



BLANKROME

JULY 2018

PERSPECTIVES

Celebrating Diversity and Inclusion in Practice



Contents

Perspectives will keep you informed on Blank Rome’s latest diversity news and events as well as provide you with insight on current diversity and inclusion issues in the legal industry and beyond.

A Note from Blank Rome’s Chairman and Managing Partner	1
Blank Rome Pilots Diversity Lab’s Mansfield Rule 2.0	2
Advancing Women in the Legal Profession	3
Promoting LGBTQ+ Equality	8
Michelle Gitlitz Leads Initiatives for Diversity in Blockchain	10
Leadership Council on Legal Diversity Fellows Alumni Leadership Symposium	12
A Conversation with Judge James T. Giles	13
Houston Strong: Championing Diversity to Overcome Adversity	16
Celebrating Heritage History Months	19
Blank Rome Welcomes the 2018 Summer Associate Class	22
More Blank Rome in the News	25
Diversity and Inclusion Mission Statement and Committee	29



ALAN J. HOFFMAN

A Note from Blank Rome's Chairman and Managing Partner

I am pleased to present the July 2018 edition of *Perspectives*, Blank Rome's diversity and inclusion newsletter brought to you by [Christopher A. Lewis](#), Chief Officer of Diversity and Inclusion, and our Firm's dedicated [Diversity & Inclusion Committee](#).

This January, I was presented with the American Jewish Committee ("AJC") Judge Learned Hand Award, established in honor of one of the most influential judges in American history who relentlessly defended the rights and freedom of all people. In 1944, Judge Hand addressed almost one and a half million people at the annual "I Am an American Day" event where newly naturalized citizens swore the Pledge of Allegiance. He stated that all Americans were immigrants who had come to America in search of liberty, and liberty was not located in America's constitutions, laws, and courts, but in the hearts of the people.

When accepting the Judge Learned Hand Award, I spoke about that spirit of liberty and some of the core values of Blank Rome—diversity, inclusion, and tolerance. These core values have been the backbone of Blank Rome's culture since 1946, when the Firm was established by a group of attorneys who were barred from joining many established law firms because of their religion. The founders' vision for the Firm was of a work environment where people of diverse backgrounds could gather to practice law and bring their "whole selves" to work.

At Blank Rome we follow the five words, "distinguish ourselves from the masses," with our clients and adversaries every day. As a result, Blank Rome and its attorneys have received national recognition for our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Notably, in the last year, the Firm was recognized in Yale Law Women's 2018 [Top Ten Female Friendly Firms Report](#) and also received the [Advancing Women Company Award](#) by the *Philadelphia Business Journal*.

Our attorneys have also been recognized as [Most Influential Minority Attorneys](#) by the *Los Angeles Business Journal*, [Women of Influence](#) by the *Pittsburgh Business Times*, and [Outstanding Diversity Role Model](#) by the *Houston Business Journal*, among other accolades. They have been regarded as thought leaders in the areas of diversity and women leadership, leading the way for [diversity in blockchain](#) and other industries. They have also done an outstanding job providing unique, thought-provoking programming, including celebrations for various heritage history months, conversations about [race in America](#), and numerous [civil rights walking tours](#).

These are just a handful of accolades and commitments that demonstrate Blank Rome's dedication to advancing diversity and inclusion. We look forward to continuing our diversity initiatives as well as honoring both our founders' vision for the Firm and the spirit of liberty by distinguishing ourselves through diversity, inclusion, and tolerance.

I hope you enjoy our newsletter and welcome your feedback. [□](#)

To watch Alan's acceptance speech, please click [here](#).



Alan Hoffman accepts the American Jewish Committee's Judge Learned Hand Award.

Blank Rome Pilots Diversity Lab's Mansfield Rule 2.0



Blank Rome is pleased to announce that it has signed on to pilot Diversity Lab's Mansfield Rule 2.0, which launched this July. Blank Rome and other leading law firms began **piloting** the inaugural Mansfield Rule 1.0 last summer, which measured whether law firms have affirmatively considered women and minority lawyers—at least 30 percent of the candidate pool—for promotions, senior-level hiring, and significant leadership roles within their respective firms. The Mansfield Rule was one of the winning ideas from the 2016 Women in Law Hackathon hosted by Diversity Lab in collaboration with Bloomberg Law and Stanford Law School.

Mansfield Rule 2.0 extends the initiative to include LGBTQ+ attorneys and broadens the definition of minority lawyers. In order to granularly define racial and ethnic diversity, participating firms can now use a list developed by Project Include, a more inclusive alternative to the categories used by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. This list includes Middle Eastern as an ethnicity and breaks down broader categories, such as Asian American, into sub-groups, such as East Asian, South Asian, and others. The updated Mansfield Rule also measures consideration for participation in client pitch meetings and requests that participating law firms make appointment and election processes transparent to all lawyers in their firms.

"We have been grateful to work closely with **Caren Ulrich Stacy** and the Diversity Lab team to put their innovative programs into practice over the past several years, and are proud to continue to pilot the latest version of the Mansfield Rule," said **Alan J. Hoffman**, Blank Rome's Chairman and Managing Partner. "The Mansfield Rule directly aligns with our diversity and inclusion efforts and leadership development initiatives, and having the opportunity to join with peer law firms and legal departments to make a real impact in the industry is very exciting."

In addition to the Mansfield Rule, Blank Rome is a member of Diversity Lab's **Women in Law Hackathon Alliance** and participated in the inaugural 2016 **Women in Law Hackathon** as well as the recent 2018 **Diversity in Law Hackathon**. The Hackathons are *Shark Tank*-style competitions that bring together law firms and legal departments from top companies across the country to hack the legal industry's toughest diversity and inclusion challenges. In 2014, the Firm also joined Diversity Lab's **OnRamp Fellowship**, a re-entry platform that matches experienced lawyers returning to the workforce after a career hiatus with law firms and legal departments in the United States, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom for year-long paid positions. As a result, the Firm welcomed **Kathy E. Herman** through the program in 2015.

The Mansfield Rule was inspired by the NFL's Rooney Rule, which was created by the late Dan Rooney in 2003 and is now supported by his son, Art Rooney II, President of the Pittsburgh Steelers. The Rooney Rule requires every NFL team to interview at least one minority candidate for head coach vacancies. In the years following its implementation, the number of minorities hired to fill head-coach roles doubled. □

Advancing Women in the Legal Profession

Blank Rome Announces Women’s Forum Leadership Changes

Blank Rome is pleased to announce the following leadership changes to our Firm’s [Women’s Forum](#).

DEBORAH SKAKEL

Partner, Vice Chair,
Corporate Litigation
practice group



NEW CHAIR

LINSEY B. BOZZELLI

Partner, Vice Chair,
Corporate, M&A, and
Securities practice group



NEW VICE CHAIR

MICHELLE ANN GITLITZ

Partner, Vice Chair,
General Litigation
practice group



NEW VICE CHAIR

“ I am honored and humbled to be chosen to lead the Women’s Forum with Michelle Gitlitz and Linsey Bozzelli—two incredibly talented women who complete our triumvirate! I have some very big shoes (or, rather, very high heels) to fill of my predecessors, Lisa Casey Spaniel and Susan Bickley, and am grateful for the opportunity to build on their successes and achievements, such as the Women’s Leadership Summit and the Women’s Business Development Academy. Linsey, Michelle, and I look forward to working with the [Diversity & Inclusion Committee](#) and the Firm’s leadership to implement Mansfield 2.0 and to develop more effective strategies