail of a client's situation in order to craft a firm strategy that she can tailor to each client's specific needs. In each situation, she analyzes whether settlement, litigation, or another alternative is the most appropriate option and then works to do everything possible to pursue the desired outcome for her client.

Although her firm has been practicing for only two years, Natlie has already established a reputation for her attention to detail and for her ability to think quickly in order to effectively maneuver around challenges that arise during cases. Natlie stands firm on her commitment to not only passionately advocate for her clients' rights in the courtroom but to also seek the best possible outcome during settlement negotiations.

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Michael D'Amico

D'AMICO LAW, LLC

As the owner of D'Amico Law LLC, Michael D'Amico is a personal injury attorney on a mission to assist victims of serious accidents. He is a 31-year-old legal wunderkind who started his first practice straight out of law school and hit the courtroom running, trying a number of courtside and jury trials within his first couple of years. Characteristic of his blue-collar roots, he is a compassionate, caring attorney fiercely committed to fighting for maximum recovery for his clients. "I think I really connect and communicate well with my clients. Because I'm a sole practitioner, I try to take on fewer cases so that I can work closely with my clients and fully understand their stories inside and out. I learned early on that some of the older defense attorneys will do everything they can to try to take advantage of a younger attorney but I make clear from the get-go that my age is not reflective of my capabilities as a lawyer. I have no fear of anybody," he explains.

A passionate advocate for his clients, Michael brings to bear extensive expertise in the area of personal injury law, including bad faith, unfair insurance practices and complex insurance litigation. His knowledge and negotiation skills have resulted in significant verdicts and settlements, including three six-figure settlements in less than two short years since he opened the new and improved D'Amico Law LLC in 2018. Hailing from a small-town upbringing, his humble beginnings did not portend the success he would achieve as the first lawyer in his family. With a mother who is a gym teacher and a father who works at the water company, hard work and compassion are in Michael's blue-collar blood. He attended Wesleyan University where he played football and lacrosse before being injured and transferring to UConn and graduating pre-med with a biology degree. He was "this close" to attending medical school when an epiphany changed his path. "I was in the middle of taking the MCAT, dropped my pencil and walked out of the room. I knew it wasn't for me. At that point, I decided to pursue a career in law. I was always good at debating and arguing so I went to Quinnipiac and gave law school a shot. Coincidentally, I now rely on and use to my advantage my science background when developing my cases and explaining to insurers the severity of my clients' injuries."

> "I think I really connect and communicate well with my clients. Because I'm a sole practitioner, I try to take on fewer cases so that I can work closely with my clients and fully understand their stories inside and out.

Michael tutored middle school children and bartended while he pursued his law degree which led to a fortuitous meeting with Nick Nesi, an attorney who would become his mentor and the catalyst for Michael's first foray into law as a sole practitioner. He opened the Law Office of Michael P. D'Amico straight out of law school, and as his reputation for his legal skills grew, so, too, did the number of cases referred to him. "I had quite a few really solid wins early on. The problem I encountered was pretty ironic—I was bringing in too many clients. The issue with that was I could not keep up with the costs associated with litigating those cases even though I was bartending nights and weekends." After three years, he left his practice and joined Biller, Sachs, Zito, and LeMoult, where for a year and a half he gained experience in cases involving bad faith and unfair insurances practices. At that time, he felt he'd learned enough to take that and do it his own way, opening up D'Amico Law LLC in 2018.

Michael holds a J.D. from Quinnipiac University School of Law where he received the *Distinguished Achievement Award in Lawyer's Professional Responsibility*. In 2019, he started the *D'Amico Law Scholarship*, which is awarded to a promising senior lacrosse player from Branford High School, his *alma mater*. He is admitted to practice in Connecticut Superior Court, United States Bankruptcy Court: District of Connecticut, and United States District Court: District of Connecticut.

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Michelle Otero Valdés

Managing Partner

CHALOS & CO, P.C.
International Law Firm

Michelle Otero Valdés is an admiralty and maritime trial attorney as well as an internationally recognized authority on marine insurance who has been providing skilled and practical guidance since 1994. As a Florida Bar board certified lawyer representing a vast range of maritime interests, she has published articles relating to admiralty and maritime law and blogs regularly on issues affecting the maritime industry. She also frequently serves as a lecturer for continuing legal education courses and commercial trade organizations.

Born and raised in Central Florida, Michelle has always loved the sea. In fact, every weekend throughout her childhood not spent sailing or rowing was spent fishing, shrimping or scalloping. It was during those years of her youth that Michelle developed a personal appreciation for the maritime industry.

Michelle first attended Florida International University College of Business where she earned a bachelor's degree in international business and management. She then graduated with a Juris Doctorate degree from St. Thomas University School of Law. During her years in law school, Michelle worked as a volunteer for Casa Marina, now known as Seafarer's House in Port Everglades, providing visiting mariners with practical care and spiritual support. Michelle also worked as a law clerk for a maritime plaintiff's firm, primarily handling crew member cases against their employers. Upon graduating from law school, Michelle began working as an associate at a maritime defense firm in Miami. For the first three years of her career, Michelle handled primarily personal injury cases such as water born and land side injuries involving port workers, shipboard casualties, incidents involving brown water vessels and Florida state workers compensation claims.

According to Michelle, the aspect that sets her apart from most other attorneys is her in-depth understanding of client perspective. She credits this ability to the experience she gained when she left her first job as a lawyer to work as an in-house claims executive for Thomas Miller, at the time, the largest marine insurer in the world. For over eight years, Michelle handled third-party liability matters including thru transport (TT), protection and indemnity (P&I) and freight, demurrage and defense (FDD) claims for the South American syndicate of the UK Club. "I was able to get into the nitty gritty of the day-to-day handling of a matter outside of litigation, and I learned a lot about managing litigation costs," says Michelle. She also discovered that to fully understand what a client wants out of a case, it is essential to take the time to learn his or her perspective.

In 2006, Michelle went back into private practice as a partner with a big maritime firm in Miami, where she held many of the same responsibilities as her former in-house position but with the added practice of yacht and marina work. Michelle remained in the marine department of that firm for eight years before finally deciding to venture out on her own.

Michelle investigates and defends cases nationwide against the United States Department of Justice and handles other admiralty cases in federal court.

Michelle has been an independent attorney since 2012, owning a hybrid style firm that is affiliated with Chalos & Co in Miami. Michelle investigates and defends cases nationwide against the United States Department of Justice and handles other admiralty cases in federal court. Michelle handles other maritime matters in Florida state courts. Michelle's many specialties include maritime casualties; marine pollution claims under *The Oil Pollution Act of 1990*; *The International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage*; defense of maritime death and personal injury claims; passenger and crew claims; commercial maritime contracts and transactions; claims coverage evaluations; salvage and *Special Compensation P&I Club Clause* claims; cargo claims and recoveries; P&I and FDD insurance claims; freight forwarder/non-vessel-operating common carrier liability claims; yacht disputes; and other marine industry disputes.

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Lina Stillman

In order to provide clients with the best service possible, Lina offers a wide range of employment advice, training, investigations and litigation.

The epitome of a modern, business-savvy employment attorney, Lina Stillman has dedicated her entire legal career exclusively to the practice of labor and employment law. She holds vast experience in all areas of labor and employment including claims, defenses, strategies, and tactics utilized by the parties who participate in labor law cases. As the managing attorney of Stillman Legal P.C. located in New York City, Lina is passionate about fighting for the rights of underserved populations. Her mission is made evident by the practice's motto: "We are the law firm for the working people."

Since 2015, Stillman Legal P.C. has been serving clients throughout New York's metropolitan area including the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn.

In order to provide clients with the best service possible, Lina offers a wide range of employment advice, training, investigations and litigation. Subjects include discrimination, sexual harassment, hostile work environment, unpaid overtime and minimum wage.

Whether handling individual cases or litigating collective and action involving multiple plaintiffs, the Stillman Legal attorneys are successful due to their extensive experience in all aspects of employment law, from hiring, employment contracts, non-compete agreements to termination and separations agreements.

However, the firm specializes in wage and hour litigation as many workers continue to have their wages stolen by their employers despite the Federal Labor Standards Act and New York Labor Laws establishing minimum wage and overtime.

STILLMAN LEGAL, P.C
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Lina and her team strive to maintain their mission of working for the people, no matter how much or how little money they have. As a result, their clients are given a choice regarding payment, and everyone abides by a contingent arrangement where the firm doesn't receive payment unless the client does.

Before becoming an attorney, Lina worked producing television commercials but never experienced a sense of fulfillment. She eventually decided to enroll in law school because she saw there were few attorneys working on behalf of the Latino Community. Subsequently, Lina earned a bachelor's degree with honors from Syracuse University; a master's degree from Parsons School of Design; and a Juris Doctorate degree from Rutgers Law School. After becoming an attorney and fighting for people's rights, Lina found fulfillment through helping others.

Outside of the firm, Lina serves as a board member for Mixteca Organization Inc., a community-based organization who works to empower Latin-American immigrants in New York. Located in Sunset Park, Mixteca offers a variety of programs and services that respond to the specific needs of immigrant families including health, education, and legal assistance. Lina regularly speaks at conferences, seminars, and training sessions on topics related to employment law. She is fluent in Spanish and Italian.

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Thomas Scot Wolinetz

Founding Partner

WELTZLAW
WELTZ KAKOS GERBI WOLINETZ VOLYNSKY LLP

A highly respected litigation and transactional attorney with years of diverse experience, Thomas Scot Wolinetz has an established reputation for his ability to analyze a situation and to devise the best possible strategy within a short time frame. He is also known for aggressively advocating on behalf of his clients with professionalism and expertise. Recently, Thomas is a founding partner of Weltz Kakos Gerbi Wolinetz Volynsky LLP, a law firm representing clients in all aspects of securities, corporate and commercial matters.

Headquartered in New York City, Weltz Law offers nationwide representation to clients with offices in Manhattan, Long Island, Florida, and California. Although it was recently founded in 2019, Weltz Law collectively boasts over 25 years of legal experience. Together, the attorneys leverage their diverse knowledge and skill sets to focus on securities and corporate matters, as well as general and commercial litigation, real estate, employment, estate planning, and bankruptcy matters. “Weltz Law is dedicated to providing professional and effective legal services to [their] clients.”

As a founding partner, Thomas takes pride in the firm’s mission to offer individualized services and to build strong relationships with all clients. He enjoys being part of a culture that offers a small law firm experience but with big law firm capabilities. Known for his ability to provide a unique perspective, Thomas focuses his practice on both litigation and transactional matters, which includes, but is not limited to, securities arbitration, litigation, corporate law, mergers and acquisition, finance, and corporate governance. However, he has a vast amount of experience in other areas of law as well.

Prior to founding Weltz Law, Thomas worked at what is now known as Duane Morris as well as another prominent boutique New York City law firm. Prior to that, he held various professional legal roles including a position at the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission’s division of enforcement. Throughout his career, he has dealt with private placements, initial public offerings (IPOs), and private investment in public equity (PIPE) transactions. Thomas has also arbitrated matters before the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, including cases involving stocks, bonds, options, mutual funds, private placements, real estate investment trusts (REITS), structured products, annuities, life insurance policies, and exchange-traded funds (ETFs).

Thomas obtained his bachelor’s degree from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, a senior college of the City University of New York (CUNY). He then attended The Hofstra University School of Law where he consistently made the *Dean’s List*, received a public service award, the *Herman Hillman Real Estate Award*, numerous course excellence awards, was named a *Dean’s Scholar*, and graduated *cum laude*. Thomas credits his quality education and experience in law and business with helping him to successfully serve his clients and community.

Thomas is also known for aggressively advocating on behalf of his clients with professionalism and expertise. Recently, Thomas is a founding partner of Weltz Kakos Gerbi Wolinetz Volynsky LLP, a law firm representing clients in all aspects of securities, corporate and commercial matters.

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Yurika Pistorius

A native South African, Yurika Pistorius was inspired at a young age by Nelson Mandela, who once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." These words not only resonated with Yurika, but served as a catalyst, driving her to become a highly skilled compliance officer (and formerly, a civil litigation trial attorney), with more than 15 years of extensive experience in legal, governance, organizational leadership, risk, and regulatory compliance management. Most importantly, Yurika has spent her entire career rooting for the underdog, mentoring young professionals, and leading by example. Though once a practicing attorney, Yurika currently focuses on legal and compliance at the Clientèle Limited Group (Clientèle) in Johannesburg, South Africa, where she is appointed as group compliance officer and also serves as in-house legal counsel.

As executive head of legal and compliance, Yurika has a unique position at Clientèle, balancing the need for sustainable growth of the business, whilst ensuring compliance with the myriad of laws and regulations of the insurance industry. Not only does she advise and guide the business on national and international laws, she conducts impact assessments and implements the necessary changes as well. "A well-rounded compliance and legal professional should not only know and understand the regulatory environment, but must also understand the world we are living in and be in a position to guide the business strategically in the new digital world," says Yurika. As a result, she has worked to guide Clientèle with legal, regulatory, and operational structures to implement digital strategies such as the roll-out of a fintech mobile application and customer loyalty program.

Yurika currently focuses on legal and compliance at the Clientèle Limited Group (Clientèle) in Johannesburg, South Africa, where she is appointed as group compliance officer and also serves as in-house legal counsel.

Yurika obtained both Bachelor of Civil Law and Bachelor of Law (LLB) degrees from the University of Pretoria in South Africa. She then went on to complete her articles of clerkship and legal training at a law firm in Pretoria before being admitted as an attorney of the High Court of South Africa. This achievement was followed by Yurika's appointment as a practicing attorney in the same firm's commercial litigation department, where she became skilled in high court litigation, commercial litigation, contract law, banking and insurance practice, family law, and medical negligence. Yurika later had the honor of joining a winning legal team at a law firm in Pretoria, where she worked on the landmark case, *Barkhuizen v Napier*. The case became a monumental win for all insurers in South Africa when the Supreme Court of Appeal and the Constitutional Court held that time-limitation clauses in insurance contracts are permissible and was found not be unconstitutional, nor in violation of the *Bill of Rights* of *The Constitution*. Yurika was also chosen by Zurich Insurance to be part of its *Global Association Rotation Program* as one of only two South African candidates of 80 nominees from 170 countries, and was awarded the professional designation of compliance practitioner (CPrac) through the Compliance Institute of Southern Africa. She is also a registered compliance officer at the Financial Sector Conduct Authority, has published numerous articles relating to the financial services industry, and is a local and international speaker on compliance and conduct matters.

Yurika thanks God for providing her with the many opportunities she has been given, for her family, her three Siberian Huskies, and especially for her parents. "My parents are my heroes. They gave us love and provided us opportunities to succeed in all aspects of our lives," says Yurika. In fact, her father always said, "You can lose everything, but you can never lose your education," and by investing in his words, Yurika found success.

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Troy Foster

Along with his life-long passion for helping people, Troy Foster's extensive career as a trial lawyer, counselor, mediator, and business partner have strengthened his ability to utilize the law as a tool to achieve significant results. He is a powerful advocate for his clients, especially in the areas of employment law, human resources, and health care challenges due to his 26 years of diverse legal experience. Currently, Troy serves as a partner at The Foster Group, PLLC in Phoenix, Arizona where he continues to provide custom solutions for clients who need assistance with employment law conflicts, human resources legal support, and healthcare compliance and certification.

Troy is a powerful advocate for his clients, especially in the areas of employment law, human resources, and health care challenges due to his 26 years of diverse legal experience.

With offices located in both Phoenix and Prescott, The Foster Group represents employees, employers, health care providers, human resources personnel, and other clients throughout the state of Arizona. Acknowledging that clients require more than legal advice, the firm prides itself in providing white glove service that is both transparent and result oriented. Team members strive to set goals that are objectively reasonable, and they are dedicated to responding to clients day or night. In fact, once a client signs on with The Foster Group, he or she is given a list of the legal team's personal numbers in case of an emergency. "We want to ensure that our clients are not stressing out or having sleepless nights," says Troy. Part of the firm's white glove service is making sure that the process goes as smoothly as possible. That is why the firm's motto is "Putting the pieces together for you."

Although The Foster Group was originally founded in 2010, the firm closed temporarily while Troy went in-house for a large company as general counsel. After reopening in 2018, they began to transition in order to narrow their focus on representing more employees, and the firm added two additional lawyers who are responsible for assisting with employment matters from the early stages of conflict. For example, if an employee is nearing retirement, and an employer is attempting to push the person out in order to deny retirement benefits, then an attorney will step in and negotiate. The lawyers also assist on the transactional front with employees who are facing harassment, discrimination, and retaliation situations at work. Half of the firm's cases fall into this area as well as collective cases, which involve instances such as several hundred employees not receiving pay required under federal law.

Prior to founding his own law firm, Troy graduated magna cum laude from each of Arizona's three collegiate institutions. His college career included North Arizona University, where he obtained a bachelor's degree in political science; The University of Arizona, where he earned a master's degree in public health; and Arizona State University's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law where he finished with a Juris Doctorate degree.

Our firm's motto is
"Putting the pieces together for you."

Troy began his law career as a clerk for a federal judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit before he began working as a partner and chair of the employment division for the Phoenix office of Lewis and Roca. In that role, he oversaw five offices and all lawyers in their employment practices. He also served as judge pro tempore on Arizona's Superior Court for several years. Subsequently, Troy went in-house to work as chief human resources officer before moving into the role of general counsel for the same large health care organization.

Outside of his work at The Foster Group, Troy is a published author and has also worked as an adjunct professor of law for Indiana University: Purdue University Indianapolis and Arizona State University. However, as a father of four, he enjoys being a family man above all else.

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Tanya N. Blocker

Senior In-House Counsel

Tanya N. Blocker serves as senior in-house labor and employment counsel for multinational energy conglomerate National Grid. With over a decade of legal experience in the private and government sectors and a history of litigation victories in both state and federal courts, she provides counsel to the company in its employment law matters and manages the Company's employment related litigations as well. She is the immediate past president of the Association of Black Women Attorneys New York, co-chair of the Metropolitan Black Bar Association's Labor & Employment Section, and is the recipient of the *New York Law Journal*'s *2018 Distinguished Leadership Award* as well as a *Profiles in Diversity Journal 2019 Women Worth Watching Award* recipient. Tanya is a leader with a mission, unwavering in her purpose, who prioritizes God—and is one whose very presence inspires people. "To whom much is given, much is required; and to whom much is extended much more will be asked" is her scriptural mantra. "I have been blessed, and it is for me to give back," she shares. "I am planting seeds many of which I may not see bloom, but it is my obligation to continue planting for future generations. I want to unify communities to grow, and build, and change together. And at the root of that is espousing compassion for others."

As a young lawyer armed with a jurist doctorate from St. John's University School of Law, Tanya began her career in 2009 in private practice, specializing in commercial litigation, including white collar crime and employment law. Prior to joining National Grid, she served as senior counsel at an AM 100 law firm, as a senior counsel in the Labor & Employment Division of the New York City Law Department, and as a commercial litigation associate for the firm Kaye Scholer, LLP. (kna Arnold Porter Kaye Scholer). Though she began in commercial litigation, before long, Tanya realized that her calling was not the glitzy universe of white-collar crime, but the purpose-driven field of employment law. "I started in big law commercial litigation primarily because of the cachet and the sophistication of it all. As a naïve law school student, I measured success in law school and the legal profession, for that matter, exclusively based on whether or not I could secure an offer in big law. Because that's what you are fed as a law student. This was despite having an offer in government with the opportunity to gain trial experience, which I knew I would enjoy. While big law offers phenomenal training and refinement, I learned quickly that securing and offer in big law and achieving success in the legal profession are not binary. As I matured and began networking and attending professional development events, I heard something that struck a chord. That the common denominator for success is career ownership. While I enjoyed white collar crime, I adored employment law," she shares.

After being introduced to employment law in the private sector, Tanya took all the skills, knowledge, and experience gained over her tenure there and transitioned to the government sector and matured into a fierce and formidable litigator with the capacity to think on her feet. "One of my favorite quotes is from Coco Chanel—'The most courageous act is still to think for oneself. Aloud!' I ascribe to this and the notion of doing rather than saying. To me, one's actions speak louder than one's words. In my field, there is a tendency to tell rather than show and to romanticize certain positions and stigmatize others based sheerly on title rather than skill. I confronted this after transitioning from private practice to the government. While I too enjoy the pomp and circumstance, it is all meaningless absent substance." So, she encourages young attorneys "to resist the eloquence of titles and the smoke and mirrors of 'prestige' and root themselves in purpose and substance." Take control of your career early and explore your passion even if the cachet doesn't accompany that choice," she explains. "To what end am I doing this, should be your initial question and the ultimate answer, your guiding post."

> "I am planting seeds many of which I may not see bloom, but it is my obligation to continue planting for future generations. I want to unify communities to grow, and build, and change together. And at the root of that is espousing compassion for others.

Grounded in her commitment to contribute to the betterment of communities and humankind, Tanya also uses her legal skills and experience to lift-up others. She has spent significant time in West Africa engaging in diversity and governance work, and presenting on international employment law, and she was a participant of the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) Abshire-Inamori Leadership Academy (AILA) 2019 Fellowship Program, a flagship leadership program designed to equip aspiring global leaders to be effective and ethical change-makers. "I believe I have an obligation to assist in reframing the narrative of how Africa is perceived. And to understand my origins and to contribute back to the diaspora," she explains.

In keeping with her mission to give back, she also supports kids, serving as a mock trial coach for a public school in Harlem, New York, from 2013 to 2017, and working to instill in them the message to be compassionate, confident and collaborative—the theme that runs through everything she does. As a leader in her profession and an active supporter of communities here and abroad, Tanya is the epitome of one of her guiding principles—"Your actions speak louder than words."

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Sally Rowshan

Founder and President

An accomplished real estate attorney with a focus on escrow and title insurance law, Sally Rowshan is the go-to specialist for complex escrow transactions in the state of California. She specializes in holding escrows, mergers and acquisitions, business, and asset sale escrows. Sally serves as a trusted advisor to clients throughout the state of California and strives to provide personalized services to all who enter her office at Hollywood Escrow.

Sally has been a practicing attorney since 2001, when she graduated from Georgetown University Law Center with a Juris Doctorate. While many of her classmates went straight into law firms after graduating, Sally was a natural-born entrepreneur. She established an underwritten title company called New Era Title in the Washington, D.C. area, where she underwrote for major national title insurance companies such as Chicago Title and Lawyer's Title. New Era Title quickly became one of the largest per- volume title companies in northern Virginia with licenses in several states and multiple locations. In 2010, Sally sold the company to Lawrence E. Tucker, a fellow Georgetown Law grad, who still owns and operates it today under the name of Title One. She then moved back to her hometown of Los Angeles and returned to her area of expertise by opening an escrow company.

Located in Los Angeles, Hollywood Escrow is an independent escrow company licensed under the strict regulatory requirements of the California Department of Business Oversight. It is managed, owned, and operated by Sally and her team of escrow professionals.

As the founder and president of Hollywood Escrow, Sally has built her practice on her relationship with her fellow colleagues in the legal community. She is familiar with the complexities of acting as the escrow agent for the sale of businesses and products.

Since, March of 2020, she has been the paymaster for several transactions involving the sale of personal protective equipment ("PPE"). Recently, one of the most notable transactions she has worked on was the sale of a $540 million business buyout for a gaming software company. She is also the official escrow agent for many large franchises including Papa John's Pizza, McDonald's, and Menchie's Ice Cream.

Entertainment attorneys and a number of film industry A-list celebrities go to her as their escrow agent for entertainment contracts when they need a trusted fiduciary who understands the underlying contract. However, the majority of Sally's clients are members of the real estate community who entrust her and her team with handling their real estate transactions, most of which are in exclusive areas of Los Angeles.

In addition to owning and operating Hollywood Escrow, Sally provides legal consulting services to other Southern California escrow companies in regulatory and formation matters. Sally has two children: her daughter is a third-year student at USC Marshall School of Business, and her son is a senior in high school.

Sally helps further the legal industry as a member of The State Bar of California as well as the Virginia State Bar. In addition, she is an active member of the Escrow Institute of California, California Escrow Association, Los Angeles Escrow Association, and the Beverly Hills Bar Association, and the California Bar Association.

As the founder and president of Hollywood Escrow, Sally has built her practice on her relationship with her fellow colleagues in the legal community. She is familiar with the complexities of acting as the escrow agent for the sale of businesses and products.

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Vithu Ramachandran

As managing partner at Ramachandran Law, a Toronto-based firm specializing in family law, real estate, civil litigation, wills and estates, and corporate matters, Vithu Ramachandran leads a practice whose vision is simple—to improve communities around the world. After working as a junior associate for nearly four years at a larger, traditional firm, Vithu opened the practice in 2019, to put people at the center of it. With the motto, "We're not just lawyers, but people too," the firm is dedicated to bringing humanity back to the service of law. "The humanity in the service was missing, so it was important for me to bring it back. I wanted a more humane approach to serving people with the law rather than the clients dreading the bill—that is not my priority. I wanted it to be more people oriented; a more connected, relationship approach," he shares.

With his passion for people driving him, Vithu harnesses his ability to solve problems using both traditional and innovative methods to deliver on the firm's promise to provide excellent results and value to all its stakeholders. He believes in a value-based fee structure, not hourly billing. "Clients should pay for the value of the work they're receiving, not for the time we spent serving them. This is very important to me," he explains.

A Canadian native, Vithu's journey to Ramachandran Law took him from Toronto to New York and back again. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in marketing from York University in Toronto, he moved to New York in 2011 to pursue his law degree at Hofstra University School of Law, where he was awarded the *Citation of Excellence in International Law*. Prior to graduating in 2014, he worked with the Suffolk County D.A.'s office, where he honed his legal skills by assisting prosecutors with cases. He passed the New York bar that same year, but decided to relinquish his license and return to his roots to serve his Toronto community.

With his passion for people driving him, Vithu harnesses his ability to solve problems using both traditional and innovative methods to deliver on the firm's promise to provide excellent results and value to all its stakeholders.

After obtaining is law license in Toronto in 2016, he joined a boutique legal firm, where he handled civil litigation, as well as corporate, real estate, and some family law. While there, he realized two things. First, he really wanted to focus on family, estates, and litigation as his practice areas. Second, he wanted to use his legal skills and knowledge to improve communities—not to pad his own wallet. With Ramachandran Law, he is fulfilling his dream. "My ambition is not based off of a Fortune 500 Company mentality. I never aimed to be super rich. I just truly care about what I do."

True to his word, the firm accepts legal aid certificates and is part of "Pledge 1%," giving one percent of its equity, profit, or time to charitable causes for social wellbeing. With a growing client base, and increasing requests for assistance with immigration matters, the firm has plans to expand into immigration law in the near future. "We've built a great, positive rapport with our clients. People come to us and ask us to do immigration, so we intend to help them."

RAMACHANDRAN LAW
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Jay has decided to transform Edelstein Law, LLP, by handling defense as well as plaintiff cases, creating an ideal practice to benefit both attorney and clients.

As a third-generation defense attorney from Philadelphia, Jay Edelstein was born and bred to be a compassionate advocate for victims in need of representation. He has successfully won cases on behalf of his clients for the past 40 years, resulting in more than $50 million in settlements and verdicts. As the founder of Edelstein Law, Jay focuses his practice on the areas of personal injury litigation, auto injury, sexual abuse, slip and fall, dog bites, construction law, as well as litigation involving common carriers. As the firm's slogan states, "Jay gives victims a voice when they don't have one."

In staying true to this slogan, one of the most interesting aspects of Jay's legal career was his decision to transition from solely handling defense cases with insurance companies, to include plaintiff cases with the public as well. After being admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1979, Jay went to work at his father's firm, where he would remain until 1984, when he and four others co-founded a new practice.

In 1999, Jay decided to leave the practice he co-founded to begin Edelstein Law, LLP. His idea was to create a firm specifically designed to provide clients with the greatest experience at a more affordable cost. However, the competition of other large firms, which typically staff over hundreds of lawyers, led to the decision to expand Edelstein Law nationally, instead of locally. This national expansion yielded great results and developed many relationships in the rental car industry, such as Hertz, which has been a client for over 40 years. Edelstein Law, LLP now represents almost every rental car company in the United States, with the exception of Enterprise.

As a defense attorney, Jay spent the majority of his career keeping exposure down for Insurance companies, while helping them save money in the process. However, as a result of recent changes within the insurance industry, Jay has decided to transform Edelstein Law, LLP, by handling defense as well as plaintiff cases, creating an ideal practice to benefit both attorney and clients.

Through his passionate work, Jay knows he is making a difference by fighting for victims and has even developed a niche in his practice to focus on sexual assault, sexual abuse, and judicial misconduct involving children being taken from their families. Although he still handles defense cases, Jay sees protocols being added and changes being made as a result of his representation in plaintiff law. He enjoys being in a field where he feels his direct work is helping others.

Jay has been awarded the distinction of *Super Lawyer of Pennsylvania* for 2013, 2014, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Only 5% of the state's attorneys receive this honor. In addition, Jay is *AV* rated with Martindale-Hubbel, the highest peer review rating in legal ability and ethical standards. This *AV* rating is given to only 5% of attorneys worldwide.

Outside of his role as an attorney, Jay has been happily married to his lovely wife of 33 years. Together, they share three beautiful children and two rambunctious grandsons. Jay is also an advocate for those affected by substance abuse, actively serving as a member of The Philadelphia Board of Directors at Ashley Treatment Center and as Philadelphia counsel for Steps To Recovery, LLC.

Jason Wood

As an attorney with Wood Law Group, Jason Wood is no ordinary trial lawyer. He is a fierce legal advocate whose passion for obtaining justice for his clients was born from decades of witnessing the injustices inflicted upon them by the insurance companies, big business and governmental entities he once helped to defend. With 25 years of experience in medical malpractice, civil rights, abuse of power, personal injury and catastrophic loss, wrongful termination, and discrimination, Jason now leads a firm dedicated to the cause of the victims. For his clients across Idaho and Wyoming, he is their champion. Someone who really believes in their case. He uses his legal insight from the other side of the courtroom and uses it against them. "It was soul-sucking, working for those large companies. It's not what I wanted to do. I wanted to represent the victims of the wealthy and powerful, ordinary people and small businesses *against* the wealthy and powerful who seem to be able to bend the legal system in their favor," he explains.

Jason entered the legal field in 1994, clerking for a federal judge in Boise, Idaho. With an interest in different types of law, he moved back to his hometown of Idaho Falls a year later and began his career with a firm that focused on defending insurance companies against plaintiffs. While he tried to find fulfillment in the intellectual challenges and financial gain in representing them, the work only fed his increasing desire to "change teams" and serve the victims. After nearly 20 years, the unfairness of it all finally wore on him. "I tried to bring more of that to my old firm as the years went by, but it never took hold, so I finally broke off and started my own firm."

With 25 years of experience in medical malpractice, civil rights, abuse of power, personal injury and catastrophic loss, wrongful termination, and discrimination, Jason now leads a firm dedicated to the cause of the victims.

In a relentless pursuit of justice for the victims, in 2014 Jason took his decades of experience and legal skill, turned the tables on the corporate and insurance behemoths, and founded a practice as a passionate advocate dedicated to fighting for "ordinary people" against the very powers he once represented. Born and raised in Idaho with a deep-rooted Idahoan lineage that extends for six generations, Jason knows the jury and the state inside and out. With integrity as a core value, he takes only cases he believes in. "I refuse to take cases I don't believe in, so when I am on their side, my clients know that they have a real champion in their corner, while other side always knows they are in for a brawl," he shares. As former president of the Idaho Trial Lawyers Association—a position reserved for only the best attorneys—with a reputation for "if he takes you to court, you'll lose," there is perhaps no more fitting word than "champion" to describe him.

Jason received his law degree from the University of Idaho. Dedicated to helping victims of injustice, he does *pro bono* work with child advocacy groups and has been appointed by the federal court to represent inmates with meritorious civil rights claims who cannot otherwise obtain competent legal representation.

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Tania N. Shah

Managing Member

Through her roles as business attorney, published author, founder of a tutoring company, and professor of law, Tania Shah has proven herself to be a woman of many talents. Originally from Irvine, California, she relocated to Massachusetts where she has been serving as a practicing attorney for the past 20 years. Currently, as the managing member at Shah Law, PLLC, Tania assists with corporate legal compliance and focuses on business law throughout the Boston area, and, in particular, mom-owned businesses.

> Due to the success of both her law firm and tutoring company, Tania has developed additional niches within the technology field and within the growing "mom-economy" in order to help women who do not want to choose between motherhood and career success to starting their own businesses.

Although now highly successful, Tania's career began with a snag. After graduating from University of California, Berkeley with a Bachelor of Arts in rhetoric and a Bachelor of Science in environmental economics and being selected as the commencement speaker for the College of Natural Science, Tania decided to move across the country for an East Coast experience at the Boston University School of Law. Unfortunately, upon graduating with a promising future, Tania experienced a personal crisis that left her jobless, in debt, and far away from her family in California. However, after realizing there were many other law students in search of support and mentorship, something Tania felt she would have sought out while in law school, she found a way to make money for herself by posting advertisements for tutoring services at surrounding law schools. Tania then began developing materials based upon the feedback of her students, and LawTutors was born.

Today, Tania is bicoastal between California and Massachusetts, and LawTutors has grown into a national tutoring company, offering personalized attention catering to students across various cultures, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Experienced, frequently published professors are available to law school students in need of extra assistance throughout their college careers, and many even remain with their students throughout their bar exams to offer guidance and support. As a result, LawTutors was selected to provide academic support every year to the top 100 minority Ivy League law students during their first year of law school.

At the same time Tania started LawTutors, she began practicing business law as it made sense to be able to support herself financially while growing both companies naturally. Shah Law began as a small, one-person firm, but Tania quickly started networking and representing local businesses in her town. Interestingly, as LawTutors grew, and as her students graduated from law school, they also began referring others to her. As a result, both companies started to experience rapid growth.

SHAH LAW

LawTutors
THE SOLUTION IS HERE

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Because it is important for Tania to empower others by equipping them with knowledge of the law, she also serves as an educator. In fact, she just received a full-time faculty position at Western State College of Law at Westcliff University in Irvine, California and is currently working on a new, innovative workbook under her legal publishing company with her two co-authors Professor Melissa Hale and Professor Antonia Miceli called *The Ultimate Guide to the Uniform Bar Exam*. Tania has also lectured throughout the United States, including Boston, New York, California, Florida, and North Carolina.

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Olaseni A. Bello, Jr.

A Veteran on a Mission

Olaseni A. Bello is an attorney and an entrepreneur, a former U.S. Army combat veteran and JAG officer. He is a servant leader with the world view of an immigrant and a passion for initiatives that address critical vulnerabilities on both the national and international level, particularly as it pertains to marginalized communities. Now he is combining his skill as a lawyer, his discipline as a soldier, and his global experience to launch a unique startup called CarpeMed—"Seize Your Medicine"—a company dedicated to ensuring health care safety and connectivity anywhere in the world. CarpeMed is an international travel medical search platform that serves travelers, who neither want nor are willing to, travel without the certainty of medical access. "I love the law, but it tends to look backwards and there are issues that the law historically hasn't addressed well, such as access to healthcare and capital. I felt that business was tapping these areas much better," he shares.

Olaseni founded CarpeMed in 2019, bringing his unique cross-function abilities sharpened as a captain in Afghanistan and refined as a vice president on the fast-paced foreign exchange trading floor at Morgan Stanley headquarters in New York. He brings a compassionate, holistic approach to focus on increasing healthcare accessibility to travelers. "I want to use technology as a change agent. If you traveled and an unexpected urgent health issue occurred, how would you find local, high quality, and in-language healthcare professionals? Furthermore, building out a safety travel companion allows a traveler to have access to critical health information, such as allergies, blood type, etc., and share that lifesaving information with trusted companions," he explains.

Raised in Nigeria, Olaseni became a U.S. citizen while pursuing his law degree at Vermont Law School. While there, he served as Moot Court president and as part of the trial advocacy team, gaining valuable judicial insight while clerking for a judge. A naturalized citizen, he joined the army with his JD, where he combined his two passions; advocacy and service. As an army captain and JAG officer, Olaseni was entrusted with sensitive investigations involving human trafficking and misuse of government property in Bulgaria and Romania. He was assigned to one of the largest U.S. Army brigades, where he prosecuted 11 trials in 12 months with an astounding record of 10 victories and only one loss. Over his five and a half years in service, he gained extensive on-the-ground experience in conflict areas, including Afghanistan and Nigeria, and was awarded the *Bronze Star* for service in Afghanistan, where he served as chief of detention operations (RC-East).

Olaseni founded CarpeMed in 2019, bringing his unique cross-function abilities sharpened as a captain in Afghanistan and refined as a vice president on the fast-paced foreign exchange trading floor at Morgan Stanley headquarters in New York. He brings a compassionate, holistic approach to focus on increasing healthcare accessibility to travelers.

He began his post-Army career in 2015 as vice president of the fixed-income trading floor in New York for Morgan Stanley, focusing on foreign exchange as the advisor for the Institutional Securities Group covering the Americas. In this role, he provided counsel on legal issues, such as regulatory requirements, internal policies, and best practices, and was responsible for updating policies and procedures to ensure compliance with FINRA rules. In 2018, he joined Wells Fargo as senior counsel for global capital markets, where he focused on the global FX exchange and negotiating contracts on behalf of the company.

In 2019, he left his successful career as an attorney to simultaneously launch CarpeMed and pursue his MBA at the University of California, Berkeley, Haas School of Business. Ever driven by his compassion and his unwavering commitment to serve, Olaseni leverages his experiences as an immigrant, a soldier, a lawyer, and, now, a founder of a company dedicated to improving the lives of others by aiming to move the needle on issues of importance.

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Theron Morrison

As founding attorney for Morrison Law Group and one of the top five attorneys in Utah, Theron Morrison leads the state's largest bankruptcy and consumer protection law firm with the belief that everyone deserves a fresh start. He is passionate about helping to improve the lives of families experiencing financial difficulties, and he has spent his entire career committed to doing so. With a reputation as the most trusted bankruptcy firm in Utah, the practice has served more than 20,000 families, with a focus on the unique situation of each of them. "I started the practice with the client in mind. So many attorneys are arrogant and think people should do what they say when they say to do it, but my focus is on the client and their experience. Each one is unique, and with bankruptcy, it is very important for people to understand, so I explain to them everything, all the details," he shares.

Long before Theron passed the bar, long before his firm was voted *Bankruptcy Firm of the Year*, he had experienced the stress of financial hardship and bankruptcy as a 10-year-old child, when his parents divorced and his father fell on hard times. His father was a realtor and owned rental homes, which provided income for the family. When his parents divorced, Theron's father couldn't support two families with one income, and he was forced to file for bankruptcy. "My dad was at the mercy of bankruptcy, and this is something that I stress to my clients, that I know it is about mercy and starting over to put the pieces back together. I understand their feelings."

Theron knew the day he graduated law school that he wanted to have his own practice. In 2004—on the day he was sworn into the bar—he opened Morrison Law Group, bringing with him valuable insight and knowledge gained while clerking for the largest bankruptcy firm in Oregon to help other families who are enduring the same plight that his family had. Ironically, while in school, Theron worked in collections. He didn't like the way people were treated by collection agencies, and it was this experience that would inform a unique service that his firm offers—debt defense. "I know how people were treated, so I do debt defense and help clients with collection agencies because it is kind of my penance."

While most bankruptcy firms provide only assistance with Chapter 7 or 13 filings, Theron and his team provide assistance with not only bankruptcy options, but also debt defense, consumer protection, and resolving credit reporting errors after bankruptcy. They help correct inaccurate credit reports to restore their credit status, and even sue creditors and credit bureaus, if need be—at no cost to the client.

Theron holds a law degree from Willamette University College of Law and a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and criminology from Metropolitan State University of Denver. He has also served as the Weaver County Bar Association President. In addition, he served as president of the National Consumer Bankruptcy Council, an affiliation of some of the nation's largest bankruptcy firms.

He is passionate about helping to improve the lives of families experiencing financial difficulties, and he has spent his entire career committed to doing so. With a reputation as the most trusted bankruptcy firm in Utah, the practice has served more than 20,000 families, with a focus on the unique situation of each of them.

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One of the main characteristics that sets Arsalan apart from other family law attorneys is the amount of work and diligence he puts into every case.

The founder and owner of Hayat Family Law and Mediation Offices, Attorney Arsalan Hayatdavoodi, holds extensive experience in litigation, mediation, research, and collaborative law. Professionalism, high quality, efficiency, and impeccable customer service are the main pillars of his law firm. It is his mission to ensure that each of his clients have nothing but a stellar experience when coming to him for help. His clients appreciate his dedication to efficiently getting to the point of judgment by seeking to find a solution through mediation instead of litigation. When working on a family law case, he never fails to sympathize with his clients and remains aware to the fact that he is representing both adults and children in stressful situations.

Headquartered in Santa Monica, California, Hayat Family Law and Mediation Offices specializes in divorce and family law cases throughout Los Angeles County. They handle cases involving prenuptial agreements, child custody, and guardianship. In addition, they focus on property issues and other financial aspects of divorce such as income available for child support and spousal support. Arsalan frequently represents parties in high asset cases entailing significant property that must be divided between family members or divorcees.

According to Arsalan, one of the main characteristics that sets him apart from other family law attorneys is the amount of work and diligence he puts into every case. He works directly with his clients to determine the most efficient and effective way to reach their goals. A major strong point is his ability to push litigation forward even if the other party is unresponsive. He thinks of his clients as members of his family and treats all cases as if they were his own. He is also passionate about the discovery portion of cases and is extremely adept in dealing with the financial aspects of cases. Consequently, Arsalan does not believe in any short cuts and goes out of his way to give each case a complete 100% effort.

Because Arsalan speaks Persian (Farsi), a portion of his clientele is Persian as well. The firm continues to serve a diverse range of clients throughout Los Angeles County as well as across the State.

Prior to becoming a lawyer, Arsalan worked as a real estate developer, where he was building residential subdivision projects throughout Southern California. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science from California Polytechnic State University (San Luis Obispo) as well as a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of California. He also received the Congressional Order of Merit two years in a row. Arsalan entered law school where he won the *Witkins Award* and graduated with his Juris Doctorate degree from the Western State College of Law in Irvine, California.

After being admitted to the bar, Arsalan obtained his certificate of specialization in business law and began doing litigation. However, he soon made the decision to transition over into family law where he worked as a court appointed mediator and was able to resolve over 80% of the cases to which he was appointed.

Arsalan later gained significant experience while being involved in high asset divorce cases and won over $30 million in assets through high asset litigation cases. He has also worked with a private firm called the Law Help Center. During his two years there, he attended over 500 hearings and led over 20 trials. Arsalan now has his own practice where he remains committed to assisting clients in need of representation.

Jinhee Wilde

Principal and Founding Partner

Jinhee Wilde is principal and founding partner at WA Law Group, LLC, a boutique law firm located in Maryland that focuses exclusively on immigration law. As a former government prosecutor and lawyer for 10 years and as an immigration lawyer for 20 years, she looks at cases from a unique perspective—with a proactive eye toward the government. Her ability to do so has resulted in nearly 100-percent approval record of hundreds of cases. "We don't do assembly-line type of immigration work like some large firms. We don't just meet the minimal requirement on the immigration forms. We try to anticipate what the government will ask for and provide it proactively," she explains. "This allowed us to receive very few Request for [additional] Evidence (RFE) from USCIS over the years, which has saved time, extra cost and anxiety for our clients."

Jinhee opened her current firm in 2009 as Wilde & Associates. In 2018, with the firm's growth, it became WA Law Group. The firm provides comprehensive immigration legal services with an emphasis on investment and employment immigration. She and her team of like-minded attorneys with more than 30 years of combined experience serve as powerful advocates for their clients, ushering them through the often confusing and changing immigration laws and policies, from green cards to citizenship. "We focus on the business side of immigration with employment-based and investment-based immigration--which I believe is the key to successful immigration policy – to help U.S. employers maintain a robust workforce. Our focus is to create U.S. jobs when and where they are needed to build a successful economy." Jinhee shares.

Jinhee and her team place tremendous value on the accuracy of their work and the quality of customer care and service they provide for their clients. Their commitment to excellence means giving individualized attention to each client, keeping them informed and anticipating their questions about the many forms and processes along the way. The firm's staff always responds to client emails, phone calls, and other inquiries within 24 hours. As the founding partner, Jinhee sets the tone and takes full responsibility for each case and each client. She and her partner remain involved from start to finish, with both reviewing each case fully at least once to ensure its completeness and accuracy.

The entire WA Law Group team works closely with their clients—often for years—tailoring their work to each specific client and taking into consideration their long- and short-term goals. "Unlike other legal work, the immigration process takes a very long time. From start to finish, it could be five years, or even longer, so it becomes a long-term relationship where the client becomes part of the firm. They come back and refer their family and friends, and we become one large family and take care of each other," she explains. With a reputation for being a fierce and personable advocate for her clients, she has been ranked repeatedly among the Top 10 and Top 25 immigration lawyers in the country. "Having that kind of recognition means a lot," she shares, but "it is also humbling, and I am grateful for the support. It definitely pushes me to do better."

> We focus on the business side of immigration with employment-based and investment-based immigration--which I believe is the key to successful immigration policy – to help U.S. employers maintain a robust workforce. Our focus is to create U.S. jobs when and where they are needed to build a successful economy.

2018 TOP 25 IMMIGRATION ATTORNEYS
EB5 INVESTORS MAGAZINE

IMMIGRATION LAW TOP 10 ATTORNEY AND PRACTICE MAGAZINE'S 2018 ATTORNEY

Newsweek.com LEGAL SUPERSTARS 2015

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Jason A. Dennis

Founder & Principal Attorney

> It is imperative that I provide my clients with all the plausible options pertaining to their matters, so they have the ability to make an informed decision on how they want to proceed...

Jason A. Dennis always knew that he was put on this earth to help people, but it wasn't until his law school orientation—when he heard the inspirational convocation speech delivered by Dean Nelson Miller—that his mission became crystal clear. "After he spoke, I knew I found my calling," Jason recalls. "Which is why I work tirelessly to ensure that I pay homage to those who've made the ultimate sacrifice so that I can be afforded the opportunity and privilege to serve my community, both domestically and internationally, as a member of the legal profession."

As the founder and owner of the Law Offices of Jason A. Dennis, one of the country's fastest-growing immigration law firms, Jason is committed to helping people realize their dreams of a better life. "America gives hope to so many simply looking to better themselves and the lives of their families. Knowing that my hard work and commitment give my clients the ability to take full advantage of the endless opportunities this country has to offer gives me an overwhelming sense of humility," he shares.

Driven by a passion for the law and a deep-seated sense of justice, he stands as a fierce advocate across the northeast by representing clients in a wide range of immigration matters, specifically, asylum, deportation and removal, green card/lawful permanent resident, and citizenship and naturalization. Jason's expertise extends to bankruptcy, elder, wills, estate, and probate law, as well.

Navigating legal complexities with the integrity and professionalism befitting this noble profession, Jason is dedicated to finding the best solutions for those in need. Offering free consultations allows him to better understand his clients' needs while involving them in the decision-making process. "It is imperative that I provide my clients with all the plausible options pertaining to their matters, so they have the ability to make an informed decision on how they want to proceed. The decisions they make, based on my recommendations, will impact their lives for generations to come," he says. "When it's all said and done, it's all about how I can help my clients achieve their goals."

As Jason successfully ushers his clients through immigration matters in federal and state courts and before the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, Immigration and Custom Enforcement, and the Immigration Court and Board of Immigration Appeals, he feels a profound sense of personal fulfillment as he strives to embody the values of his oath every day. "There is no greater feeling than discovering that you've been able to help someone," he shares.

Ultimately, Jason chose to be an attorney for one reason—to fight for those who have no voice. This is why he advocates just as passionately for his community by serving as a public defender with the Newark Municipal Court when called upon. For the past three years, Jason has also served on the Board for the Municipality of Norristown Zoning Hearing Board in Pennsylvania, bringing his commitment to embody the values of his oath full circle.

Jason is admitted to the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey, the New Jersey State Bar, the District of Columbia Bar, and the Executive Office of Immigration Review. He holds a Juris Doctorate from Thomas M. Cooley Law School.

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JASON A. DENNIS

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David Oddo

A prominent New York attorney, with almost three decades of experience in civil litigation, David Oddo is known for his tenacity and skill in the courtroom and obtaining large verdicts and settlements for his clients. As a partner at Oddo & Babat, P.C., David takes great pride in representing people whose lives have been devastated by the negligence and recklessness of others. David is a staunch advocate for victims of medical malpractice, childhood sexual abuse, and general negligence.

After obtaining his Juris Doctorate from the Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center at Touro College where he served as Editor of *The Touro Law Review*, David was admitted to the New York State and Connecticut Bar in 1990. He then began his career as an assistant district attorney in the Nassau County District Attorney's office, where he prosecuted a number of high-profile criminal cases.

In 1993, David joined the law firm Newman and Okun and transitioned into civil trial work. He became a partner in 1998, and the firm later changed its name to Okun, Oddo & Babat. Then, in January 2020, David and his longtime partner, Eric Babat, formed Oddo & Babat. "It was an opportunity for us to restructure our practice and adapt to our client's changing needs," David says. They also narrowed their focus on childhood sexual abuse cases, catastrophic personal injury matters and criminal defense in order to allow for a more efficient use of their talents and resources. David and Eric have been working together for over 26 years and have assembled an experienced team of top flight attorneys with Darren Sellback and Matthew Saliba. "We also have the luxury of having a highly experienced nurse-attorney and a retired state supreme court judge serving in an 'of counsel' capacity," David adds.

According to David, one of the qualities that sets Oddo & Babat apart from other firms, is their passion about what they do. "We don't look at the practice of law as a job," says David, "For us, it's a calling. Every attorney at Oddo & Babat believes that it is both our privilege and sworn responsibility to represent and seek justice for those who have been harmed by the negligence of others and may lack the means or ability to fight for themselves."

Each attorney brings his or her own strengths, experience, and perspective to the firm. They are all committed to providing the highest quality legal representation and personal service to their clients, which is their paramount goal. Oddo & Babat's motto consists of three simple words: "Integrity, Commitment, Results." It is the firm's priority to live by these words, as they believe that it is the only way to achieve the best results for their clients.

Throughout his career, David has personally represented clients in numerous high profile civil and criminal cases. In fact, he was listed among the Top Lawyers in the Northeast as well as the Top Lawyers in New York by *Arrive Magazine* in 2011 and has been named in *City and State Magazine's* 50 Over 50, a list of distinguished and impactful New Yorkers in both 2018 and 2019, as well as their Law Power 50 list, recognizing David as one of the top influential lawyers in the state in 2018. He is a Past President of the New York State Trial Lawyers Association (NYSTLA) and serves as a frequent lecturer for the Bar on topics concerning trial practice and civil justice issues.

> "We don't look at the practice of law as a job. For us, it's a calling. Every attorney at Oddo & Babat believes that it is both our privilege and sworn responsibility to represent and seek justice for those who have been harmed by the negligence of others and may lack the means or ability to fight for themselves.

David is also a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation, a distinction given to less than one percent of lawyers licensed to practice in each jurisdiction and is a member of the American Bar Association, American Association of Justice, New York State Bar Association, Bronx County Bar Association, and the New York County Lawyer's Association as well as multiple other local bar associations. He is also admitted to practice in the United States District Courts for the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York, and in May 2016, David was honored to be admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court.

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John Heiderscheidt is a lawyer who has been practicing criminal, immigration, technology, and business law for nearly a decade. He is based out of Chicago, Illinois. John is hyper-focused on providing excellent service to all of his clients but is most proud of the preventative law products he helped create.

John provides preventative legal counseling through a unique membership plan that allows clients to talk to an attorney about *anything* for up to 30 minutes a month. Clients and John work through issues and plan ahead — thinking about legal issues *before* they occur. "So many times, people come to me after they've done something that needs to be addressed via expensive litigation. I worked together with some colleagues to help create a membership plan that is designed to use *preventative* law. We've already had some great success stories," John says.

As the George Floyd riots exploded across Chicago, a membership client called John. The client was ready to protect his business with a loaded firearm. John talked through the situation with the client, ultimately convincing them to look at alternative routes of recourse in the event of business casualty loss. "This avoided a potentially serious criminal situation. It saved the client thousands in future legal fees. Preventative law is something everyone should consider as a tool for addressing legal issues," he explains. "It can literally save you thousands and ward off so many problems before they even materialize."

So many times, people come to me after they've done something that needs to be addressed via expensive litigation. I worked together with some colleagues to help create a membership plan that is designed to use preventative law. We've already had some great success stories.

John started his career as a solo practitioner in 2010, specializing primarily in criminal law. Four years later, he transitioned to working as the chief compliance officer for MDI Access, Inc., a company focused primarily on designing, building, acquiring, and selling data center properties. "Data centers are like specialized housing units for computer equipment." In this role, John was responsible for assisting in site selection, zoning, leasing, and insurance review. He also gained enormous exposure to cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and Ripple during this time. John focuses extensively on legal issues related to cryptocurrency. "For example, if the IRS subpoenaed your Coinbase account to see if you avoided tax liability, or if the SEC accused you of securities violations, I would work with you to resolve those issues," he explains.

Two years ago, John got the itch to go back in the courtroom, returning to his passion for representing clients in the legal areas that first drove him to be a lawyer. John is an advocate for major reform to the Controlled Substances Act. He specializes in the intersection of state criminal law and federal immigration law, understanding the consequences that flow from criminal convictions in civil immigration court. As most clients facing this intersection of law will tell you, that is no easy task.

John is licensed to practice in Illinois and the Eastern District of Wisconsin, he works primarily out of the North Eastern Illinois court system, including the state and federal courts, but serves clients on federal immigration matter across the country.

Marife Nazario-Yordan

Founder and Managing Attorney

As founder and managing attorney of Nazario Yordan Law, PLLC, Marife Nazario-Yordan has dedicated most of her career to immigration law. Based in Boynton Beach, Florida, she is licensed in numerous states, including Florida, Pennsylvania and Missouri, as well as Puerto Rico. While she handles the universe of immigration matters, from asylums and complex waivers to temporary work visas to family and employment-based green cards, her specialty is investment-based E-2 visas and representing regional centers and foreign investors in the area of EB-5 law—a program that allows foreign investors to invest capital in the U.S. in numerous industries and in exchange for the creation of jobs and the increase in economic activity, they become eligible for a green card. With a multicultural background, multilingual skills, and nearly 20 years of legal experience spanning a wide array of practice areas, including business immigration law, corporate, commercial, and real estate law, with specific expertise in EB-5 law and investors' visas, she serves clients with a unique—and powerful—combination of skills and experience.

"This area has always been my passion. I began my legal career in immigration, corporate, and international law, and later on trained specifically in EB-5 law with one of the best firms in the field. There are a lot of EB-5 attorneys, but I was fortunate to have received specialized training not just in the representation of foreign investors, but also regional centers, helping them structure their projects to become EB-5 eligible and authorized to sponsor development projects relying on foreign capital to boost the U.S. economy" she explains. "All the different legal areas in which I had worked in the past somehow overlapped and eventually merged well together in this field."

> "Unlike most immigration attorneys, my practice is not based on volume. I pour my heart and soul into every case that I handle. In all my years, I have never had one denial in any of my own cases.

Born in Spain, Marife grew up in Puerto Rico and began feeding her fervent interest in different cultures in college, with study-abroad programs that took her to France, Italy, Spain, and the United States. With Spanish as her native language, she honed her language skills through her travels, becoming proficient in French, Portuguese and Italian, and fluent in English. She received her bachelor's degree in 1993 from Duke University and obtained her law degree from Tulane Law School along with a certificate in European legal studies. While pursuing her J.D., she served as managing editor and board member for the *Tulane Journal of International and Comparative Law*, was ranked among the *Who's Who: American Law Students*, and studied under Chief Justice Rehnquist in Sienna, Italy. After graduating from Tulane, she attended the University of London, where she graduated with an L.L.M. in corporate and commercial law with honors in 2000.

Marife began her career with Cohen & Grigsby, where she focused on international business transactions and business immigration. For the next 17 years, she served as an attorney for medium-sized and large international firms, including Blackwell Sanders Peper Martin, where she led the business immigration practice, and Visa, Inc., where she served as assistant vice president and legal counsel of the Latin America and Caribbean Region. In 2014, she began her EB-5 training while working as an attorney with a renowned EB-5 firm in Los Angeles. In 2018, she moved to Florida to lead the Orlando office as managing attorney for a Tampa immigration firm.

In 2019, her passion, experience, and skills culminated in a nomination for *Top EB-5 Attorneys* and the launch of her own firm, where Marife now focuses principally on immigration law and EB-5 law. "Unlike most immigration attorneys, my practice is not based on volume. I pour my heart and soul into every case that I handle. In all my years, I have never had one denial in any of my own cases," she shares.

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Sima Ali

With more than two decades of diverse professional experience, Sima Ali holds an impeccable reputation as both a lawyer and a highly successful entrepreneur and businesswoman. As principal attorney of Ali Law Group P.C., she leads a New York boutique firm that provides a full range of representative services in labor and employment law. Sima offers an exemplary level of personalized service, working closely with each client to provide an in-depth understanding of current laws and regulations and to develop a proactive approach to labor and employment issues.

Throughout her childhood, Sima admired the independence of her mother as well as the entrepreneurial spirit of her father. Although she grew up to be a combination of them both, she never tried to model herself after someone else, as her goal was to always set her own path. After earning a bachelor's degree from Cornell University's New York School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Sima enrolled at George Washington University of Law, where she graduated with a Juris Doctorate. She then went on to be admitted to the New York Bar and to the United States District Court for the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York.

Sima's career as an attorney has been focused on labor and employment law. At the beginning of her legal career, Sima worked on the union/plaintiff side of labor and employment law and later worked at a defense firm, gaining experience in both sides of the law while juggling her professional duties along with her responsibilities as the mother of three children. By the time her youngest child approached kindergarten, she had employed 20 different au pairs, nannies, and babysitters, and she knew something had to change. Sima needed flexibility, but she also wanted to be exceptional at her job. As a result, she chose to start her own labor and employment law practice and to incorporate a remote-work concept into her company.

Sima offers an exemplary level of personalized service, working closely with each client to provide an in-depth understanding of current laws and regulations and to develop a proactive approach to labor and employment issues.

With over 15 years of experience, Sima started Ali Law Group in 2010. Women who were also balancing work and children naturally gravitated toward the firm's structure, which quickly grew to four attorneys and an office manager. Focusing on the management/employer side of labor and employment law by functioning as in-house counsel and offering policy development and training, the legal team serves companies and employers of various sizes primarily in the Long Island and Metro New York area. "The day-to-day guidance and consulting we provide as well as the long-term relationships we build with clients are key to the success of our practice," says Sima.

Although a remote work force is often challenging, Sima has invested in coaching and technology to ensure the firm's growth and development. "It has been rewarding to see how everyone has grown as a team and as individuals—especially during the recent pandemic," Sima shares. Having a remote workforce in place made it easier to pivot and adjust to the changing conditions resulting from COVID-19 restrictions and focus more on counseling and guidance for clients during these unprecedented times.

In recognition of her professionalism and contribution to the field, Sima has received numerous honors and awards, including:

- *Leadership in Law Award*, *Long Island Business News*, 2019
- *Top Lawyer of Long Island*, *Herald Community Newspaper* and *RichnerLIVE*, 2019
- *Power Women in Business Award*, *Long Island Press*, 2019
- *Top 50 Women in Business Award*, *Long Island Business News*, 2017
- *Diversity in Business Award*, *Long Island Business News*, 2017

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Thomas A. Leonard

Thomas A. Leonard has dedicated his career to the practice of law. With nearly 50 years of comprehensive experience in business and complex commercial litigation in both federal and state courts, he serves as both chairman of Obermayer Rebmann Maxwell and Hippel LLP and chairman of the firm's litigation department. His practice is large and robust, spanning the areas of antitrust, construction litigation, mergers and acquisitions, commercial, administrative, and regulatory issues, environmental matters, healthcare, and real estate. Tom's illustrious career has included the role of chairman of the disciplinary board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. A fierce litigator with an extensive appellate practice, he argues many cases in the appellate courts, including the Third Circuit Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. In 2019, he was named one of *America's Top 100 High Stakes Litigators*. Tom is inarguably a winner, and he makes his clients winners too.

After graduating in 1971 with a Juris Doctorate from Temple University School of Law, Tom began his career in commercial litigation, but through the years, he expanded his legal focus to include real estate and M&A. In 1992, he joined Obermayer Rebmann Maxwell & Hippel LLP, a full-service firm based in Philadelphia with regional offices located throughout the East Coast. In his dual chairman roles, he provides overall leadership and guidance and supervises litigation all around the country. Tom also owns a national multifamily real estate business and he has served on the board directors of the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae). He also serves on the merit selection committee for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, where he has been responsible for approving every federal judge who has been appointed throughout the past 25 years, and he has served on the magistrate retention committee for the Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

Dedicated to the importance of education, Tom serves as president for the board of trustees for Roman Catholic High School and as a trustee on the board of trustees for Drexel University. Tom graduated from Roman and Drexel. Prior to becoming a trustee of the university, he served as a trustee of the Drexel School of Medicine. For his hard work and dedication, Tom has received numerous honors and awards. In 2014, he received The Greater Philadelphia Area *Man of the Year Award*. He was also named among Drexel University's *100 Most Outstanding Graduates* and selected to be a member of the *Drexel 100*. He has received *The Learned Hand Award* from The American Jewish Committee. *Marquis Who's Who* named him a *Lifetime Achiever* in September 2017. In October 2020, Tom will receive *The Lifetime Achievement Award* from the World Trade Center of Greater Philadelphia.

Tom has also been active in politics throughout his life, beginning as city controller for the City of Philadelphia. He has served as vice chairman of finance for the Democratic National Committee and he is the current chairman of an independent expenditure PAC, Pennsylvania Values. In Pennsylvania, he has chaired campaigns for president, U.S. senate, governor, and mayor, and he has served as a delegate for numerous presidential conventions. In 1996, he served as chairman of the electoral college in Pennsylvania.

> His practice is large and robust, spanning the areas of antitrust, construction litigation, mergers and acquisitions, commercial, administrative, and regulatory issues, environmental matters, healthcare, and real estate.

Tom is a lifetime charter member of *Rue Ratings, Best Attorneys of America*. *The American Registry* lists Tom in the top 1% of *America's Most Honored Professionals*. He is annually named one of Pennsylvania's *Super Lawyers*. Tom is a fellow of the American Bar Foundation. He is rated *AV Preeminent* by Martindale Hubbell. Tom served as a captain in the United States Army (Inf.), honorable discharge.

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Leonard A. Martinez, Founder & CEO

Born and raised in Denver, Colorado by a politically active family, Leonard Martinez has always had a passion for the law and for giving back to the community. In fact, he believes that it is his strong connection with clients that sets him apart from most other litigation attorneys. Known in his community for working on non-profit boards and coaching youth sports, Leonard tries to work with his clients in all areas, whether it involves cost or any other need. As the founder of Leonard A. Martinez & Associates, P.C., his areas of practice focus on personal injury, criminal defense, civil litigation, employment law, contract litigation, and family law.

After earning a bachelor's degree in business and marketing from Metropolitan State College in 1990, Leonard went on to graduate with a Juris Doctorate degree from The University of Denver College of Law in 1995. He then started his legal career as an intern in the Legislative Affairs Department in the East Wing of the White House under former President Bill Clinton.

Leonard went on to run several political campaigns after completing his internship and then transitioned over into litigation. He worked for several different law firms until 2001 when he decided to branch out and start his own firm. After securing a partner, who has since moved to Florida, Leonard founded The Denver Legal Team in Lakewood, Colorado, which he has served for the past 20 years.

When the firm first opened, The Denver Legal Team's primary focus was on civil litigation, which included personal injury, criminal defense, and family law. However, Leonard and his firm have received the most recognition for their success in winning tough criminal law cases. Although in the last ten years they have not spent time or money on advertising, the firm continues to go strong based upon client referrals, which means a great deal to both Leonard and his team.

Leonard Martinez has always had a passion for the law and for giving back to the community. In fact, he believes that it is his strong connection with clients that sets him apart from most other litigation attorneys.

After 24 years of practice, Leonard saw both old and new cases beginning to stack up, and being in a small firm, his team did not have the resources enjoyed by larger firms. As a solution to the problem, he became inspired to start a web-based tech company. In 2015, AttorneyDocs became the first open, online marketplace for law students, paralegals, other and legal professionals to safely buy and sell their work products. For example, attorneys could sell old case documents, making a profit for themselves and saving time for others. Fortunately, AttorneyDocs now offers access to the general public as well. As a result, any user can purchase legal documents that are editable in Microsoft Word. AttorneyDocs offers over 10,000 documents from all 50 states as well as many from other countries. A recent review calls it "An Ebay for lawyers."

In his spare time, Leonard volunteers as a high school football coach, not so he can get more business, but because he believes it is important. Last year, he also did pro-bono work for the Southwest Immigration project, focusing on families who were being separated at the border. Leonard's goal is to live by example because he does not only believe in community involvement; he also believes in the community.

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Gabriel Mbanefo

Principal Attorney

Gabriel Mbanefo is the owner and founder of Law Offices of Gabriel C. Mbanefo, P.C., a unique New York based law practice geared towards providing business transactional and IP related legal services to both US and Non-US based entrepreneurs. The international focus of his practice stems from the fact that he is licensed to practice as an attorney in New York State, and as a solicitor in England and Wales, and therefore often advises on matters pertaining to both English law and New York State law. His international experience extends across the globe, having lived in various countries, and he currently advises entrepreneurs and businesses based in over 25 countries, including the US, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Israel, Poland, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, and Brazil. Gabriel brings his clients an international perspective as he helps startups and established businesses navigate the legal complexities of launching, financing, and growing their business in the US and/or expanding their business outside the US. “Having practiced law in two different countries, alternative perspectives of doing business can be brought to the table. When you have a comparator, there is a broader foundation on which ideas can be tested and solutions found,” he explains.

Based in New York, the firm offers a broad range of transactional legal services, primarily in the areas of business formation and reorganization, mergers and acquisitions, business finance, securities law, international commercial transactions, employment law, trademarks, copyright and business taxation.

Gabriel opened his practice in 2014 with the specific purpose of addressing the legal needs of entrepreneurs and providing solutions to the legal problems often faced by startups. Based in New York, the firm offers a broad range of transactional legal services, primarily in the areas of business formation and reorganization, mergers and acquisitions, business finance, securities law, international commercial transactions, employment law, trademarks, copyright and business taxation. Though he is a third-generation attorney, with the law in his veins, from a very prominent legal family in Nigeria, Gabriel’s practice is far from that of his parents or his grandparents before him. Built for the 21st century, it is an efficient, modern, and tech-driven practice, designed to handle and solve complex legal issues efficiently and accurately, while minimizing client costs.

Gabriel’s international perspective comes to him naturally, having spent seven years in Nigeria in his youth before moving to England, where he received both his Bachelor

LAW OFFICES OF
GABRIEL C. MBANEFO, P.C.

of Laws and his Master of Laws in international commercial law from the University of Nottingham. He moved to New York in 2010 and was admitted to the New York State bar just a year later. Interestingly, the idea to set up his own firm was not driven by his legal lineage or the singular desire to be a business owner. It began with a chance meeting with a stranger in an elevator. “I saw a guy reviewing an IP license agreement who I initially assumed was an attorney but actually turned out to be a business owner who had found it difficult to find a good attorney that could assist. He was ready to hire me right there and then, in the elevator, to help him review this,” Gabriel recalls. “That’s when it really dawned on me that entrepreneurs and business owners need assistance with a broad range of legal services, which sometimes require specialist knowledge, but often don’t have the cash to go to a large firm, so the idea of my practice was to help them by building a gamut of services around that.” With that in mind, Gabriel launched his practice, and the experience so far is that “if you do great work consistently, your clients usually refer people and it kind of snowballs from there.”

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Joseph R. Wojciechowski

Managing Partner

"Let us get your money back."

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As managing partner of Stoltmann Law Offices, Joseph Wojciechowski has dedicated his entire career to representing investors in securities arbitration and litigation in claims against brokerage firms, banks, insurance companies, investment advisers, and other institutions. As a legal expert who has focused in this very specialized area of law for 11 years, he has a unique and experienced perspective on how to approach any case in arbitration. He has successfully arbitrated over 300 investor cases before FINRA, AAA, and JAMS arbitration panels and participated in class-action litigation on behalf of his clients.

Underlying it all is a value that drives his determination to triumph against industry behemoths that have wronged his clients—the fundamental concept of fairness. "Fairness is important in this area, when dealing with individuals who are elderly and entrust their life savings to a professional backed by a big, fancy company and they do wrong by those folks. Out of fairness, the people I represent are entitled to compensation," he shares.

Joseph joined Stoltmann Law Offices in 2005, the day it was founded by Andrew Stoltmann, the firm's principal. The practice itself has its roots in investor representation. As former president of PIABA, Public Investors Advocate Bar Association, Andrew has specialized in this area for over 20 years and opened his practice specifically to serve clients in this unique area of law. Together with a small team of attorneys, they are on a mission to fulfill a simple promise to their clients: "Let us get your money back."

> Joseph Wojciechowski has dedicated his entire career to representing investors in securities arbitration and litigation in claims against brokerage firms, banks, insurance companies, investment advisers, and other institutions.

Their experience in this niche sets them apart from other lawyers who don't specialize in this area and take on these cases without an understanding of its legal complexities or the realm of arbitration. "It can be really tricky. First, the law has been tilted in favor of the other side, so it's difficult to win, and to do well, you have to have mastery in this area. And second, because you deal in different arbitration forums, you have to know and understand the rules and procedures involved in all of them. If you don't, you'll screw up, and the client pays for that."

Joseph began as a paralegal with the firm, and his immersion into this unique area of law grew into a passion that drove him to law school and ultimately informed his career path. "I knew that this was what I wanted to do more than anything. I went to law school while working full time as a paralegal, doing nineteen-hour days, five days a week, and using the weekend to study. That type of commitment means you sure better like what you're going to do." In 2009, after receiving his law degree from John Marshall Law School in Chicago, he assumed the role as attorney and was eventually named the firm's managing partner due to his experience in assisting in the representation of investors in a very complex area of law, but also with the intricate knowledge of the laws that govern it. For his dedication to PIABA, Joseph received the *Distinguished Service Award* in 2019, and has served as managing editor and editor-in-chief of the organization's bar journal.

Stoltmann Law

Christopher S. Nudo

Founder

As founder of the law firm, Christopher S. Nudo, LLC , Christopher Nudo has focused the practice on estate-planning and has applied his Christian values for over three decades. This approach helped his clients maximize the transfer of wealth and assets. He also ushers clients through the legal complexities of real estate and business matters. He's garnered a cache of industry awards, including the *American Jurisprudence Award* and rankings as *Super Lawyer* and *Top Attorney in North America*. He's served as in-house general counsel and advisor to boards of directors. Yet to Christopher the business is very personal. From drafting wills and trusts to assigning powers of attorney and performing trust administration services, he works with each client personally and he makes every relationship about the client. "It is all about what is appropriate for the client and their circumstances. It can be something as simple as meeting in the evening, or meeting at their house, working out payment plans—financing shouldn't be a limitation in getting their plans done," he explains.

Through faith-based guidance, he leads his clients through the complicated estate-planning process to design a plan tailored to each of their unique goals and needs to give them peace of mind that their loved ones are taken care of.

Christopher began his career in 1993 practicing with his dad at his firm of 25 lawyers. In 2012, he made the switch to a church lawyer and started representing ministries on a full-time basis. In 2015 he transitioned to estate planning and which eventually became his own firm, with offices in Elgin, Schaumburg and Arlington Heights, Illinois. Christopher is a member of the Wealth Council, one of the most elite associations of estate-planning professionals in the country. He serves families across the greater Chicago metro area with a focus on the northwest suburbs. The majority of clients served have a net worth of $500,000.00 to $3,500,000.00. "Middle America is the segment of clientele where I really enjoy helping people," he shares. While his goal is to maximize wealth for his clients, he holds a unique definition of the word. "There is a better word for 'wealth'—an accumulation of one's life."

As the leader of a Christ-centered practice, Christopher is the epitome of its motto, *"Leading with integrity"* and the bible verse, *2 Corinthians 8:21*, upon which it is founded: "For we aim at what is honorable, not only in the Lord's sight, but also in the sight of man." Through faith-based guidance, he leads his clients through the complicated estate-planning process to design a plan tailored to each of their unique goals and needs to give them peace of mind that their loved ones are taken care of.

CSN | CHRISTOPHER S. NUDO
ATTORNEY AT LAW

He's garnered a cache of industry awards, including the *American Jurisprudence Award* and rankings as *Super Lawyer* and *Top Attorney in North America.*

His practice also places a strong emphasis on caring for the local church and charities. In addition to supporting these organizations through the practice itself, Christopher works with clients to give back to these causes during their lifetime or at their death, including establishing trusts for people's pets.

Christopher is a member of the Northwest Suburban Bar Association, the Illinois Bar Association, and the Kane County Bar Association. He received his law degree from Thomas S. Cooley Law School, and he holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from Creighton University.

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Desha Jackson

Managing Lawyer

Desha Jackson became an attorney for one reason, and one reason only—to seek justice and make a difference. She has dedicated her entire 25-year career to this cause, as a government attorney, a prosecutor, a policy lawyer, and now as managing lawyer of her own firm, Desha Jackson Law Group, LLC, for the last eight years. It is her life's mission, and through her tireless work, she has been able to affect change and make positive contributions for the betterment of people and society. "I became a lawyer to help people. If I can make a positive change and contribution, my career has been worthwhile," she explains.

Although she's served in private practice for thirteen years, Desha founded her own firm eight years ago with an unwavering determination to make a difference. She focuses primarily on representing clients in discrimination cases, most of whom are female and minorities, and she fights for them with the hope that through her work, she is able to help to eradicate injustice, racism, sexism, and disability and age discrimination. She is a fierce legal mind with a stellar reputation and an enviable career who has garnered a cache of industry awards, including inclusion in the *New Jersey Super Lawyers-Rising Stars Editions* 2006 through 2009 and recognition as a *Rising Star* in *Super Lawyers 2005*. But in Desha's mind, what makes her different is one simple, human characteristic that drives her—she truly cares.

Desha's experience as both a private and public attorney over her career sets her apart from her legal counterparts. Her roles

> "I became a lawyer to help people. If I can make a positive change and contribution, my career has been worthwhile.

included of counsel to the Law Office of Evelyn Padin, and then associate with Wilentz, Goldman and Spitzer, where she was assigned to the Employment Law Team. As a government attorney, she served as the assistant director of the Equal Employment Division and Regulatory and Legal Affairs of the New Jersey Department of Corrections, as legal consultant for the City of Newark's Public Safety Department- in charge of their racial profiling consent decree unit and lead hearing officer for all fire and police discipline, as the first black female prosecutor hired in the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office in their 150 year history in 1997 and as a deputy attorney general (DAG) for the Department of Law and Public Safety Office. As a DAG she was assigned to the Office of State Police Affairs from 2002-2007, where she assisted with providing oversight of the New Jersey State Police to enforce the racial profiling consent decree, and primarily served as the prosecutor in disciplinary proceedings against New Jersey State Troopers. In 2004, Ms. Jackson was promoted to deputy director and served as acting director from October 2006 to March of 2007. During her tenure at the Department of Law and Public Safety she argued a case in the New Jersey Supreme Court, *State v. Roberts*, where she prevailed 7-0 regarding how much time management has to charge a State Trooper with discipline.

Desha also practices sports and entertainment law as CEO of her company, DLJ Sports and Entertainment Connections. As an FIBA agent, she represents basketball players internationally and leads a team of NFL-certified agents. In addition, she is a past president of the New Jersey Women Lawyers Association—the first black woman to lead the organization—and a past president of the Association of Black Women Lawyers of New Jersey. Her commitment to helping people extends beyond her professional life with a charity that she describes as "a project of my heart to give back to people," through which she has given to upwards of 20 charities over the past nine years to support homeless shelters, recreation programs, people who are sick, etc.

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David Sanchez

Owner and Trial Attorney

Described by his colleagues as a "dynamite trial lawyer who is incredibly compassionate with clients," David Sanchez has effectively handled personal injury cases for over 13 years. Clients get a trial attorney who received a computer engineering degree from the University of Notre Dame. His attention to detail and understanding of physics and how forces interact give him an advantage over insurance lawyers who fail to use logic in arguing a case to a jury. As owner of The Law Office of Trujillo & Sanchez, P.C., based out of Dallas, Texas, he treats each case uniquely and is not afraid to defend his clients against the largest of companies. David's areas of specialty include personal injury, slip and fall accidents, work-related injuries, motor accidents, construction accidents, and wrongful death.

At their law office, David and his partner, James Trujillo, refuse to settle or to accept anything less than what their clients deserve. As a result, they offer a "No Win - No Fee" contingency policy, which means the attorneys do not charge any fees until the client's case is resolved. Therefore, if they fail to win the case, all fees are waived for the client. The attorneys are also unafraid to take a case to trial, which is evident in the fact that they have won 15 straight jury verdicts against Allstate Insurance since 2018. "These wins are monumental since Allstate is the biggest bully in the insurance industry," says David. While most firms hesitate to battle against the insurance giant, Trujillo and Sanchez have already won three cases against Allstate this year, forcing them to pay over the policy limits in one those cases.

The motto at The Law Office of Trujillo & Sanchez is that they "will stick with you until the end and go all the way to trial with you."

The motto at The Law Office of Trujillo & Sanchez is that they "will stick with you until the end and go all the way to trial with you." As a result of their reliable and unyielding reputation, they are frequently hired to conduct trial work for other firms and have always gotten excellent results. For instance, just last year they succeeded in winning 13 trials. "That is what sets us apart from the competition," says David, "We're the only ones really going to court and winning. No one else has our track record, especially against Allstate." Trujillo and Sanchez are willing to fight in court, appeal cases, and do whatever else it takes to satisfy their clients.

Prior to founding their own firm, David and James both worked with a large firm called Law Office of Domingo Garcia. The Dallas firm specializes in different types of personal injury cases and for a while, David held the record for taking the most cases to trial with a total of 19 jury verdicts in one year. He was trying

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80% of the entire firm's cases on his own. Consequently, everyone within the legal sector started hearing about him and he began receiving multiple job offers. However, David decided to instead establish his own firm, where people could supply him with litigation cases.

Due to his exemplary work within the legal industry, David has been recognized in several magazines and has won numerous awards for being a top trial attorney on top of being board certified in personal injury. For example, he was honored by the *Texas Lawyer Magazine* as one of the few civil trial attorneys in the state to be named *Litigator of the Week*, based upon jury verdicts. Also, David and his team won two *Top Five* Texas jury verdicts for premise/work accidents in 2012 and 2017.

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Cathleen Kelly Rebar

Cathleen believes that expedient and cost-effective resolutions are often the best way to serve clients.

Cathleen Kelly Rebar is the founder and managing partner of Rebar Kelly, a regional law firm with offices in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. The firm specializes in representing insurance companies in coverage and liability cases, but in response to the new challenges presented by the pandemic, Cathleen has expanded their representation to include matters related to COVID-19.

As an award-winning attorney and fierce litigator with an impressive record of victories in the courtroom, Cathleen has acted as lead counsel in some of the insurance industry's most high-profile cases and served as an elected magisterial district judge in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, for over 10 years.

With over two decades of experience, she leads a team of lawyers, who have tried hundreds of cases to successful verdicts.

Cathleen believes that expedient and cost-effective resolutions are often the best way to serve clients. Just as each case is unique, so too are her clients' goals and she works closely with them to determine the best strategy for each of their situations. Cathleen's passion for her work echoes the words of Ray Kroc and define her perspective perfectly: "If you work just for money, you'll never make it, but if you love what you're doing and you always put the customer first, success will be yours." This enthusiasm, coupled with her legal skills, have resulted in a cache of industry awards, including: *Super Lawyer* 2014 - 2019, *The Legal Intelligencer Litigation Department of the Year*, 2018; *Lawyer on the Fast Track*, *The Legal Intelligencer*; and *Rising Star*, *Law & Politics*, 2006-2008, 2010-2011, 2011-2012.

Cathleen is also an active public speaker and the author of a host of published works examining a wide variety of issues. Some of her more recent speaking engagements include:

- Slip, Trip, and Fall – Managing These Cases in a Retail, Restaurant, and Hospitality Environment," CLM Alliance Workers Compensation and Retail, Restaurant & Hospitality Conference, June 18, 2020 (virtual)
- Winning Strategies for Litigation Management," CLM 2019 Annual Conference in Orlando, FL on March 14, 2019
- Transferring Risk in the Retail, Restaurant & Hospitality Arena, CLM Retail, Restaurant & Hospitality Conference, Dallas, TX, Feb. 7, 2019
- Claims College Mock Trial, annually beginning in 2015 through present
- Claims College, Third-Party Vendor Management, 2016 through 2019
- "E-Strategies, Litigation Management Institute," Loyola University, Chicago, IL, annual course beginning in 2015 through present
- Claims & Judicial Inconsistencies on the Rise," CLM Cyber Summit, New York, NY, October 12, 2018
- Looking for Other Pockets: Identifying and Pursuing Other Entities to Offset Liability Including Additional Insureds," CLM Construction Conference, Chicago, IL, September 2018
- Third-Party Vendor Risk Management and Exposure," CLM Claims College, Baltimore, Maryland, September 5-8, 2018
- Strategies for Marketing, Mitigating and Offsetting Costs of Data Breach Claims," CLM Annual Conference, Houston, March 2018
- Combating the Reptile Theory Through Deposition Preparation and Motion Practice," RRM CLM Conference, Dallas, TX, February 2018
- Reptile Theory Practicum," New York Athletic Club, January 11, 2018
- User's Guide to Data Breach Handling," 2017 CLM Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, March 30, 2017
- Aspects of Working in Litigation Boutiques," Villanova University Panel on Business, Villanova, PA, January 11, 2017

Cathleen received her law degree from Villanova University School of Law in 1998, and she holds a bachelor's degree from Long Island University, where she graduated *magna cum laude*.

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Ronald S. Nir

Attorney

Ronald is a recognized criminal defense attorney with over three decades of experience.

Ronald Nir is an attorney with Law Offices of Ronald Nir, a full-service law firm based in Kew Gardens, New York, representing individuals accused of all manner of criminal offenses in the City of New York, Nassau County, Suffolk County, and Westchester County. The practice also handles contract law, civil litigation, family law, commercial and residential real estate, and commercial landlord-tenant matters. Ronald is a recognized criminal defense attorney with over three decades of experience. He has handled high-profile murder cases and appeared on *Court TV, NBC, ABC, Fox 5*, and several radio stations. He is the recipient of the coveted *BV Peer Review* rating from Martindale Hubbell, an official ranking bestowed by attorneys upon one of their own as a testament of both years of service and legal excellence.

Underlying Ronald's illustrious career and professional accolades is the force that has driven him since he passed the bar in 1987—his genuine affinity for people. "I give 110 percent to all of my clients, and I work very hard to provide them the best legal representation and advice. But it's not just about being professional; it's about caring. I care not just about my clients; I care about their families," he shares.

Ronald passed the bar the same year he received his degree from Cardozo School of Law, and immediately joined the Legal Aid Society of New York. Three years later, in 1991, he opened his own practice, where he departed from his legal brethren in his approach to cases, looking beyond the surface. "I think most of my legal peers don't think outside the box and look at all the corners. It is important to look at all details of the case and client," he explains.

He has worked with Congress of Racial Equality regarding the treatment of people of color in the court system, and used to lecture on what takes place and ways to combat it—long before anyone was talking about it. He has also lectured on various issues, including fingerprint analysis, DNA analysis, and sex offender registration, at various bar associations, and served as a judge at various law school programs, including Hofstra and Cardozo, regarding appellate advocacy.

> "I give 110 percent to all of my clients, and I work very hard to provide them the best legal representation and advice. But it's not just about being professional; it's about caring. I care not just about my clients; I care about their families.

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Mariusz J. Sniarowski

He is responsible for case handling from its inception to the final resolution with depositions, motion practice, negotiations, and court appearances.

Mariusz Sniarowski is an attorney at The Perecman Firm, P.L.L.C., one of the most highly respected personal injury firms in New York. With offices in both Jericho and New York City, Mariusz and his fellow attorneys handle catastrophic injury, construction, accident, wrongful death, and motor vehicle accident cases throughout the state including Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, The Bronx, Staten Island, Westchester and Long Island. In addition to contributing over 40 years of experience, The Perecman Firm has secured more than half a billion dollars in verdicts and settlements and holds a perfect 10.0 Avvo rating —the result of superior client satisfaction as well as a seal of approval from the legal community. The firm's attorneys have also received recognition from some of the most prestigious publications in the country including *Super Lawyers*, *The Best Lawyers in America*, the *Multi-Million Dollar Advocates Forum*, *U.S. News' Best Law Firms in America*, *New York Magazine's Leaders in the Law*, and many more.

When Mariusz joined over 19 years ago, The Perecman Firm instantly became a part of his family. He loves his job because he has opportunities to help other people in life —representing injured clients and focusing on assisting workers injured in construction accidents. Mariusz is especially dedicated to using his skills to represent clients from different demographic groups because his own experiences have helped him to understand the problems and fears they frequently endure. He is responsible for case handling from its inception to the final resolution with depositions, motion practice, negotiations, and court appearances.

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Fluent in Polish, Mariusz also represents the firm's Polish-speaking clients. At defendants' examinations before trial, he assures they are provided with accurate translation and works with the legal team to ensure that they have access to excellent representation.

Mariusz's unique upbringing and diverse background as a first generation immigrate further sets him apart from others in the industry. When he relocated to the U.S. at the age of 19, he spoke no English and worked as an interoffice messenger delivering mail for a large law firm. Mariusz soon became inspired to enter the legal field and made the decision to learn English while attending college and continuing to work. Although it was difficult, he graduated summa cum laude from John Jay College of Criminal Justice with his undergraduate degree before moving on to attend the Hofstra University School of Law in New York. While there, he was recognized on the Dean's List four years in a row and was a member on the National Dean's List. Mariusz also proved that he could achieve the American Dream through determination and pure, hard work.

Because Mariusz is so thankful for his family, professors, former classmates, co-workers, and many others who helped him, he dedicates a great deal of his time to charity work and volunteering. He serves as president and as a member of the board of directors for The Children's Smile Foundation in NYC, which provides financial support for disadvantaged children in need of medical and financial assistance. He is also the director of the Polish and Slavic Federal Credit Union, one of the largest privately owned ethnic banks in the U.S., and he even rescues animals —recently adopting two dogs. "No matter if they're animals or people, I like helping to make their lives better," says Mariusz.

THE PERECMAN FIRM P.L.L.C.
PERSONAL INJURY | WORKER'S COMPENSATION | CONSTRUCTION ACCIDENTS

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Michael V. Pepe

Michael V. Pepe is an experienced insurance coverage attorney with an active construction law practice, representing real estate developers, owners, contractors, and other corporate policyholders in contract disputes and complex insurance coverage issues. With his extensive experience and industry-specific knowledge of insurance coverage, Michael understands his clients' needs and how insurance fits into their businesses. Taking a holistic approach to representation, Michael leverages his litigation experience to help his clients avoid coverage disputes and to fully understand and take advantage of available risk transfer options.

Michael represents insurance policyholders, making sure that insurance companies provide the coverage his clients expect. Typically working with clients' in-house risk management team, Michael structures his clients' contracts to ensure strong downstream risk transfer. He also reviews his clients' insurance programs to ensure adequate coverage and avoid disputes about what the policy language means. However, when disputes do arise, Michael is a skilled litigator capable of taking cases to verdict. His firm was awarded the *Litigation Department of the Year* by *The Connecticut Law Tribune*.

Taking a holistic approach to representation, Michael leverages his litigation experience to help his clients avoid coverage disputes and to fully understand and take advantage of available risk transfer options.

After obtaining a bachelor's degree from Georgetown University, Michael earned his Juris Doctorate from the University of Connecticut School of Law. He is admitted to practice in both Connecticut and New York and has been admitted *pro hac vice* in several jurisdictions around the country. Michael began his career with a boutique construction law firm, specializing in construction disputes between contractors and owners. Michael then joined Saxe Doernberger & Vita, P.C. (SDV), a national law firm headquartered in Fairfield County Connecticut with offices in California and Florida. Presently a partner at SDV, he is involved in firmwide technology and marketing initiatives, and he is a member of the firm's executive committee. At SDV, Michael has been able to utilize his knowledge of construction law and contracting while shifting over to the insurance side, which he finds more rewarding.

"Now, when I represent an owner, my goal is to bring money into the dispute as opposed to fighting over who caused it," Michael says. He recalls a wrongful death action where he represented the owner of a construction project site. In an all-too-common scenario, there was no question that collectively the defendants were liable, but they could not agree on how to split up the responsibility for the settlement. Once Michael and his team successfully argued that all of the contractor's insurers were also responsible for insuring his client, the disputes about who caused the death all but disappeared, and the case settled.

Michael works with clients who place a high value on risk management. He explains, "Our society asks these companies to take on a huge amount of risk to build our infrastructure and communities. They need to manage that risk through insurance and contracts in order to do what they do." Michael helps his clients draft the contractual provisions that need to mesh with the insurance policies to ensure proper risk transfer. In addition to serving contractors and developers, Michael's practice focuses on publicly traded real estate investment trusts (REITs) and global investment funds. He works with their teams to make sure development projects are adequately insured before they make their investments. Michael also helps global, national, and regional insurance brokers and wholesalers by providing technical legal advice so they can better serve their clients. Michael's experience with coverage claims allows him to provide perspective about policy language. Brokers often turn to him to interpret policy language and evaluate claims. An active, sought-after speaker, Michael often presents at industry conferences and seminars/webinars, nationwide, speaking about insurance coverage topics in the real estate and construction industries. Last year, he spoke at the International Risk Management Institute (IRMI) *Construction Risk Conference*. Michael has also presented at the Construction SuperConference for the past two consecutive years.

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Altagracia Pierre-Outerbridge

Altagracia Pierre-Outerbridge is founder and owner of New York city-based law firm Outerbridge Law P.C., a firm with a focus on landlord tenant, real estate and immigration law.

She is a multilingual attorney with an MBA and a passion for helping others. As the principal of the firm, and an immigrant, she stands as a unique amalgam of businessperson, lawyer, and humanitarian who, at 39 years old, founded her own law practice. With over a decade of experience, she sees her age and gender as unique differentiators that her clients appreciate. "My age makes a difference, but also the fact that I am a woman—and a woman of color, an immigrant woman of color, at that. Unfortunately, folks do not see this often. My age and life experiences help me cater to a different age demographic and the marginalized. I am easily able to cater to a younger generation and folks who are marginalized because I understand them. I have lived in their shoes. My clients often say I am not stuffy, or intimidating; I am relatable," she shares.

Altagracia launched Outerbridge Law P.C. nearly one ago in Midtown Manhattan, the heart of New York City, bringing with her over a decade of diverse legal skill and expertise in landlord-tenant issues, and experience in the areas of labor and employment, and immigration. She is a technologically savvy attorney leading a forward-thinking firm with its finger on the pulse of ever-changing technology and the ways in which people communicate—all while grounded in the ethics that govern their work. "We are not held back by old standards or traditional methods. We deliver quick service using technology. Our clients have my personal phone number, so I have a personal relationship with each and every single one of them, and that's the way it should be," she explains.

In terms of real estate, Altagracia and her team of legal experts serve clients in New York City, focusing 70 percent of their work on landlord-tenant litigation and 30 percent on transactional matters, including closings, development, and leasing. With experience on both sides, they defend clients against eviction and represent landlords, protecting each client's best interest. Altagracia represents both landlords and tenants in housing litigation matters such as no-defense holdovers, nuisance cases, owner's use cases, licensee cases, succession claims, non-primary residence claims, rent overcharge claims, nonpayment of rent cases, harassment claims, repair cases and tenant buyouts. As a landlord's attorney, she diligently protects a landlord's property rights. As a tenant's attorney, she meticulously defends against unnecessary evictions.

Armed with a law degree and an MBA in taxation from the Zicklin School of Business at Baruch College—one of the toughest business schools in the country—she serves clients with a unique perspective of the business, not just from the legal side.

The immigration arm of Outerbridge Law P.C. is committed to helping people secure the right to live and work in the U.S. and to defend themselves against government enforcement actions. As one who speaks French, Creole, Spanish, and English, Altagracia and her team cater to clients in many demographics, serving people in all areas of immigration matters, whether seeking asylum, facing deportation, or pursuing citizenship. As an immigrant herself, Altagracia serves her clients with valuable personal insight and experience from one who understands intimately the struggles to become a U.S. citizen. "I came here at age 15, was soon thereafter orphaned and went through an intense struggle to become a U.S. citizen. I went through it all myself, so I understand my clients," she explains.

> "We are not held back by old standards or traditional methods. We deliver quick service using technology. Our clients have my personal phone number, so I have a personal relationship with each and every single one of them, and that's the way it should be.

As a tenacious litigator, Altagracia's persistence and desire for successful outcomes for her clients has resulted in unparalleled service.

In a field where there is often little opportunity for women of color, Altagracia's unbridled desire to help others, and her unrelenting determination to succeed, drove her to overcome barriers that many would find insurmountable. A wise person, a judge, once quoted Shirley Chisolm to her and it has become her motto ever since: 'If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.'

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Alexander Visbal

Experienced in Asia, Europe, the United States, and Shanghai, and named as one of the best corporate attorneys in Colombia by *Legal 500*, Alexander Visbal offers a unique business approach from many others in his industry. As senior partner at Bretton Woods Legal & Investments, his principal objective is to bring his clients both consulting services and profits. Not only has he has been practicing law for over 14 years, but Alexander is also a former chief ethics and compliance officer as well as a developer of foreign operations both inside and outside of Colombia. In addition, he is a specialist in commercial and international business law and is highly experienced in international transactions, finance forecasts, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, compliance, audits, and crowdfunding development. As a result of his diverse skill set, Alexander's clients at Bretton Woods have been delighted with the outcome of their investments.

With two offices located in Barranquilla, Colombia and Chicago, Illinois, Bretton Woods provides specialized international counseling in corporate and financial matters with the goal of increasing a company's competitive advantages and preventing risks in their business operations. Although they are a boutique firm consisting personal service, the team has a reputation for providing excellent service and for always focusing on the results of profits. Senior partners attend to all clients, and the firm complies with both international and Colombian laws. This year, the firm's goal is to further expand into infrastructure, development of largest river dredging, water treatment and hotels. For infrastructure, they plan to utilize the 4G special highways in Colombia to gather funds to present to international funds, and purchase projects.

he is a specialist in commercial and international business law and is highly experienced in international transactions, finance forecasts, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, compliance, audits, and crowdfunding development.

As a senior partner at Bretton Woods, Alexander represents the international funds that invest in cannabis, renewable energy, and infrastructure. Some matters are also in hotels but only those that are focused in air B&B business model channels. The firm also acquires projects, such as energy, infrastructure and cannabis, from Peru, Chile, Panama, and Puerto Rico. It is Alex's responsibility to introduce international funds into the project in Colombia and carry out due diligence. Then, the firm sends a letter of intent in order to purchase the project, which can be bought with a stock purchase, asset purchase agreement, or other interesting vehicle.

Most of Alexander's projects are in energy, infrastructure, ports, and cannabis. However, it is difficult to obtain renewable energy sources in Colombia that comply with local and international guidelines. In Cannabis matters, however, medical plant is allowed as long as the firm complies with the regulations and purchases the license required by the local Food and Drug Administration.

The principal and international funds for his matters are located in the U.S., Canada, London, Madrid, the Netherlands, and Shanghai.

Prior to joining Bretton Woods, Alexander studied law in Colombia and was voted best in class before graduating cum laude. He then went on to receive his master's degree in international law in US and served as general counsel for both European and American companies in Colombia. After that, Alexander worked as a professor for international contracts and taught at the two most important universities in Colombia before he finally decided to establish his own practice working with international funds.

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Omid Amjadi

Associate General Counsel

Focused on solving problems and improving efficiencies, he has developed a patented technology to facilitate affordable review of contracts by lawyers.

As an attorney with a rare combination of legal and business savvy, collaboration skills, and a global worldview nurtured from a young age, it seems Omid Amjadi was destined to become an associate general counsel at Mars. Omid leads the legal function of Mars Global Services (MGS), which manages $8 billion in annual spending across key shared services for the multinational company. In 2019, MGS ranked among the *Top 20 Most Admired Shared Services Organizations* in the world.

As a young boy in Iran, deeply inspired by his father's international business acumen, Omid cultivated a passion for the law and business. Omid joined Mars in May 2020 with experience as legal counsel across myriad industries. He brought with him a deep understanding of the legal complexities of global business and mastery in finding the perfect balance between risk and opportunity that leads to business growth. "Navigating through the ever-changing regulatory environment, developing standard work to better manage risk and promote efficiency and consistency across the enterprise, and optimizing legal capabilities through automation and integration of digital technologies all require a harmonious balance," he shares.

Throughout his career working with legal teams of billion-dollar companies, including Liberty Mutual Insurance, Sprint Telecom, Infosys Limited, and Danaher Corporation, one trait more than any other has driven Omid's success and that of his clients; collaboration. "Collaboration is one of the key aspects of what I do, how I do it, and how I progress to conquer challenges and realize opportunities. Involving key stakeholders is critical. I don't dwell and theorize for weeks on end until I get somewhere alone. I involve the stakeholders to get their perspective," he explains. During his 20-year career, he has used collaborative approaches to create legal frameworks that support growing companies' commercial departments.

And, his core value of collaboration is the foundation for all of Omid's work to support MGS and its ongoing commitment to improve the customer experience, associate engagement, environmental discipline, corporate responsibility, internal controls, and vendor relationships for Mars, Incorporated. He works closely with business partners to ensure legal capabilities are aligned with business objectives. For him, the journey begins and ends with the business client. "To be a true partner to the business, you need to be connected to the business, and the connection is all about effort," he explains. "Diversity is important, so making sure we have a well-rounded approach, and then evaluating that input and its impact is critical to risk management. You can't get that approach without true collaboration and it's a key attribute that I've been told sets me apart from other attorneys."

Although Omid is far from the shores on which he was raised, the values, passion and worldview his parents instilled in him a lifetime ago continue to drive his commitment to excellence and his entrepreneurial spirit. Focused on solving problems and improving efficiencies, he has developed a patented technology to facilitate affordable review of contracts by lawyers. Omid received his law degree from Washburn University School of Law and holds a bachelor's degree in political science and international relations from the University of Northern Iowa.

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Jamon R. Hicks, Founding Partner

> Together, their mission is to "help people rebuild their lives financially and emotionally."

A respected civil rights and criminal defense attorney, Jamon R. Hicks represents plaintiffs in both state and federal courts. He not only holds extensive experience in civil litigation involving wrongful death, personal injury, and police misconduct, but he has also litigated numerous felony and misdemeanor criminal cases. As a founding partner at Douglas/Hicks Law, APC, Jamon finds gratification in doing what he loves: fulfilling his life-long passion of working on behalf of those who are unable to defend and/or protect themselves.

Founded in 2014, by Carl Douglas and Jamon, Douglas/Hicks Law is a California-based firm that specializes in representing victims of personal injury and wrongful death as well as those who have had their civil rights violated. While Carl's primary focus is on civil rights and wrongful death cases, Jamon and another attorney run the employment practice group. The firm's legal team consists of four attorneys who serve clients throughout California as well as a few other states such as New York and Florida. Together, their mission is to "help people rebuild their lives financially and emotionally."

Jamon explains, "We do impact litigation, which affects change, and it is a great feeling to lead our clients toward success and recovery." He also notes that it is especially satisfying when one of their cases results in a positive change for other employees.

As a founding partner at Douglas/Hicks Law, Jamon's areas of expertise are wrongful deaths, serious personal injury cases, employment discrimination cases, and some criminal defense. Although he has always specialized in most of these areas, he did not begin practicing employment law until recently. However, he has been working in the other areas of law since 2004.

According to Jamon, the highlight of his career thus far has been the case of Matthew Ngov, who was charged with murder due to a gang-related drive-by shooting. Although the shooting occurred in 2011, there were four separate trials on the case. The first trial resulted in a hung jury, and in the second Ngov was sentenced to 55 years to life, which was overturned on appeal. Jamon's firm came in on the third trial, which resulted in another hung jury, but in the fourth trial, Ngov finally received a verdict of not guilty. Jamon strongly believes that Ngov was only guilty by association because the defendant was not in the car, nor was he the shooter. It was a long-fought battle that was challenging, mentally draining, and that required Jamon to be on the case nonstop. Nevertheless, he says it was worth all the hard work because he succeeded in getting a verdict of not guilty for a man whom he truly believed to be innocent.

Jamon also holds an interesting background. Prior founding Douglas/Hicks Law, he earned his bachelor's degree from The University of California at Berkley and his Juris Doctorate degree from Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. In his last year of law school, Jamon served as an intern for his current partner, Carl, before moving on to become Carl's law clerk during his second and third years of school. After passing the bar, Jamon then worked as Carl's associate for six years, moving up from an associate to a senior associate with the Johnnie Cochran Firm in Los Angeles where Carl served as managing partner. In 2014, Jamon left the Johnny Cochran Firm to go back to work with Carl, and that is when they decided to establish their partnership, Douglas/Hicks Law.

Due to his success as an attorney, Jamon has received numerous awards and recognitions. For instance, he has been selected by *Super Lawyers Magazine* as a rising star and has also been named a Super Lawyer, both for seven consecutive years. He has also been included in the Trial Lawyers Association's *Top 40 Under 40* and, in 2009, he was the youngest African American president of the John Langston Bar Association. Jamon was also the youngest president ever elected to the California Association of Black Lawyers and was listed among the National Bar Association's *Top 40 Under 40*.

DOUGLAS / HICKS
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Ronald S. Johnson

Founding Partner

> He likes to approach law the same way that he approached the sport. "It's all about being a team player and showing that you are determined, focused, and prepared."

Experienced trial lawyer, Ronald S. Johnson, has always believed that great things will happen to those who keep God first and treat people right. After growing up in Albany, New York, in the inner city, he is proud to not only be an African American attorney but to be a positive role model for young people throughout Connecticut, where his firm is based. As the founder of Law Offices of Ronald S. Johnson & Associates, Ronald specializes in high end federal cases, serious state cases, and civil litigation, particularly in the realm of personal injury.

Located in downtown Hartford, the Law offices of Ronald S. Johnson & Associates have been representing and fighting for people of color since 1992. Although they started out as a criminal defense firm, focusing on serious felonies and murder cases, Ronald and his team were so successful at the trial level that they have since added associates and now offer more areas of practice including immigration and personal injury. The majority of the office clients are African American, Hispanic, or of Caribbean decent, and the legal team is dedicated to advocating for those individuals as well as their families. They also represent a number of professional athletes including clients in the National Football League (NFL) and the National Basketball Association (NBA).

According to Ronald, the characteristics that set him apart from other attorneys are his passion, confidence, and determination. He was an athletic basketball player throughout his youth, so he likes to approach law the same way that he approached the sport. "It's all about being a team player and showing that you are determined, focused, and prepared," explains Ronald. In fact, he makes it clear that he is not someone who tries to "buck the system" because he believes a person can become better as a result of knowing different people and developing a network of relationships.

Ronald also takes pride in being trustworthy, which he considers essential when making legal decisions for those he represents. He views his clients as members of his own family and genuinely enjoys assisting them. As a result, he makes sure that he is easily accessible and that his clients can reach out to him at any time, especially those involved in serious accidents and personal injury cases.

Prior to starting his own firm, Ronald earned his master's degree from Syracuse University's Maxwell Citizenship of Public Affairs, the nation's top ranked school for preparing public administrators. While working on his master's, he pursued his Juris Doctorate at Syracuse University School of Law in Syracuse, New York, where he obtained both degrees and then officially began practicing law in 1991.

Most recently, Ronald has become passionate about representing professional athletes as a certified NFL contract advisor as well as being actively involved in non-profit organizations. He serves as board chair for the Wilson Gray Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) while also sitting on the board of the Greater Hartford YMCA. The Hartford organization services the entire county, covering over a dozen different YMCAs and providing programs and support to almost one million people.

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Dmitriy Chernyy

> It's about the client and making sure the client has the experience they're supposed to have when they have an attorney representing them. I give each case everything I have.

For Dmitriy Chernyy, managing attorney and owner of Chernyy & Associates, his passion for litigation and for his clients drives everything he does. As a personal injury lawyer, he is a fierce advocate for his clients, emotionally invested in each of their cases. "It's about the client and making sure the client has the experience they're supposed to have when they have an attorney representing them. I give each case everything I have," he explains.

Dmitriy began his career on the other side of the courtroom, defending the interests of companies against the very clients he now represents. However, he soon found it unrewarding, morally and emotionally, and he decided that he no longer wanted to fight for the side of the Goliaths—he wanted to fight the good fight *against* them. When he was presented with an opportunity to join a plaintiffs' personal injury firm and represent hundreds of plaintiffs, he jumped at the chance. After a successful tenure, in June 2019, he opened his own practice in Brooklyn, where he manages his firm's personal-injury matters and serves as trial counsel for a host of other firms. "I am in the industry that I love. My practice and the firm that I am building is about getting a successful result for each client. When I agree to take a case or go into a trial, I feel like I am bleeding with the client—in war, in the trenches, next to the client. Losing is a lot more painful than the joy of winning," he shares.

Dmitriy's experience on the defense side gives his clients invaluable legal insight into the opposition. Drawing on his past experience as an award-winning coach for the mock trial teams at Syracuse University College of Law and Hofstra's law school, he serves his clients as both skilled attorney and teacher, informing them every step of the way, throughout the entirety of their case. "As attorneys, we've done thousands of depositions and trials, but for a plaintiff, it is usually their first time, so it is always important to put them first," he explains. "Clients at other personal injury firms tend to get ignored. I've taken on cases where clients were not getting the attention they deserved from their prior attorney and were not as informed as they should be. Our clients are always involved in every decision."

Chernyy & Associates flourished and in January 2020, one of Dmitriy's former legal colleagues and managing partner of Kremin Law, Todd Kremin, began working with the firm. The two had worked together at a national law firm, where Todd served as a partner for five years in the global insurance services group before opening his own firm in 2020. Kremin Law opened with the goal of providing legal services that are "transparent, practical, efficient, and honest."

"I did not want to duplicate the same old law firm model that has been around for generations. Instead, I wanted to take an approach to client service that demystified the legal process for small and large clients alike, so the clients understood and were involved in the decision throughout the process of any transaction or litigation" Todd shares. "These are values that both Chernyy & Associates and Kremin Law share," Dmitriy commented.

As two attorneys ranked as *Super Lawyers* with shared backgrounds, Dmitriy and Todd are working together with plans to merge their firms completely within the next year. Their new firm will serve a broader field of specialties to include plaintiffs' personal injury involving construction, motor vehicle, and premises liability in addition to plaintiffs' insurance recovery, commercial litigation and business counseling. "We have always respected one another. We've been working together for a bit now, and it is a perfect fit. Our practices are different but our diverse skill sets complement each other's perfectly."

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Crystal J. Rodriguez

> Crystal's boundless energy and infectious positivity, which have served to propel many entrepreneurs to success and lead so many people to happier lives, are reflected in one of her favorite quotes by William Lloyd Garrison: "I have need to be on fire, for I have mountains of ice about me to melt."

As managing attorney of the law firm Crystal J. Rodriguez, Esq., Crystal Rodriguez is on a mission to make the legal part of structuring a business and protecting assets "Crystal Clear" for small business owners. She is a passionate entrepreneur with a calling to help people maximize their opportunities by realizing their value and potential in life. With 13 years of legal experience and expertise as a certified Master Life & Business coach, she not only helps clients navigate the legal aspects of business, she also provides business coaching that includes an array of services, from business plan assistance to marketing and branding tips. "One of my superpowers is in making the legal parts of forming a business less intimidating and, in many cases, more affordable," she explains.

As a fierce advocate for equality and equity and a champion of entrepreneurs, Crystal believes that everyone deserves to prosper. As part of her mission, she breaks down the barrier of costly legal services that often stand in the way of success. She does this by offering educational courses and access to DIY options, such as contract templates and her flagship, *Business in a (IN)Box* course. She also offers generous access by way of group chats where general questions can be answered. Crystal's boundless energy and infectious positivity, which have served to propel many entrepreneurs to success and lead so many people to happier lives, are reflected in one of her favorite quotes by William Lloyd Garrison: "I have need to be on fire, for I have mountains of ice about me to melt."

Prior to founding her law firm, Crystal served nearly 12 years with the first African American mayor of the city of Buffalo, and she was appointed as the city's first diversity officer. During her tenure, she served as the executive director of the Commission on Citizens' Rights and Community Relations, where she spearheaded social and community programs such as race relations and anti-bullying initiatives. As chief diversity officer, Crystal designed the City of Buffalo Opportunity Pledge aimed at embracing racial equity, diversity, and inclusion to ensure economic opportunities could be shared by all citizens. She also led the city's efforts in promoting and advancing the mayor's Opportunity Agenda, which included his diversity goals.

Crystal's professional leadership and dedication to community has been recognized through a host of awards, including being named a finalist for the *2020 ATHENA Leadership Award* from the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, the *2018 Community Leader in Government Award from* The National Association of Just Communities of WNY*, the 2013 Woman of Excellence Award* from Every Woman Opportunity Center, and the *2009 Emerging Leader Award* from YWCA of WNY.

Before her law career, Crystal served in the U.S. Navy, during which time she received her bachelor's degree in social sciences with concentrations in political science, history, and sociology from California State University, San Marcos. She holds J.D. and LL.M. degrees from the University at Buffalo Law School, and she is a certified Law of Attraction practitioner. Committed to community, Crystal is involved with charitable organizations and serves on many community boards. She is also a proud member of *Delta Sigma Theta* Sorority, Inc., Buffalo Alumnae Chapter.

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Chris Dreyer

A self-taught affiliate marketer, Chris Dreyer got his start in search engine optimization (SEO) competing in some of the most ruthless niches on the Internet. While his days were spent building websites, his nights were devoted to pouring over SEO forums, running tests, and absorbing any knowledge he thought could give him an edge in the industry. Although it was challenging, his hands-on education of "learn, apply, test, repeat" was a success. Today, Chris is the founder and chief executive officer of Rankings.io, headquartered in O'Fallon, Illinois.

Founded in 2013, Rankings.io is known as the "SEO agency of choice for elite personal injury law firms." In fact, in both 2018 and 2019, they were named to the *Inc. 5000*, a list of the fastest growing private companies in the nation. Due to their continued success, Chris and his team feel confident they will be on the list again in 2020.

Rankings.io is both horizontally and vertically integrated and serves personal injury firms throughout the country. While most of their competitors will work with any law firm and within multiple areas of practice, Rankings' vertical is solely personal injury law. In terms of horizontal integration, a variety of services are offered, including reputation management and SEO.

According to Chris, one of the aspects that sets Rankings.io apart from its competitors is its vertical. Team members work with scientists and statisticians to create unique and original data in order to interpret the actions attorneys will need to take to create the most impact for their rankings. For example, Rankings.io performed a data science-based study of 112,000 personal injury firms (utilizing multiple metrics) to determine what it takes to rank. In order to prevent conflict of interest, they also provide geographic exclusivity to their clients, meaning they only work with one client per market.

Prior to founding Rankings.io, Chris was employed as a history teacher and oversaw detention as well. One day in 2006, he had some extra time and researched "how to make money online." He subsequently discovered a course called, *How to Make Your First Ten Dollars from Digital Marketing*, through which he earned $20 and began learning the basis of the industry. By his second year in the school system, he was earning more money through digital marketing than he was bringing in as a history teacher. As a result, Chris left to the educational field and began pursuing affiliate marketing full-time.

rankings.io®

> "Founded in 2013, Rankings.io is known as the "SEO agency of choice for elite personal injury law firms."

From 2006-2011, Chris worked helping other businesses sell their products. In 2011, the Penguin Algorithm hit, which changed how affiliate marketing worked. Consequently, Chris transitioned into the consulting/service space working for a digital marketing agency in Missouri. There, he quickly rose to become the lead SEO specialist, managing campaigns for over 30 law firms. "I loved the competitiveness of the legal niche," says Chris. In less than two years, he found the opportunity to strike out and start his own company and he's never looked back. Chris notes, "I've never met a lawyer who wasn't relentless about winning. They devour every bit of knowledge that gives them an edge. It's why I get along with lawyers so well: we're cut from the same competitive cloth."

Contact

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Jennifer M. Mohamed

Jennifer's areas of practice at The Bayne Law Group include frequently acting as full-service counsel to established and emerging businesses on domestic and cross-border issues, business litigation, corporate law, employment law, and transactional work.

Jennifer M. Mohamed is an experienced attorney and a partner at The Bayne Law Group, LLC, and a health and wellness professional. Jennifer has recently launched her own wellness consulting business, Jen the Yoga Lawyer, LLC, offering training in optimal wellness for attorneys and professional leaders.

The Bayne Law Group is a sophisticated commercial practice law firm based in Princeton, New Jersey with satellite offices in New York City and Philadelphia that provides practical and strategic advice to sophisticated businesses of all sizes, including investors, entrepreneurs and professionals in a broad range of industries and sectors worldwide.

Jennifer's areas of practice at The Bayne Law Group include frequently acting as full-service counsel to established and emerging businesses on domestic and cross-border issues, business litigation, corporate law, employment law, and transactional work. She became licensed to practice law in New Jersey and New York in 1999. She is a former president of the Princeton Bar Association and remains a trustee and the president emeritus.

Jennifer has been practicing law for over 15 years, and after working on all sides of the fence - as an environmental attorney for the NYSDEC, in private practice in Albany, New York and in Princeton, New Jersey, including for an AmLaw 100 law firm in the cleanup of Newark Bay and Passaic River—the largest environmental lawsuit filed in New Jersey - she holds a personal understanding of how stressful and unhealthy the legal profession can become. As a result, and in light of the added stress of Covid-19, Jennifer became inspired to offer wellness retreats for lawyers. "Yoga has taught me to maintain focus even when I am pushing limits and am in stressful situations. It allows me to bring a centeredness to everything I do and reminds me of who I am. This gives me tremendous inner strength and clarity which benefits me and my clients. I want to teach that to other attorneys," she says.

Since her personal and professional experiences have equipped her to bring such a unique depth of knowledge to the wellness space, Jennifer recently founded the Optimal Wellness for Lawyers and Leaders (OWL) program at Jen the Yoga Lawyer, LLC. Jennifer's goal is to help her other attorneys and professionals maintain a healthier lifestyle through yoga, meditation, and nutrition so that they can become healthier and happier and ultimately, more successful lawyers. Jennifer's offerings include domestic and international classes and retreats and in-house programs consistent with ABA guidelines on attorney wellness. Jen the Yoga Lawyer LLC also offers complimentary wellness products, such as all-natural CBD, nutritional supplements, and essential oils. Jennifer's goal is to guide lawyers to become conscious leaders in the post-Covid world.

In addition to her numerous achievements as an attorney and wellness expert, Jennifer has dedicated much of her life to improving the world around her. Jennifer uses her privilege as a lawyer to advocate for environmental and human rights topics that matter. As a humanitarian and an advocate for a more just, sustainable world, Jennifer believes that all people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect of basic human rights, and to have equal access to the law. A few of her most significant accomplishments include:

- A certification in Green Economy from the United Nations
- A bachelor's degree in Russian language
- A published Law Review article on climate change with the University of California Davis School of Law: "Silent Spring + 55: The Human Right to a Clean Environment"
- Winning asylum for a political refugee from Tanzania as a pro bono attorney with Human Rights First
- International philanthropic travel to India to support women and girls rescued from human trafficking and in Kenya with the Samburu Girls Foundation
- Speaker at the New Jersey Bar Association Conference in Paris on the green economy and international human rights

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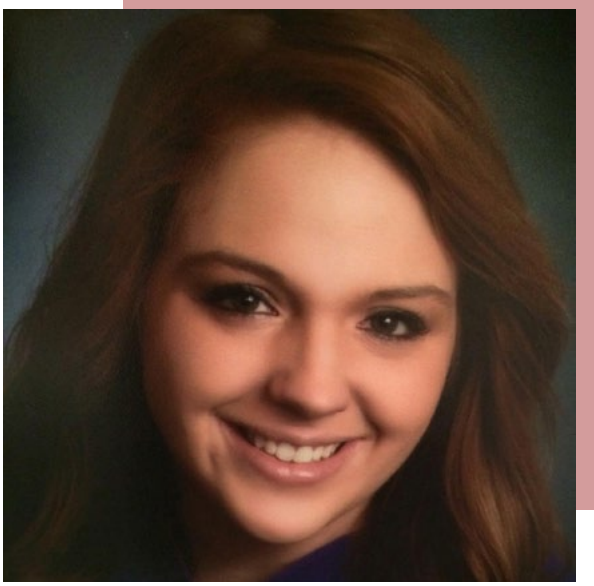
ALEXIS FERRACUTI

Managing Partner



Alexis Ferracuti is the managing partner with The Law Offices of Peter F. Ferracuti, P.C., an Illinois law firm that specializes primarily in personal injury and workers' compensation, but also represents clients with civil claims and medical malpractice cases. Founded by her father, Peter F. Ferracuti, in 1954, it has the distinction of being one of the original law firms in Illinois. Now, 66 years later, Alexis leads the firm in its unwavering mission to make a difference in people's lives. "We fight for what's right because as a society, we have to stick together. We don't treat anyone like clients. Everyone is a member of the family," she shares.

From its humble beginnings six decades ago, the firm is now a multimillion-dollar family office with a staff of 20 that serves clients statewide, from Springfield to Chicago. Specializing in workers' compensation and auto accidents, she is a fierce advocate for her clients—winning over 90% of the cases that she's tried, with awarded settlements or verdicts ranging from $25,000 to $1 million. Her family motto at the firm is what she believes sets her apart. Advocacy isn't about just fighting for what's right but being present and available through every step of the process. "All my clients have my personal cell and can reach me at any time."

Alexis's passion for law began when she was just seven years old, in Ottawa, spending afternoons watching her father work with clients. She recalls the pivotal encounter that set the legal fire in her. "I watched my dad talk to one of his clients who couldn't afford winter coats for his kids because he was without workers compensation pay at that time. My dad and I decided we should share my coat with this man, and then we helped them obtain more coats for the other children in his family," she shares. "When my dad settled that case, the client said that because of him, they were able to keep their family together. I knew at that moment that I wanted to do what my dad did—make a difference in people's lives. That is what makes us different."

> Advocacy isn't about just fighting for what's right but being present and available through every step of the process.

With that scene driving her, Alexis raced through the path to her law degree. After graduating from Illinois Wesleyan University with a bachelor's degree in philosophy and political science and a minor in Spanish, she received a presidential scholarship award to New England School of Law. She obtained her law degree in 2014, passed the bar that same year—on her first attempt—and at just 24 years old, began practicing at her father's firm.

In her first two years as a practicing attorney, she won a $2 million settlement on behalf of a small child. When her father retired in 2015, she assumed the role of managing partner to continue his legacy of helping people. "My dad never did it for the money. There is no amount of money to make up for what people lose and go through during times of injury both emotionally and physically, but our job as attorneys is to at least help make their lives a little easier," she says.

> We fight for what's right because as a society, we have to stick together. We don't treat anyone like clients. Everyone is a member of the family.

The firm's commitment to helping people extends beyond the walls of the practice. The firm has always been a strong union supporter providing advice and services to many unions throughout the State of Illinois and helping those they serve to obtain benefits through their unions and employers as deserved by each individual in our state. As a major sponsor for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention since 2012, the firm's entire staff serves as volunteers, and Alexis has acted as walk chair since 2015 for the LaSalle County Walk, where she lives, and has lived her entire life. When a tornado hit a neighboring town in 2017, her firm provided for the victims, free legal help with insurance and Alexis coordinated all volunteer efforts and was the president of the tornado recovery coordinating donations, funding, and efforts to rebuild her community. The firm also participates in Make-A-Wish each winter, and Alexis took part in the Penguin Plunge this year. Community service clearly falls right in line with the firm values, and she considers herself fortunate to have a supportive staff family who is willing to follow her into whatever project she volunteers for next.

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Tzvi Y. Hagler

The firm specializes in high-net-worth cases, contested and uncontested cases, child support, custody, visitation, and modifications of support or custody.

Tzvi Hagler is a partner and attorney at the Law Office of Tzvi Y. Hagler P.C., a Nassau County law firm specializing exclusively in the full spectrum of family and matrimonial law. For Tzvi, it is not the law that sits at the center of each case, it is the people; the clients he is fiercely devoted to serving. Throughout his decade-long career, this philosophy has driven what he values most—his connections with his clients—as he strives to provide each with individual attention and legal strategies that protect their rights and interests. "*This is often an emotional and stressful time in people's lives, and each case is different and unique - each case is important. We understand this. We handle each case as if it were our only case*," Tzvi explains.

It was Tzvi's devotion to serving people, and his commitment to using his legal skills and knowledge that drove Tzvi to found the firm in 2011 to specialize in divorce and family law. With this mission as its foundation, he designed a practice that shuns the assembly-line approach to cases and, instead, appreciates the unique circumstances of each of its clients and the need for individualized legal strategies to help them. The firm specializes in high-net-worth cases, contested and uncontested cases, child support, custody, visitation, and modifications of support or custody. Whether clients are facing extraordinarily complex cases or emotional disputes with finances or children, Tzvi and his legal team are always willing to help.

Throughout his decade-long career, this philosophy has driven what he values most—his connections with his clients—as he strives to provide each with individual attention and legal strategies that protect their rights and interests.

"*The law exists to serve people. Our firm is not a factory, churning out case after case using a single one-size-fits-all legal strategy. What drives us is our sincere desire to help. Our representation is tailor-made for each client's specific situation and my team and I are dedicated to handling each case individually, with extraordinary attention to detail*," Tzvi shares.

Tzvi began his legal career in 2008, after graduating from Maurice A. Dean School of Law at Hofstra University, and has dedicated his entire career to serving clients in family and matrimonial cases. "*I became a lawyer because I was always interested in the legal side of things. I was interested in how it affected people's lives, and I wanted to make sure people understood their rights, and were not being abused by the legal system*," he shares.

Tzvi's natural ability to connect with his clients is well known among clients and his legal peers, as is his reputation for his mastery of the law, which has helped the firm achieve success in some of the most complex family law cases. He maintains long-term relationships with most of his clients, who return to him for other legal matters and refer their friends and family members. While the practice's client base continues to swell through referrals from both clients and from outside attorneys, who often refer more complicated cases to the firm, Tzvi remains committed to the values that first drew him to the legal field—his connection with people.

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Pieter A. Weyts

Partner

Pieter Weyts is a partner with NEXT Legal, LLC, a Miami-based boutique law firm focused on corporate, finance and real estate transactions—and he has the distinction of being named *Private Equity Lawyer of the Year* in 2017. With 20 years of corporate experience and a keen legal mind, he leads the firm's corporate practice, specializing in private equity, corporate finance, and mergers and acquisitions. Born in Belgium, his multilingual skills in six languages allow him to serve a broad and diverse client base, a reflection of the firm's unique cross-border capabilities.

Pieter and his three partners founded NEXT Legal in 2018, when they decided to join forces and open their own practice after working together for five years their previous law firm. The firm's clients include prominent entrepreneurs, venture capital funds, investment funds and high net worth families, spanning from South Florida to Latin America to Europe, and from China and India to Russia.

Service and Integrity

All hailing from big law firms in New York and Miami, this group of skilled lawyers left their legal behemoths to form a practice where they could work closely with clients centered around the firm's core values of service and integrity. Pieter shares: "Our clients entrust us with their most important business and financial transactions and we 'go the extra mile' to serve our clients in achieving their strategic objectives. We serve our clients in often challenging and complex transactions and strive to do so in the most pragmatic and efficient manner. We act as true partners to our clients who appreciate that they can rely on our support under any circumstances."

As a boutique firm, Pieter and his partners apply the highest levels of integrity to all their work. "Our clients know that they can rely on the quality and integrity of our work in getting the deal done. Our integrity is also crucial in establishing a relationship of trust and confidence with our clients, especially when we handle very sensitive transactions or information," Pieter adds.

Pieter grew up in Belgium, and after receiving his law degree from Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, he moved to New York to pursue his JD from Columbia Law School and his MBA from Columbia Business School. He began his career in 2001 as a corporate attorney at Davis Polk, one of Wall Street's finest firms, where he focused on investment funds, M&A and securities offerings, and advised several non-US companies listed on the NYSE. Seven years later, he fulfilled his dream and moved to Miami, where he ran his own firm for four years before assuming the role of in-house counsel for an international company. As fate would have it, Pieter moved back to private practice where the idea for NEXT Legal was born.

NEXT LEGAL

> "Our clients entrust us with their most important business and financial transactions and we 'go the extra mile' to serve our clients in achieving their strategic objectives. We serve our clients in often challenging and complex transactions and strive to do so in the most pragmatic and efficient manner. We act as true partners to our clients who appreciate that they can rely on our support under any circumstances."

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Robert Appleton

Partner

As a leading investigation and FCPA lawyer—Robert focuses on anti-corruption compliance, government and internal investigations, global asset tracing and recovery, and securities.

MURPHY & McGONIGLE

Robert Appleton is one of the foremost cross border regulatory, anti-corruption, asset recovery and due diligence specialists in the world. Robert is currently a partner at Murphy & McGonigle, P.C., a *Tier 1*-ranked, *Top 10* law firm known for its financial securities and regulatory practice and white-collar group. In November 2020, *US News & World Report* ranked Murphy & McGonigle the leading financial regulatory firm in the US. As a leading investigation and FCPA lawyer—Robert focuses on anti-corruption compliance, government and internal investigations, global asset tracing and recovery, and securities. Robert is a former high profile and very accomplished senior DOJ attorney who worked for 13 years as a federal prosecutor, leading numerous high-profile international cases, where he received countless awards. Robert is an attorney with a career that spans nearly three decades in the legal service of clients worldwide, including the U.N., and the recipient of dozens of awards for his legal skill and leadership working on behalf of the government. As an international cross-border specialist with vast global experience, he not only knows and understands the over 100 countries he works in, he understands the needs in those countries and has established strong contacts and relationships in each of them. Robert provides cross borders services that are unparalleled.

Robert has had a remarkable career that included roles as a high-ranking U.N. official and chief of investigations, special counsel to Paul Volcker in the U.N. investigation into Saddam Hussein's Iraqi *Oil for Food Program* bribery investigation, and head of the first al Qaeda anti-terrorism finance case in the United States. The majority of his clients residing outside the U.S., Robert represents clients in Brazil and throughout Latin America, Europe and Asia, where clients have regulatory issues within the U.S. Robert has achieved a number of very successful outcomes for his clients, beyond their expectations. Whether criminal matters, issues with the SEC, FTC, DOJ or state regulators, or litigation or asset recovery needs, Robert represents foreign institutions and banks who are seeking to recapture assets that have been stored in the U.S. or elsewhere. He is also very involved in a leading role in the Brazil Lava Jato cases arising out of the large multinational cross-border investigations in Brazil.

Robert began his career in 1990 after receiving his law degree from Emory University, which, in 2009, bestowed upon him the *Distinguished Alumni Award* for his international anti-terrorism work. After graduating, he clerked for a very well respected U.S. District Judge T. Emmet Clarie, before joining the Department of Justice as a federal prosecutor in 1992, where for the next 13 years, he prosecuted federal criminal cases and provided strategic counsel in DOJ/SEC investigations, with special focus on high profile international matters. Robert prosecuted the case of *Jose Stroh,* Pablo Escobar's principal money launderer. In recognition for his skill and leadership, he received countless awards, including the prestigious *Director's Award* from the DOJ.

In 2006, Robert moved into the international space when he was appointed by the United Nations to lead the first anti-corruption unit in the U.N. As chairman, he led a team of 50 international lawyers and investigators across the globe in hundreds of international corruption investigations. In 2010, he joined the Global Fund to Fight Malaria as director of investigations. There he spent months in Africa, leading the investigations into the misuse of funds by the world's biggest health financier that loans and grants money to developing countries through ministry of health and health programs.

In 2014, Robert returned to the U.S. and settled into private practice, where he uses his experience to focus on international cross-border legal matters. He is admitted to the bar in New York, Connecticut, the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Court of Appeals, Second Circuit, and the U.S. District Court in New York and Connecticut.

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Jonathan (Jon) Spaeth

Partner & General Counsel

In this age of legal specialization, Jon is a throwback – an attorney who is as comfortable negotiating a complex multi-million-dollar contract as he is representing a client in high stakes litigation. Jon's versatility and range as a lawyer comes from his rare blend of law firm and in-house experience. As a partner at a large international law firm and at several smaller firms, and as a senior in-house attorney for both public and private companies, Jon not only has acquired expertise in multiple disciplines but also has worked across a wide variety of industries. Likewise, Jon not only has represented a vast array of clients but has himself been the client on numerous occasions. As a consequence, Jon has a unique understanding of what clients are looking for in an attorney, a perspective that, in his current role as partner and general counsel of Centre Law & Consulting, LLC, enables him to deliver big firm services at a fraction of the cost.

> Jon has a unique understanding of what clients are looking for in an attorney, a perspective that ... enables him to deliver big firm services at a fraction of the cost.

After obtaining his undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan and his law degree from the University of Virginia, Jon became an attorney in 1984. He spent almost 20 years at Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Field LLP in Washington, D.C., working his way through the associate ranks to become partner, where he conducted high-profile litigation for Fortune 100 and other corporate clients. Jon then held several senior in-house positions in the defense industry, including at Raytheon, before serving as general counsel to the largest operating division of Zebra Technologies Corporation. While at Zebra, Jon led the negotiation of all legal aspects of Zebra's sale and licensing of player tracking technology to the National Football League, which resulted in the company achieving "Proud Partner of the NFL" status.

Jon joined Centre Law & Consulting in March 2019 both as a practicing lawyer and the general counsel of the firm. While most of the firm's lawyers specialize in government contracts, Jon's areas of practice also include civil litigation, commercial transactions and contracts, regulatory compliance, and labor and employment matters. Moreover, commensurate with his diverse background, Jon is frequently called upon to advise clients on a variety of issues outside of his general areas of expertise.

Founded in 2002, Centre Law & Consulting is a boutique law firm that specializes in federal government contracting issues as well as the unique needs of federal contractors. With over 30 years of government contracting experience, Centre is the only company that offers integrated legal, consulting, and training services for both government and industry clients. Not only do their consultants, attorneys, and CPAs know and understand the complex rules and regulations of General Services Administration (GSA) schedules but they have also successfully represented clients before all major tribunals, including the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, the agency boards of contract appeals, and the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Although Jon's office is located in Washington, D.C. area, his team serves clients throughout the United States.

CENTRE
LAW & CONSULTING

While most of the firm's lawyers specialize in government contracts, Jon's areas of practice also include civil litigation, commercial transactions and contracts, regulatory compliance, and labor and employment matters.

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MAIN STREET REAL ESTATE GROUP

Mo Dadkhah is a prominent attorney and owner of Dadkhah Law Group, a Chicago-based practice that specializes in real estate law.

Mo started his firm as the sole practicing attorney and handled the caseload by himself for the first five years. He completed his law degree at John Marshall University in Chicago, but after graduating in 2009, he discovered that job offers were limited and most of them were unattractive. Although he was offered positions, Mo had no interest in the prospect of a small, low paying role within a large, impersonal firm.

Mo decided to begin his career on his own terms and despite the risk of starting a firm straight out of law school, he defied tradition and opened an office. Initially, clients were hard to come by so Mo advertised on *Craigslist*, accepting status cases for just $50. He also got a real estate license, with the intention of supplementing his income through real estate cases.

"A goal without a plan is just a wish."

Soon, Mo was getting referrals from other attorneys and past clients, which created enough work for a second attorney. In 2014, Mo and his newly hired associate began accepting more real estate cases and amassed an impressive roster of clients. It was at this time that Mo decided to open a second business; Main Street Real Estate Group, a full-service real estate brokerage.

By 2018, Dadkhah Law Group had become successful enough to add a third member to their practice and dedicate much of their caseload to real estate law, competently handling matters pertaining to closings, tax appeals, and condo deconversions throughout Chicago. In addition, the Firm also offers corporate and litigation expertise.

Mo credits his success in both businesses to a decade of hard work, consistency, and above all, patience. He adds, “It doesn’t happen overnight, and we are still planning for exponential growth.”

In addition to overseeing his real estate agency and practicing law, Mo dedicates a significant amount of time to coaching and training realtors. His unique perspective and dual career experience allow him to offer proven strategies for success to business owners and agents alike. Mo often includes his personal mantra in his presentations, which is, “A goal without a plan is just a wish.”

Mo has always maintained an active role within the community. He was president of the YPN board for Chicago Association of Realtors and a host on *WGN Market Overdrive*, a real estate talk show. From there, he moved on to his own podcast, *AE Wheelhouse*, which features local entrepreneurs and business owners. Mo also developed the real estate tech start up, Bid Mojo, which specializes in lead generation. He states, “Everything I do has some relation to real estate.” This is especially evident in Mo’s many awards and recognitions. Main Street Real Estate Group was named by *Inc 5000* as one of the *Fastest Growing Companies In America* and Mo has been featured in *Chicago Agent Magazine* as a *Top Producer* for the last 3 years, as well as a *Chicago Magazine Power Player.*

Christopher S. Swiecicki

Managing Member

"It is not all about money for me. I give up my time to proudly do this."

Christopher Swiecicki is managing member of Swiecicki & Muskett, LLC, a St. Louis-based law firm specializing in business and corporate taxation, with vast experience in energy, finance, banking, and construction law. The practice also serves clients in the areas of litigation, appellate work, and employment law. With both a law degree and a master's of law in taxation, and over two decades of experience, he leads the firm as a recognized legal expert on corporate taxation issues. He is also an adjunct professor at Washington University School of Law—the 17th-ranked law school in the nation. Defined by his clients as a practical lawyer, his advice is a combination of legal and pragmatic.

Chris founded Swiecicki & Muskett as a small firm in 2005, bringing with him nearly 20 years of experience in business and law, and valuable insight gained from his time as counsel for Big Four accounting firms. He has served both as in-house counsel for Fortune 500 financial institutions, major corporations, and one of the top utility companies in the nation and as outside counsel for multi-billion-dollar corporations. Having split his career between these two worlds, Chris possesses a rare dual perspective held by few attorneys in private practice, and breadth and depth of experience to help his clients navigate complex corporate matters. "By having in-house experience, I'm better able to give advice that is practical advice," he explains.

The practice serves clients through its office in St. Louis. and Michigan. Its small size is by design, allowing its attorneys to offer personal attention to each of their clients and to keep costs low to best serve their clients' needs—clients pay lower costs for the same service offered at larger firms. The firm is small, but it is mighty, led by Chris's motto, "We don't quit when we are tired, we quit when the task is completed."

The practice also serves clients in the areas of litigation, appellate work, and employment law. With both a law degree and a master's of law in taxation, and over two decades of experience, he leads the firm as a recognized legal expert on corporate taxation issues.

In 2011, at the invitation of the dean of Washington University School of Law, his alma mater, Chris joined the university as an adjunct professor, teaching business acquisitions, corporate, and estate and gift tax. He is also the author of several publications. Chris's legal expertise extends beyond the corporate realm. He was appointed by the United States Court of Appeals to represent criminal defendants. Though his compensation is minimal, he gladly contributes some of his time to represent these individuals. "It is not all about money for me. I give up my time to proudly do this."

He also contributes his time as chair, Eliot Society Washington University – Law School.

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DENIS SCHMIDT

Denis Shmidt is a litigator, trial attorney, and founding partner of Orsus Gate LLP, a boutique litigation firm with offices in both San Francisco and Los Angeles, California.

Mr. Shmidt established Orsus Gate in 2017 with the belief that all businesses deserve the highest level of legal representation, whether they are a startup or a member of the Fortune 500. His clients now span seven states, and four countries and range from non-profit organizations to technology companies, from schools to manufacturers.

Prior to founding Orsus Gate, Mr. Shmidt served as deputy district attorney for the County of Los Angeles, where he personally prosecuted thousands of criminals, conducted hundreds of hearings and handled jury trials ranging from misdemeanors to third-strike felony life cases. Beyond business disputes, Mr. Shmidt regularly handles antitrust, trade secrets, class actions and derivative shareholder litigations.

Mr. Shmidt has degrees in economics and political science from the University of California San Diego and a Juris Doctor from the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law.

He is passionate about giving back to the community and has represented victims of domestic violence in obtaining restraining orders, seeking asylum and standing up to major institutions. He has also worked for the NYU Brennan Center for Justice, sat on the boards of two non-profits, and volunteered in East Los Angeles middle schools on behalf of Project LEAD and the Constitutional Rights Foundation. “Some people call it complex commercial litigation, corporate litigation or high stakes dispute resolution. At the end of the day, it’s simply helping companies that have a problem.”

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SHALEV AMAR

Shalev Amar is owner of Amar Law Group, a Scottsdale headquartered multi-state law firm focused on *Lemon Law* and breach-of-warranty claims. An attorney with 16 years of experience and the author of 4 consumer guides on *Lemon Law* matters, Shalev has dedicated his entire career to protecting consumers—and with a nearly 99-percent success rate and a client rating that consists of 100% *Five-Star* reviews, his firm’s commitment is undeniable. “We put our clients first—always. We return all client calls within 1 business day or less,” he shares.

After practicing consumer protection law for nearly 14 years, as managing partner for 12, Shalev founded Amar Law Group in 2018 with a model different from other firms—one that matched his own deeper, broader definition of consumer protection. With the slogan, “If your car’s not up to par, call Amar,” he built a team of attorneys who share his commitment to a client-centered approach. Amar Law Group has extensive expertise in this specific legal niche. “The *Lemon Law* applies when you buy a brand-new vehicle that has been repaired too many times or has been in the shop too long,” he explains.

In a break from its legal peers, Amar Law Group has a *Fair Fee Guarantee* for out-of-court representation, with 95 percent of its cases settling out of court, the guarantee ensures the firm is *never* compensated more than its clients, even if that means cutting its fee. “We seek our attorneys’ fees only from the companies, not our clients, and the fee is based on whether the case is settled. If not, we don’t charge at all,” Shalev explains.

Shalev graduated from the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law and he is the recipient of multiple academic awards, including the *cum laude* distinction and an award for academic excellence. He has also participated in multiple local TV interviews regarding consumer issues. In his commitment to serving the community, the Firm donates two percent of its net profits to the Humane Society.

AMAR LAW GROUP, PLLC

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ANDREW VAN ARSDALE

With years of demonstrated work history within the legal services industry, Attorney Andrew Van Arsdale is a seasoned business development professional skilled in legal assistance, personal injury litigation, legal research, and nonprofit organizations. After earning his Juris Doctorate degree from the University of San Diego School of Law and passing the bar in California, Nevada, and Montana, Andrew entered into private practice and founded AVA Law Group, headquartered in San Diego. As the firm's managing partner, Andrew's mission is to provide clients with easy access to the justice system and to offer efficient legal representation.

Since establishing AVA Law Group in 2019, Andrew and his team specialize in helping victims of negligence-related injuries by seeking maximum compensation from the responsible parties and ensuring continual client satisfaction. At AVA, "We represent the people against the powerful!" says Andrew, whose most recent work focuses on sexual abuse cases. His representation of clients against a wide range of organizations, notably the Boy Scouts of America, has been widely recognized by the media and featured on *CNN, ABC News, NBC News*, and several other platforms.

Although they are based in California with offices in Montana, the AVA Law Group assists people throughout the country. No matter their location, Andrew works to protect clients by providing strong litigation with the goal of placing pressure upon the defendants and helping to establish new protocols, policies, and procedures. Although the work can be challenging, Andrew is grateful for the opportunity to right the wrongs that have been committed and to help victims finally begin the process of healing.

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CHARLES TUCKER, JR.

Boasting over 21 years of experience, Charles Tucker, Jr. has been recognized as an outstanding litigation attorney with over 300 jury trials, bench trials, and administrative hearings to his credit. Today, as senior partner in The Cochran Firm Mississippi Delta office with offices in Mississippi and managing partner for the Tucker Moore Group, LLP in Hyattsville, Maryland, Charles specializes in civil, employment, and criminal defense litigation and is always willing to fight for his clients.

With locations in Mississippi, New York, and Maryland, the Tucker Moore Group is a personal injury, employment, and civil rights law firm. In addition to their practice areas of civil rights, employment law, and bankruptcy, the firm is starting a new division of financial literacy as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Their goal is to assist clients both within and outside of bankruptcy by offering financial literacy resources both in office and online.

Most recently, Charles authored a new book called, *The Five Brothers*, which is about him and his four colleagues. The work is set to be published in August 2020. He will also soon embark on a brand new project this summer to do *Master Trial* classes for young attorneys across the nation.

Prior to his current position, Charles earned a Bachelor of Arts, Master of Public Administration, and a Juris Doctorate from St. John's University. He then began his legal career at the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, where he prosecuted domestic violence cases, homicides, and special victim cases.

In 2005, Charles left Brooklyn as a senior trial attorney in the Special Victims Unit and moved to the District of Columbia. There, he served as an assistant attorney general in the Personnel Labor and Employment Division.

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JONATHAN HILTON

Attorney Jonathan Hilton has a life-long history of playing to win. Not only was he a national master chess player throughout his childhood, but he was also the youngest ever Cincinnati Chess champion at age 15. After studying areas of public policy sparked his interest in law school, Jon realized he could utilize the strong strategic skills he had developed in chess as a litigator advocating for clients.

After graduating as the 2016 class valedictorian at the University of College of Law, Jon began his career as an associate at Jones Day, one of the most prestigious international law firms in the United States. In addition to handling multiple action defense and intellectual property disputes, Jon adopted the service-oriented attitude and dedication to client responsiveness for which Jones Day has been commended.

In April 2018, Jon established his own practice in Pickerington, Ohio, and six months later, he asked Geoffrey Parker, a former Jones Day associate, to join him. The two attorneys partnered to form Hilton Parker, LLC, a boutique law firm focused on consumer and small business owner rights. Together, they provide "big firm expertise" with a "small firm touch."

With a reputation for taking on complex legal issues that other firms decline, Jon and Geoffrey frequently receive referrals from other lawyers. The duo also have an excellent track record in winning federal court cases and have been particularly successful in their representation of entrepreneurs and small to medium sized businesses. As the firm's motto says, "When times get tough, the tough get great lawyers."

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MONICA THURMAN

Utilizing her extensive legal, compliance and governance experience, Monica Thurman leads global compliance for Thomson Reuters, where she has a reporting responsibility to the risk committee. She manages a team responsible for broad compliance issues, including, anti-bribery, economic sanctions, investigations, and policy initiatives. She is on the TR Legal Council, which focuses on talent management and diversity initiatives.

Prior to Thomson Reuters, she was SVP, chief compliance officer for XPO Logistics reporting to the CEO and audit committee. Her responsibilities included chairing the European risk committee, managing the global compliance program and GDPR implementation. She previously held senior in-house legal and HR roles at Halliburton, where she was director employee relations and compliance. While at Halliburton, she was selected by the CEO for its prestigious *President's Leadership Excellence Program,* designated for 30 high potential employees out of the company's 85,000 employees.

In addition to work responsibilities, Monica is frequently asked to speak about corporate compliance program best practices, women leaders in the law, and diversity and inclusion. She is on the advisory board for Corporate Counsel for Women of Color and Career and Recovery Resources, Inc. and has been a Houston mayoral appointee to serve as commissioner for the Houston Civil Service Commission. Monica also graduated from United Way's *Project Blueprint*, an esteemed leadership program which prepares leaders for service on nonprofit and public sector boards.

Monica has utilized her gender and cultural differences to navigate career challenges adeptly and to fuel her commitment to professional excellence. Ms. Thurman earned her Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from the Mauer School of Law.

"There is almost no such thing as ready. There is only now." – Hugh Laurie

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EVAN HARLOW

Evan Harlow is an attorney with The Harlow Law Firm, PLLC. Located in central Texas, the firm assists clients in Austin and the greater area with estate planning and bankruptcy. As a decorated Army veteran and a compassionate attorney, he opened the firm in 2018 to continue his commitment to helping people. While he has been practicing law for five years, Evan's legal career began over a decade ago, as a paralegal in the United States Army.

Hailing from a military family, Evan's natural desire to serve drove him to pursue both a bachelor's degree in public administration from Texas State University, where he graduated magna cum laude, and a master's degree in public service and administration from Texas A&M University before joining the Army. "I had an interest in the law, so I asked what I could do in the military pertaining to law, so I got my start as a paralegal in the Army," he shares.

Over the course of his six and a half years in the Army, Evan focused primarily on criminal prosecution under the military justice system, while helping his fellow soldiers with family law issues, estate planning, and veterans' benefits. He served one tour in Iraq, where he worked with the State Department Provincial Reconstruction Team in its efforts to strengthen the local judicial and law enforcement framework. He was awarded the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, and multiple service medals.

After three and a half years of active duty service, Evan continued to serve in the Army Reserves while pursuing his law degree at Houston Law Center. He began his career in 2015 with a local law firm specializing in bankruptcy and family law. Three years later, he opened his own firm—a people-centered firm—where he provides compassionate representation. "I am here to help see my clients through their immediate legal problem, but also to set them up for success in the long run."

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SHARIKA M. ROBINSON

With a strong reputation for her ability to personally relate to clients, Sharika Robinson has dedicated her career to serving those who have experienced discrimination and unjust treatment. As the owner and founder of The Law Office of Sharika M. Robinson, PLLC, she specializes in civil litigation and strives to provide her clients with the services they need to feel respected and well-represented.

Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, Sharika's firm offers a variety of practice areas including civil rights, employment law, police brutality, personal injury, and wrongful death. From the firm's founding, it has been Sharika's mission to serve the community as an advocate for equality and to eliminate discrimination, particularly in the areas of race and gender.

Prior to attending law school, Sharika earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry from North Carolina State University and worked as a chemist developing pharmaceuticals and methodologies. She then went on to enroll in law school at North Carolina Central where she was named valedictorian and obtained her Juris Doctorate. After completing two prestigious clerkships with the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and the United States District Court of the Eastern District of Michigan, Sharika went directly into private practice.

Sharika has since represented those who have been aggrieved. For instance, in 2019, she litigated a $55 million lawsuit against Frontier Airlines when officials wrongly removed a mother and daughter from their flight, had the mother arrested for trespassing, and placed the daughter in protective services.

To learn more about Sharika's recent action, read below:
https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.newsobserver.com/news/local/crime/article243794082.html

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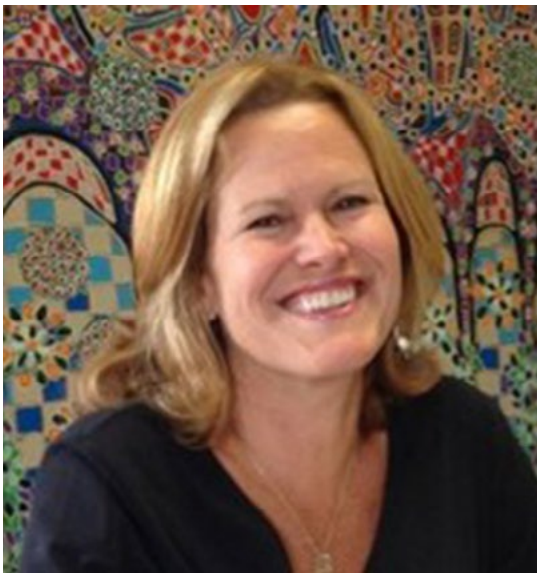

LESLIE CASE

Leslie Case is executive vice president and general counsel for IDB Bank. With its headquarters in New York, the Bank serves private and commercial clients worldwide through its offices in the United States, Latin America, and Israel and its network of correspondent banks.

An effective leader and skilled attorney, Leslie joined IDB in 2008 as a senior associate general counsel and assumed the role as general counsel in 2012 to lead the office of the general counsel in its efforts to support the Bank's commitment to serving its clients' interests and its dedication to building lasting relationships based on integrity and trust.

Prior to IDB Bank, Leslie held the position of vice president, director of compliance at Scientific Games Corporation. Before moving to private practice, she worked as a state and federal court commercial litigation partner at Gersten, Savage & Kaplowitz, LLP, a law firm based in New York that specialized in the areas of mergers and acquisitions, broker dealer and enforcement, investment advisor regulatory and enforcement, and capital markets, among others.

Leslie earned her bachelor's degree from Mount Holyoke College, and her juris doctorate from Benjamin E. Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University.

Leslie Case | Executive Vice President, General Counsel — IDB Bank | New York, New York

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SANKEETHA SELVARAJAH

An award-winning startup attorney with more than a decade of legal and business consulting experience, Sankeetha Selvarajah has served as outside general legal counsel to hundreds of small businesses and has worked with startups as an advisor, strategist, and as an occasional therapist. Currently, Sankeetha serves as managing attorney of the civil transactional firm, Selvarajah Law P.C. and as chief executive officer of BiztoCo, a business educational platform designed to create profitable CEOs.

With offices in Boston, Massachusetts and New, York, New York, Selvarajah Law P.C., is a full-service firm focused on corporate governance and business law. Although Sankeetha's primary roles are strategic advisor to clients and liaison to outside vendors, she also offers corporate governance and advisory board services. Sankeetha specializes in assisting small businesses from incorporation to exit mergers & acquisition sales. Her clients include various food industry companies as well as businesses within the retail, technology, real estate, and manufacturing sectors.

Sankeetha is also passionate about her role at BiztoCo, a national business educational platform. Designed to assist small businesses and startup founders, the platform utilizes subject-specific seminars and corporate coaching to guide business owners through short to long-term strategic planning. Sankeetha and her team also train CEOs via online classes and provide consulting services relating to everyday business matters.

No matter which role Sankeetha is playing, her goal is simple; she strives to educate and equip founders with the skills and knowledge necessary to drive measurable results independently. She believes that empowering organizations and founders through strategic knowledge can only result in the growth of better companies.

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LEE LONDON

Lee London is a partner at Barasch & McGarry and the managing attorney for the firm's 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund practice located in Lower Manhattan in New York City. The firm has dedicated over two decades to representing victims of the 9/11 attacks and helping to recover billions of dollars from the Victim Compensation Fund on their behalf. As a result of the firm's tireless dedication to the 9/11 community and the highest success record in award appeals, it is the largest such practice in the country, with over 20,000 clients.

As a partner of the firm and manager of its 9/11 practice, Lee's responsibilities include overseeing 9/11 claims processing and supervising the staff who handles them. Additionally, he leads the appeal process and guides his team of attorneys in establishing client presence in the 9/11 exposure zone and optimizing client loss calculation settlements at in-person and phone hearings. Lee is a passionate advocate for the 9/11 community and strives for regular educational outreach to inform the public of the benefits and programs available to its members.

Prior to his work at Barasch & McGarry, Lee graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelor of Science degree from Syracuse University. As a law student, he was accepted into the John Jay Legal Services Criminal Defense Clinic, as well as the prestigious summer internship program at the Bronx District Attorney's office. After graduating from Pace Law School with a Juris Doctorate degree and passing the New York State Bar Exam, Lee joined Barasch & McGarry.

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HILLARY JOHNS

A seasoned trial lawyer, Hillary Johns has tried more than one hundred cases to verdict and is an AV rated attorney with Martindale-Hubbell. She was on the Dean's list and graduated with honors from Occidental College in 1990 and from Golden Gate University School of Law in 1993. She is also fluent in Spanish and is trained in both German and French.

A native Southern Californian, Hillary is licensed to practice law in California, the California Central and Northern United States Federal District Courts, and in the District of Columbia. She specializes in the areas of civil litigation, business law, torts, employment law, and entertainment law.

Hillary writes regularly for a nationally recognized publishing company as well as individual law firms about various areas of civil law. She provides instruction, compliance assessments, and sexual harassment training to a variety of companies in order to ensure their compliance with current California employment law guidelines.

In order to give back to the community, Hillary is also a member of multiple organizations. For instance, she is a member of the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund and works with the American Bar Association to provide legal services to military personnel. She has additionally served as a pro bono attorney and has volunteered for local, statewide, and national domestic violence organizations. Hillary is a past alumni committee chair and current student mentor with Occidental College. She is also a member of the Beverly Hills Bar Association and the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce.

Outside of her legal career, Hillary is a licensed competitive youth soccer coach and was once herself a competitive ranked soccer player and professional athlete. Her interests include European and American history, competitive sports, fitness for people of all ages, and animal rights.

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GEORGE MITRIS

An attorney with three decades of experience in the practice of bankruptcy, commercial, and civil litigation, George Mitris leads one of the largest bankruptcy filers in the Rochester, New York, area and across the Western District. As a seasoned litigator with a background in commercial litigation who has represented both creditors and debtors in state and federal courts, he brings valuable insight, experience, and a unique dual perspective to serve his clients in all matters of bankruptcy and commercial law.

Though he leads one of the area's most successful law firms, he believes that personal touch is important. He personally meets with clients and works closely with them to find solutions that best serve them. "I've been doing this since my clerking days in 1984. When you're doing something for that long, you gain certain sensitivities and wisdom and take a different approach," he explains.

George began his career as an attorney with a commercial litigation law firm in Syracuse. However, his dedication to community compelled him to move back to his hometown of Rochester several years later and open his own practice as a sole practitioner in 1991, where he serves people in Monroe and surrounding counties, focusing on the local population that needs his services or debt protection. "Serving a local community, you become rooted in that community. A lot of our business is through word-of-mouth and our clients become an extended family. It may be corny, but it's a source of pride."

George received his law degree from Syracuse University College of Law in 1986 and was admitted to the bar the following year. He also holds a tax law degree, which allows him to serve clients with tax issues.

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PRASHANTHI RAO RAMAN

As an established attorney and public policy executive, Prashanthi Raman has nearly 15 years of experience navigating challenging, highly charged, and complex political environments. Honing her skills in both the public and private sector, Prashanthi has earned the reputation of building trust quickly and utilizing her political astuteness to shape the compliance, policies, and legislative affairs for multiple organizations, particularly in industries that are traditionally broken for the average person.

Prashanthi currently serves as the head of global government affairs for Cruise, an all-electric autonomous vehicle company, where she oversees global public policies and regulatory issues. Prior to her role at Cruise, Prashanthi was the head of state and local government relations at Lyft, a transportation network company. For over five years, she was a critical voice in negotiation and in creating and expanding and removing operational barriers to the ridesharing industry across North America.

Healthcare has and remains a passion of Prashanthi's. She started her career as a healthcare attorney, which ultimately led to her appointment as associate chief of staff for healthcare and human services by then governor of Illinois, Pat Quinn. Throughout that time, Prashanthi worked with a diverse set of decision-makers to advance the governor's agenda, negotiate multiple legislative bills and led major policy initiatives, which included medical marijuana, Medicaid expansion, and ridesharing.

As reflected by industries like healthcare and transportation, giving back has always been a guiding force in Prashanthi's life. Post Katrina, she spent two years providing legal aid and revitalization efforts in New Orleans. She currently serves on the boards of both PowHerful, a foundation dedicated to sending young women to and through college with wraparound services, and the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, a foundation focused on community, health, housing, and transportation public policies.

Prashanthi earned her undergraduate degree from Northwestern University and is still an active alumna. She holds a joint Juris Doctorate and Master of Public Health degree from the Chicago-Kent College of Law and the University of Illinois at Chicago. She currently lives in the Bay Area with her husband and two daughters.

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ANTHONY P. RAIMONDO

Throughout his two-decade career in the legal industry, Anthony Raimondo has remained a passionate advocate for his clients. In addition to graduating *cum laude* from Vermont Law School, he holds an *AV Preeminent* rating by Martindale Hubble and serves as California's leading expert on dairy labor issues. In fact, he is the primary labor and employment resource for California's Western United Dairymen. In addition, he is California's leading attorney for farm labor contractors. As owner and president of Raimondo & Associates, Anthony leads his team in defending employers against class action lawsuits, sexual harassment charges, discrimination claims, and other complex cases in both state and federal courts.

Although Anthony got his start in court appointed criminal defense, he quickly discovered it was not for him. As a result, he went to work for a small firm practicing agricultural labor, an unusual specialty that got him involved in labor law and agriculture. Then, after leaving and working at a large firm in Fresno for a few years, Anthony knew for certain that he wanted to serve his own demographic as an ally committed to the success of his clients.

Today, Raimondo & Associates consists of a diverse group of attorneys who specialize in labor relations and employment law. Their services include management representation in counter-organizing campaigns, unfair labor practice defense, grievance and arbitration defense, and collective bargaining negotiations. Anthony and his team are deeply involved with the community and represent mostly family-owned businesses. Since many of their clients speak only Spanish, bilingual employees are always available as the goal of Raimondo & Associates is to provide the highest quality service at the best value.

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JOHN N. WOOD

John Wood holds a life-long passion for seeking entrepreneurial opportunities and for wealth management and preservation. Today, as a managing attorney for Grant Park Legal Advisors, LLC, a Chicago based multidisciplinary law firm, he is able to combine both his passions by providing high quality legal representation as well as cost-effective solutions to his clients. The firm's primary areas of practice focus upon general business law, business litigation, and estate planning.

After graduating from DePaul University College of Law, John began his career in wealth management as a portfolio manager with a prominent Chicago firm. He remained with the company for 20 years and left as vice president, bringing with him a client base large enough to successfully establish his own firm, Grant Park Advisors, LLC. After successfully establishing Grant Park Advisors LLC, John moved forward to form Grant Park Legal Advisors LLC, to be able to provide his clients a more complete and potentially integrated service.

According to John, his firm's consultative, collaborative approach with clients sets them apart from the competition. His team creates plans based around each individual client. They know estate planning as well as how it will affect people's lives and investment services. In fact, this knowledge base was the motivator for opening the law firm.

The team at Grant Park Legal Advisors pride themselves in continuing to serve individuals, protect families, and build businesses. With offices in Chicago and Mokena, the firm is available to communities in Tinley Park, Orland Park, Frankfort, New Lenox, and other areas throughout Northern Illinois.

GRANT PARK LEGAL ADVISORS LLC

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ZACHARY D. HELPRIN, ESQ.

Zachary Helprin is the founder and managing attorney of the Law Offices of Zachary D. Helprin. The firm has offices in Manhattan and Long Island, four attorneys on staff, and focuses on real estate, trusts and estates, and general counsel for businesses. Zachary is frequently published, most recently in *Kiplinger's*. Zachary spent time at other firms (including an AmLaw100 firm working on an infamous, international fraud litigation case), before ultimately starting his own practice. "I wanted a more meaningful and direct relationship with clients, and more importantly, the autonomy to focus on each of them in my own way," he explains.

Zachary has earned a reputation for going above and beyond for his clients. The personal connections he makes with people has led to an expansive practice of happy repeat clients and referrals. "Going the extra mile for your clients is imperative when trying to establish and build a successful practice as a smaller firm," he says. Zachary aims to ensure a stress-free and seamless experience, whether it's the exciting parts of life (a first home purchase, a new business, drafting a will after having children) or the more daunting (probating a will after the death of a loved one, negotiating a severance package after being terminated, or keeping your business afloat during a pandemic).

Zachary has been particularly busy guiding his clients during COVID-19, including running a promotion offering free wills to healthcare workers in New York. The feedback has been remarkable; Zachary adds, "Getting handwritten thank you cards from clients expressing sincere gratitude for my help is meaningful and affirms I made the right choice doing what I'm doing." Zachary graduated with honors from Yeshiva University, and from New York Law School as a Vann Memorial Scholar. He owns a tea company (Anxietea LLC), as well as racehorses in Kentucky, and is involved with legal start-up FreeWill, where he serves as a trust and estates fellow and advisor. Zachary also started his own charity with the Testicular Cancer Foundation, and volunteers with Be My Eyes, FeedNYC, and Teenok Heart Foundation.

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JENNA BAILEY

A highly motivated attorney and businesswoman, Jenna Bailey views herself as much an entrepreneur and CEO as she does an attorney. She has a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Arizona and a Juris Doctorate from the California Western School of Law. Her professional background includes extensive trial and litigation experience, as both a prosecuting attorney and civil litigator. After spending a few years as a gang prosecutor, Jenna transitioned into civil litigation, representing large companies and hospitals. She quickly discovered that her business acumen and litigation experience provided the perfect strategy and marketing approach for opening her own practice. Today, as the founder and chief executive officer of Bailey Law Firm, PLLC, Jenna's mission is to promote innovation to provide best-in-class legal services to clients and a destination workplace for her team.

Founded on June 11, 2019, Bailey Law Firm is a full-service establishment headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona. Jenna's areas of specialty are medical malpractice and business litigation. However, her diverse and talented group of attorneys also offer services in personal injury, employment law, real estate law, and estate planning. Jenna prioritized growth and Bailey Law Firm quickly became one of the largest women-owned law firms in Arizona.

In addition to providing superior client representation, bettering their community is a core value at Bailey Law Firm. Consequently, all team members are dedicated to actively engaging in the community. The firm routinely sponsors and participates in charitable events, provides legal services to non-profits and even gives employees quarterly paid volunteer days. Jenna's goal is to not only improve Arizona but to help her team feel excited about going to work and to give them the flexibility they need to do their jobs well.

BL Bailey Law Firm

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GARY J. GALLEN

As founder and CEO of rradar, Gary Gallen is the legal pioneer behind a novel law firm committed to empowering and educating businesses through smarter legal services. They are a business with a purpose—to make a social impact and to create a better future by helping people. Based in the U.K., and serving clients globally, they are an outlier among legal firms, operating at an intersection between the legal world, technology world, and risk management world, and using technology and education as a way of bringing these things together to work with clients in a completely new way. "The way things are done has to change, and that is what rradar is all about. Lawyers are still practicing old doctrine that doesn't match with the way things are done today. It took me 30 years in this profession to go back and fix things the old way—faster, efficiently, and more affordably," he explains.

Gary is a litigation specialist with over three decades of experience who has seen human nature at its worst, dealing with prosecutions, investigations, and defense work around the world. After nearly 20 years working as an attorney for international legal behemoths, he grew frustrated with the realization that firms were helping people *after* things had already gone wrong. In 2012, he took that insight and founded rradar as a proactive business to educate and to show people how to avoid troubles in the first place. He and his team of 130 solicitors, legal advisors, IT and in-house developers, design and media specialists serve as powerful advocates and champions for businesses, providing legal representation and advisory services, digital legal educational tools, and business solutions to help them to navigate and evolve in an ever-changing environment of regulation, compliance, and litigation risk. "If you can help people by educating, it is everything. You're better if you help other people, and if people know *how* to do things, they can tackle bigger issues and do more."

rradar

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JILL NISSEN

Jill Nissen, an accomplished legal and business executive with over 20 years of experience, is the president and founder of Nissen Consulting, P.C., a legal, policy, and business strategy consulting firm, located in San Francisco, California. While providing an alternative to rising legal rates and declining in-house budgets, Jill and her team offer advice to entrepreneurs, start-ups, and established companies. Their specialties include privacy, public policy and government relations, internet and digital media matters, and technology licensing. Working in both large law firms and in-house in Washington D.C. and in Silicon Valley, Jill has helped to shape key issues of importance to technology companies.

Because of her expertise, she has been tapped to participate in various policy and governmental forums, including, being appointed as one of 30 experts to the Online Safety and Technology Working Group established by Congress. Student data privacy is another area where Jill holds unique and unparalleled expertise. She was selected by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative to serve as a fellow, helping lead CZI's education privacy strategy and policy efforts. Jill advises several companies in the education technology space, including ClassDojo, Code.org and Khan Academy. Jill also serves on the advisory board of the Future of Privacy Forum and is a member of the International Association of Privacy Professionals.

Jill's niche of representing technology companies and the unique challenges they face was first discovered while working as an attorney at Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati upon graduating from Georgetown University Law Center. Jill worked at WSGR for 7 years before being recruited by her client, Ning, the world's largest online community building platform. Jill served on the management team at Ning, as V.P. and chief policy officer and established and led their global policy, government relations, privacy, and intellectual property functions. Additionally, she set company-wide privacy strategy and advised on all national and international privacy matters.

Jill lives by the motto "*you will face many defeats in life, but never let yourself be defeated" Maya Angelou*

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MEYSA MALEKI

As founder of the Toronto family law firm, Maleki Barristers, attorney and accredited mediator, Meysa Maleki holds extensive experience in trials and arbitrations as well as all aspects of separation and high conflict divorce, including complex financial matters and custody litigation. She has served as co-counsel in several notable decisions before the Ontario Court of Appeal and has also worked with two of the most distinguished family lawyers in Canada; Harold Niman and Alfred A. Mamo.

Meysa's diverse work experience, including serving as senior policy advisor to Ontario's former deputy premier, equipped her with a vast knowledge of both the mediation and dispute resolution processes and an in-depth understanding of human nature. Recently, Meysa integrated all the training she received throughout her career and authored, *The Conflict Resolution Grail: Awareness, Compassion, and a Negotiator's Toolbox*.

In her book, Meysa introduces the elements of conflict, the sub-conversations, and the skills that are required to resolve conflict effectively. However, her solution goes beyond the latest negotiation techniques, conflict resolution theory, and interpersonal skills of a mediator. Meysa draws upon the strengths of human beings as well as their capacity for compassion and their potential to change their subconscious programming through awareness.

The Conflict Resolution Grail weaves together research from human genetics, evolution, communications theory, neuroscience, world history, psychology, and sociology in order to reframe the reader's understanding of conflict. Drawing from both Eastern and Western ideologies, Meysa provides an integrated approach to conflict resolution for individuals and for professionals. The book is set to release on June 23, 2020 and is available to purchase through Amazon.

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ALICIA A. WEISSMEIER

With more than 27 years of experience in varied practice areas, Alicia A. Weissmeier brings to the profession, an impactful depth and breadth of knowledge.

Alicia began her career as an associate attorney with a general practice firm in Midtown, Manhattan, eventually assuming the position of managing partner. From there, Alicia joined the New York County Surrogate's Court as chief miscellaneous clerk, where she remained for 5 years.

In 2012, Alicia joined Miller & Milone, P.C. in Garden City, New York, as the firm's managing attorney. Today, she serves as chief operating officer as well as the managing attorney of its denial management department.

Alicia joined Miller & Milone, P.C. at a pivotal time in its history and in the healthcare industry. In addition to ensuring that all ethical considerations and *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act* (HIPAA) regulations were being followed, Alicia was instrumental in re-shaping various business lines and guiding the transition to more streamlined, technology-driven processes. While she is still a practicing attorney, Alicia's focus is on brand recognition, business development, and client servicing.

Miller & Milone, P.C. is a patient-centric, service-based law firm, focused in the fields of health care and elder law. As such, they represent hospitals and networks in the metropolitan New York area. Practice areas include denial management, Medicaid, financial recovery of accounts receivable, case management/discharge planning, and elder law and estates for major New York hospitals, nursing homes, and individual clients.

As chief operating officer, Alicia works closely with the CEO and CFO to implement the firm's strategic priorities and to ensure all departments have legal oversight in day-to-day business matters.

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GERARD P. FOX

Awarded *Super Lawyer in California* for the last 12 years, ranked among *Top Lawyers in Los Angeles*, and known for his winning litigation record, Gerard Fox is founder and owner of Gerard Fox Law, P.C., a Los Angeles-based law firm specializing in litigation law for a variety of industries, and largely known for media music cases. With offices in both Century City and New York, the firm has represented some of the most notable names in music and a variety of high-net-worth clients, including BMG Music, Dow Chemical, Madonna, James Gandolfini, Anita Baker, Rush Limbaugh, Martin Lawrence, and the Isley Brothers.

For an attorney with such a decorated career, Gerard comes from humble roots that gave no hint of the astounding success he would achieve. “None of my parents or family really went to college. I was just a kid from Queens who was happy to go to Yankee games and hang out, and things took their course and I ended up with an amazing career,” he shares. This young boy would grow up to try one of the biggest copyright infringement cases of our time: *Three Boys Music* vs. *Michael Bolton*.

Gerard began his career after graduating *magna cum laude* from Georgetown Law School in 1985. After a successful 24-year career as an attorney with Covington & Burling, Kaye Scholer, and his own litigation boutique, Fox & Spillane, he launched Gerard Fox Law in 2009. He built a legal team comprised of 15 of the top trial attorneys from other firms, most of whom are women and many of whom speak multiple languages, to serve clients across the globe. Determined to create “happy work environments,” Gerard built home offices for their employees so that people can be with their families, which, in turn, “creates happier employees who do better work.”

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ANGELA HART-EDWARDS

A veteran litigator and skilled employment attorney with more than 28 years of experience and tremendous success in the courtroom, Angela Hart-Edwards has not only brought more than 50 cases to verdict, she has been pivotal in helping organizations for which she’s worked achieve success. As a partner at Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough, LLP, she focuses on all aspects of employment law, with emphasis on representation of employers in individual, class, and collective litigation matters in both state and federal courts throughout the United States, and in noncompete litigation. She is a legal veteran whose litigation and investigative experience allows her to see issues play out from beginning to end—through trials, settlements, and appeals—and to give sound advice and counsel to avoid the pitfalls of litigation or to position the organization to defend the decisions they’re seeking. “I have developed a discernment from my vast experience around workplace issues which allows me to actively listen to our clients, not only to what they are saying, but also discerning what needs to be done to achieve their desired outcome,” she explains.

Angela joined the firm’s Washington, D.C., office in June of 2020, after a long career as both a government and private-practice attorney. Having handled some of the most complex legal and workplace issues, she is a problem-solving expert often called upon to help organizations facing challenges or struggling with persistent issues, wielding her skill with gathering all of the information necessary to identify and fix the problem. She is a former Equal Employment Opportunity Trial Attorney, a Department of Justice Civil Rights Attorney, and an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia. In these roles, she has defended the law and the public in complex cases before defending solely private-and public sector employers in lawsuits brought by individuals and various agencies nationwide.

Angela also conducts internal investigations, writes employment policies and handbooks, trains management on the myriad laws affecting the workplace, and defend employers served in with government issued subpoenas in criminal matters and audit letters in government contract compliance and wage and hour matters. In addition, she conducts labor and employment law due diligence for corporate and private equity-related mergers and acquisitions, and she defends companies in various types of commercial litigation and government inquiries. Angela received her LL.M in trial advocacy and her J.D. from Temple University James E. Beasley School of Law. She also holds a bachelor’s degree in labor studies and Africana studies from Rutgers University.

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WESLEY GLASS

Wesley Glass is a living example of author Malcom Gladwell's rule, "You have to have 10,000 hours in a subject to be an expert." With over 30 years of experience as a litigation attorney, Wesley has been in court almost every day since graduating from law school. He has selected thousands of jurors, tried countless cases, and has been on trial in every borough, across Long Island and in Westchester and upstate; with an astounding 90-percent win percentage. Today, as senior trial counsel at the law firm of Edelman, Krasin and Jaye PLLC, Wesley's extensive experience gives him the necessary edge to handle the most challenging and complex personal injury cases.

Upon graduating from New York Law School, Wesley began practicing as a member of the Legal Aid Society, where he focused on criminal law for the first seven years of his career. He then moved into civil practice, working for nearly 20 years as a senior litigator for insurance companies. Wesley's keen insight as to what defenses an insurance company may have in a case came about as a result of his experience within that role. In 2016, Wesley transferred his skills and insight to the plaintiff side and began representing injured accident victims. Last year, he joined EKJ Law, where he specializes in the practice areas of complex personal injury matters, construction accidents, and product liability cases.

Throughout his successful career, Wesley has been the go-to attorney for the most serious personal injury cases, from death cases to amputation cases and all things in between. On behalf of his clients, he has achieved numerous million-dollar verdicts and settlements. Wesley is admitted to the New York State Bar and to the United States Southern and Eastern Districts in New York.

EKJ Edelman, Krasin & Jaye PLLC

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GERARDO HERNANDEZ

Gerardo Hernandez is an attorney with Raimondo & Associates, a boutique employment law firm specializing in a variety of employment related issues. Based in Fresno, California, the growing practice focuses on small and mid-sized companies, represents family-owned businesses, has a large presence in the agricultural sector, and has recently branched out into corporate transactional and bankruptcy areas. They handle complex class-action wage and hour litigation, Title VII/FEHA related harassment and discrimination cases, labor law issues, and the defense of various state and federal administrative matters.

Gerardo specializes in representing businesses in a range of complicated legal matters, with particular focus on minority and immigrant-owned companies. As the son of immigrant parents who grew up in a small business, he genuinely cares about his clients. "I know the personal struggles they go through. My purpose as an attorney is to help them navigate complex legal matters and, on some occasions, save my clients' businesses," Gerardo shares.

Gerardo joined Raimondo & Associates six years ago, and his passion for, and personal relationships with, his clients has led to a tripling of his business in the last year alone. From defending against crippling class action ligation, to defending against overbearing litigation on the part of federal and state government agencies, Gerardo's mission is to save his clients' businesses and to generate trust through honest communication. "Many of these cases are bankruptcy-type scenarios, and my clients are in a 'make it or break it' situation, so I have to give them the honest truth and be creative in how I approach and resolve cases to get them out of a difficult situation to be able to continue to operate," he says.

Since its inception, Raimondo & Associates has seen tremendous growth, growing its practice from three attorneys to seven attorneys in order to serve a swelling client base. Gerardo attributes Raimondo & Associates' growth largely to their founding principle - provide an excellent service for a reasonable price.

Committed to furthering the development of small businesses, Gerardo serves as vice-chairman of the board of the Fresno Area Hispanic Foundation, a non-profit organization that provides technical, financial and educational assistance to small business throughout the California Central Valley.

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JEFFREY DAVIS

A successful business attorney boasting experience from a wide range of industries, Jeffrey Davis has devoted his practice to helping the construction and hospitality sectors. As the founder of Davis & Associates, P.C., he is passionate about educating small businesses and providing startups with the resources they need to thrive within a competitive market. Most importantly, Jeffrey genuinely cares about adding value and quality to the lives of his clients and strives to maintain trusting, long-term relationships with everyone he assists.

Located in Harrison, New York, Davis & Associates offers small businesses the attention, flexibility, and individualized support they deserve. Through the firm's Virtual Counsel Program, startups and other small companies receive outside general counsel services for the low cost of $75 per month. Jeffrey created the program to prioritize his goal of helping more businesses while creating meaningful connections with his clients.

While Jeffrey may offer some of the same practical legal solutions, he believes his personality and coaching style differ from most other attorneys. As the founder of Davis & Associates, Jeffrey gets personally involved in every case and treats his clients as part of his team.

Prior to practicing law, Jeffrey came from a strong construction background, which he began at the age of 15. He then went on to become a union iron worker, project manager, and estimator. Hospitality, acupuncture, and wellness were also among the industries Jeffrey loved before he graduated from law school and began consulting for Fortune 500 companies. Jeffrey credits his previous positions for teaching him the valuable skills he has since transferred to his current practice.

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KAROLINA DEHNHARD

Karolina Dehnhard is an international divorce attorney and a partner at Lindabury McCormick Estabrook & Cooper, P.C., where she is also the managing director of the international transaction group. Originally from Poland, she is a legal force with over a decade of experience, who, through perseverance and determination, overcame the challenges of a child immigrant and turned the crisis of her own divorce into a thriving career as a family law attorney and a fierce matrimonial litigator. A tireless advocate of women, just a few short years after signing her divorce papers, she went from law student to attorney to founder of Divorce Dynasty. "I was 30 when I found out that my happily-ever-after was indeed a fairy tale," she explains. "As a woman going through divorce, I was completely overwhelmed by the complexities and relied on my divorce attorney immensely, but quickly realized that I needed support and services far beyond legal advice." Seeing these character traits in her future clients, the Divorce Dynasty platform was born. "I saw myself in these women; it was déjà vu." She felt compelled to do more to help people, particularly women, navigate the complexities of the divorce process, and not have to endure the helpless feeling of being unprepared and lost while in the throes of personal emotional turmoil.

Divorce Dynasty is a concierge platform comprised of a group of attorneys, doctors, accountants, bankers, therapists, financial professionals, realtors, life coaches, wellness and beauty experts, insurance professionals, alternate investment specialists, private investigators, and even a matchmaker, who work collectively to address various needs during the divorce process. "Our ultimate goal is to provide education and empowerment that leads to outcomes in creating a new life. I do not want any person, whether because of a language barrier or because they are afraid, to feel lost, unprepared, or stifled," Karolina shares. Karolina represents clients in complex financial issues, international custody rights, and immigration status for divorcing parents and their children, addressing and enforcing foreign divorce decrees, alimony rights, and other matrimonial issues, as well as connecting businesses between the United States and Poland. When asked how her two roles at the firm intertwine, she said, "many of my clients are from Eastern Europe. They often have assets, including companies to value and potentially sell. Having to deal with lawyers and other professionals across the pond in the divorce process led to other business development for my practice."

Karolina graduated with honors in the top one percent of her class from New York Law. She subsequently clerked for the Honorable Rosemary Ramsay, her mentor, who now serves as the presiding judge in the Civil Division in Morris County.

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HERIBERTO HERNANDEZ, ESQ.

As managing partner with Hernandez Law Group, Heriberto Hernandez is an attorney who has dedicated his entire legal career to helping people navigate the complexities of immigration issues. An immigrant from Colombia, it was his own experience with the immigration system as a boy that drove him to a profession that allows him to protect and defend the rights of other immigrants in their pursuit of a better life. For Heriberto, the law is much more than a career—it's personal. "I really feel what my clients are going through because I was in their shoes, so I can relate and sympathize," he shares. Heriberto opened Florida-based Hernandez Law Group in 2017, after working for three years as an attorney focusing on criminal defense and immigration law in Florida. His practice specializes in immigration and federal defense, serving clients across the state in all types of immigration cases, from family to removal, defense, asylum, waivers, and some employment-based visas, with a great majority of cases involving representation in immigration court. Heriberto also handles many immigration detained cases for people being held in ICE detention centers in South Florida. "I wanted to get into this area because I grew up in Colombia. I came to Florida at age 11. In high school, my mom was struggling to obtain lawful status in the U.S., and she was a victim of an immigration scam through a church in Miami."

His mother had paid thousands of dollars to the church who applied for asylum on her behalf, and who had hired an unethical attorney who provided inadequate representation, which resulted in his mother, and other immigrants he had represented, ordered removed from the U.S. When he got older and learned that other families had been victims of the same scam, Heriberto hired an attorney who helped him get immigration status and re-open the case. "That process made it a goal of mine to go to law school and practice immigration law. The attorney I had was a great inspiration. This attorney encouraged me to go to law school to help the immigrant community," he shares. It is this experience that drives not only Heriberto's tireless work as an attorney on behalf of his clients, but also his work with legal organizations committed to protecting people from immigration fraud and prosecuting these offenders who prey on the immigrant community. He is part of the South Florida Chapter of the Association for Immigration Lawyers (AILA), and he is involved with the Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee, which serves as a liaison between the Department of Homeland Security and attorneys and immigrants reporting immigration fraud. "There are a lot of people in South Florida who scam immigrants. We have a massive case of a person extorting immigrants," he explains. "We help connects the dots between ICE and people so that they can collect evidence and go after scammers. We help push the government to go after these people." Heriberto holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and sociology from Florida Atlantic University and a law degree from Nova Southeastern University. Heriberto is also a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), where is the vice-chair of the Unauthorized Practice of Law committee.

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ERIC FARBER

As the founder and chief executive officer of Pacific Workers' Compensation Law Center, Eric Farber has been named a *Super Lawyer* multiple times and is an *AV* rated attorney with Martindale Hubbel. Eric is the author of the book, *The Case for Culture: How to Stop Being a Slave to Your Law Firm, Grow Your Practice, and Actually be Happy*, which quickly became a *#1 Bestseller* on Amazon upon its release.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in political science from Arizona State University and with a Juris Doctorate degree from California's Golden State Law School, Eric began his career in the sports and entertainment industry. As a litigator and crisis management expert for athletes, entertainers, and high-profile entrepreneurs, he represented Amaru Entertainment (the estate of Tupac Shakur) for over 18 years, as well as dozens of professional athletes and well-known entrepreneurs.

In 2014, Eric founded Pacific Workers', which represents first responders, healthcare professionals, teachers, retail employees, and construction workers in their fight for justice against insurance companies. Starting with only four people and a focus on company culture, Eric and Bilal Kassem have grown Pacific Workers' into one of the largest workers' compensation firms in California with almost 50 people in less than six years. Pacific Workers' has been recognized by *Inc. 5000* as one of the fastest growing companies in America; *Law Firm 500* as one of the fastest growing law firms in America, and *The Bay Area Fast 100*, a list of the fastest growing companies in America. They have also been nominated several times for *Inc. Magazine's* Best Workplaces in America.

PACIFIC WORKERS
THE LAWYERS FOR INJURED ~~WORKERS~~ HEROES

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STACEY C. KALAMARAS

Stacey C. Kalamaras is founding partner of Kalamaras Law Office, LLC, an intellectual property boutique that provides trademark, copyright, and advertising legal services to small and medium-sized businesses. She also founded Trademarkabilities™, an online trademark academy for lawyers. She is an intellectual property attorney and a recognized *Super Lawyer®* with a passion for teaching who has represented some of the most well-known brands in more than 150 countries. A unique breed in the legal field, she is not only a seasoned attorney with over 15 years of experience, but is also a marketing and advertising expert with an MBA in marketing who spent over a decade in the brand management arena. With her rare insight from dual careers, Stacey doesn't just appreciate the needs of her clients—she *is* her clients. "I've been in their shoes, on their side of the desk. I've walked the walk and talked the talk, and understand the pressures they face in their business," she explains.

Although she always wanted to be a lawyer, Stacey started her professional career as a marketing and advertising executive in multinational corporations. While employed in a large consumer packaged goods company alongside attorneys who worked for the corporation, she came to realize that her work was no longer fulfilling, and decided to pivot and attend law school full time in her mid-30s. Graduating *cum laude* from The John Marshall Law School in Chicago, she began her legal career in 2005. After spending the bulk of her career working in Big Law, assisting companies in the U.S. and abroad as a trademark and advertising attorney, Stacey founded Kalamaras Law Office in 2018 to serve her equal passions for law and teaching. Since its inception, she has educated over 1,800 lawyers on three continents on various trademark topics, including IP law for the corporate lawyer, anti-counterfeiting strategies, how to conduct a trademark search, and how to be an effective practitioner at the USPTO.

In February 2020, Stacey launched Trademarkabilities™, an online trademark academy for lawyers, with a single mission to prepare lawyers to become efficient and effective practitioners before the United States Patent and Trademark Office and to be practice ready to serve their clients. As Stacey explains, "I have a passion for teaching and giving back to the next generation of lawyers. I think it's very difficult, especially for solo and small firm lawyers, to get robust training programs. All clients deserve world-class representation, and I feel strongly that trademark lawyers (and those who want to practice in that field) are well-trained both practically and strategically. These skills are typically learned outside of law school."

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MILTON C. JOHNS

Milton C. Johns has spent over 22 years in private practice and almost 35 years in government and defense contracting. Although he has held a variety of roles, his primary practice areas are business litigation, corporate law and formation, and government contracts. He also serves as counsel for government contracting companies and serves as an adjunct professor of business law at Northern Virginia Community College. On April 1, 2020, Milt launched his own practice: Executive Law Partners, PLLC, located in Fairfax, Virginia.

Executive Law Partners (XLP) is a full-service business and corporate law firm offering advisory, transactional, and litigation services to both emerging and midmarket companies in the United States and overseas. The firm's practice areas focus on government contracts, corporate transactions and counsel, litigation, and international transactions.

Milt credits his team of attorneys with distinguishing XLP from other firms as they hold long-standing experience in each of their practice areas. The attorneys have also litigated in both state and federal courts, resulting in a national client base. "Our first-hand experience will help us to guide companies from formation and start up to success and growth," says Milt. In fact, Milt enjoyed a successful career working for defense contracting companies before he even enrolled in law school. Then, after graduating from George Mason University, he leveraged his prior experience in government contracting with his law degree to obtain a position with a small government contracting company as the director of operations and as general counsel. Due to years of personal experience, Milt genuinely understands the challenges facing business owners today.

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VERA FEDOROFF

Vera Fedoroff is not only a woman who has succeeded within a male-driven specialty, but she is a pioneer in the legal industry as the only female board-certified consumer bankruptcy lawyer in New Jersey. In fact, only 8 other certified consumer bankruptcy attorneys exist within the entire state. At the Fedoroff Firm in Monmouth County, Vera specializes not only in bankruptcy and real estate but in building personalized, trusting relationships with her clients.

As bankruptcy is typically a high volume, paralegal-driven business, Vera strives to make her client's experience different, by making herself personally accessible. By doing this, clients are always able to speak with her and she can give them one-on-one attention throughout their case. Although her certifications make her unique, it is her ability to comfort clients and to make bad situations better, that truly sets her apart.

Prior to establishing her own firm in 2016, Vera worked as a partner with a reputable New Jersey firm for over 18 years, where she gained a plethora of valuable experience in every aspect of bankruptcy and real estate law. Her previous employer was a bankruptcy trustee, so she learned to be meticulous in her field and gained a unique perspective that continues to benefit her clients.

Vera was admitted to practice in the State of New Jersey and in the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey in 1996 and in the State of New York in 1997. In 2018, she was listed as one of the *11 Top Bankruptcy Lawyers* in *Monmouth Health and Life Magazine*, once again, being the only female to be named.

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TYLER MAMONE

Tyler Mamone is a partner with Mamone Villalon, a full-service law firm specializing in litigation and corporate matters. Based in Miami, the firm represents clients across Florida and around the world in complex litigation, major transactions, financial fraud recovery actions, creditors' rights, corporate governance, and regulatory compliance.

With a large portion of its litigation practice comprised of collection concerns, the firm represents institutional lenders, private lenders, and banks in enforcing debt obligations, including representation of judgment creditors to locate and execute on assets.

"My responsibility is to solve problems. I facilitate this through my role as a litigator and business advisor. I serve my clients' interests through counseling on issues within their businesses, and I also represent their interests in court," he explains.

Tyler began his career in securities litigation, primarily in federal court, before founding his own practice in 2019 as a more "decentralized" law firm. He was joined by Ramsey Villalon in October of 2019 to form Mamone Villalon.

"We wanted to develop a full-scale litigation practice where each partner is autonomous in ways they couldn't be at larger firms," he shares. He has handled hundreds of collection cases for auto, mortgage, and other lenders, helping them to track down and enforce judgments, and the firms' unique tech-heavy, decentralized model has allowed them to continue to be successful. "We're a firm with traditional values delivered in modern fashion. We can do things more efficiently, faster and often from anywhere. This model has allowed us to outperform the marketplace."

MAMONE | VILLALON

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ASHLEY C. LHÉRISSON

Ashley C. Lhérisson is a litigation associate with experience in criminal defense, internal investigations, and regulatory enforcement. She has worked on criminal investigations involving insider trading, money laundering, and allegations of fraud. Ashley also has experience working in-house at a top investment bank, assisting with litigation, regulatory and law enforcement proceedings, and conducting internal investigations.

After graduating from Columbia Law School, Ashley completed a federal clerkship in New York City. During this time, she founded a graduate school admissions consulting company called Ivy Grad Services, LLC. Ivy Grad Services specializes in JD and MBA admissions consulting and provides prospective and current graduate students with guidance and advice throughout the entire grad school process. Ashley founded Ivy Grad Services to help increase the number of diverse students in top graduate programs. Through her team of JD and MBA consultants, Ivy Grad Services has helped dozens of students gain acceptance to top ranked schools and reach their professional goals.

Ashley frequently speaks at conferences, college campuses, and law schools across the country about her unique experiences as a woman of color in the legal profession. As a first-generation college graduate, and the first lawyer in her family, Ashley knows firsthand the importance of mentorship and networking, which is why she created Ivy Grad Services. Through her company, Ashley connects future lawyers and business leaders with well-trained and well-credentialed professionals that are willing to pay it forward using their knowledge and expertise of the admissions process and their respective industries.

Ashley's professional affiliations include the Ms. JD board of directors, the Pipeline to Practice Foundation board, and the Seizing Every Opportunity junior leadership board. She is also a member of the Women in the Legal Profession committee at the New York City Bar, the Metropolitan Black Bar Association, and the Association of Black Women Attorneys. Ashley is barred in New York and California and has been recognized for her legal and community work by The National Black Lawyers Association's, *40 Under 40 List*.

IVY GRAD SERVICES

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RONY KHALIFE

As a partner with Robinson Business Law, a boutique legal firm focusing solely on corporate and business law, Rony Khalife serves as more than an attorney for his corporate clients; he acts as internal general counsel for all their corporate commercial transactions. With specialization in securities law and mergers and acquisitions, he handles all matters related to corporate finance and securities law for corporations at all stages.

Based in the Canadian capital region, he helped clients in a wide variety of industries, including real estate development, cannabis, and technology, to structure numerous venture capital financing. "My main focus is my clients, who are all treated as my biggest client. For many, I become part of their business not only as a lawyer, but also as a partner, supporting their day to day operations. I always go the extra mile to make sure the business is run as if it were my own," he shares.

Rony started with the firm while still pursuing his law degree at the University of Ottawa. After graduating with honors and passing the bar, he joined the practice as an attorney. His passion for the law and natural business acumen drove him to become partner just a year later. Representing clients in the U.S. and all across Canada, in just four short years, Rony has built an impressive—and growing—client base, who rely on his business knowledge, and legal expertise for effective solutions for the unique challenges facing their businesses.

Rony also represents a wide range of health professionals, helping them understand the legal and tax implications of their practice and investments.

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AARON SHECHET

Known as an attorney with a sense of humor, Aaron Shechet has always taken a nontraditional approach to law. In fact, he considers his down to earth personality one of his greatest advantages within an industry filled with big egos. As partners at Chandler & Shechet, LLP, Aaron and his wife, Leigh Chandler, take pride in their straightforward attitudes and in advocating for their clients.

Aaron and Leigh began dating after they met in law school. Neither wanted to be a traditional lawyer, so they decided to start their own nontraditional practice. Founded in 2008, their firm offered business consulting services in addition to traditional work such as transactional and complex business litigation. With a master's degree in Dispute Resolution, Leigh also mediates disputes that need to avoid the courthouse: partnership disputes or family-owned businesses.

Continuing his nontraditional streak, Aaron has carved out a niche in the areas of legal ethics and professional liability. He is the presiding arbitrator of the Mandatory Fee Arbitration program for the Santa Monica Bar Association and has been retained as an expert witness on the topic of legal fees.

Aaron has a YouTube channel providing practical advice to lawyers and endeavoring to cover all of California's Rules of Professional Conduct.

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ALEXANDER TUTTLE

Alexander Tuttle is the owner and founder of Tuttle Legal, a boutique law firm that specializes in both financial law as well as real estate law. Upon opening the doors to Tuttle Legal in 2007, Alex wanted to use his background expertise of representing lenders to now helping his clients battle against those same creditors.

"When someone comes to our office, they are already going through a difficult and scary time. An integral part of our services is working closely with our clients so they can make the right decisions with respect to their legal needs," he explains.

"We sit down with every person that comes to us and listen to everything that is going on in their financial lives so that we can try to find a whole solution for their situation. We are a law firm that puts our clients and their needs first. We work closely with them throughout the entire process to help them obtain the best results possible," he concludes.

Mr. Tuttle is a unique attorney in that he strives to think outside the box to strategize with all his clients so the outcome of their situation goes from bleak to hopeful. He enjoys the process of educating his clients about all their financial options and will never force anyone into a quick legal fix. This is why thousands of people in the Bucks, Montgomery, Lehigh and Northampton areas have already trusted Alex's legal expertise to help them get relief from their financial burdens.

These same clients also had such positive experiences that they have helped award him both the *AVVO Client Choice Award* and the *Martindale Hubble Award for Client Satisfaction*. He has also received a *Featured Attorney Award* from the Lawyers of Distinction as well as the 2020 *Top 100 Attorney Award*.

If you or someone you know needs a financial life line, please reach out and give Alex a call at Tuttle Legal. He is there to offer free, no obligation financial guidance in those stressful, overwhelming and uncertain times.

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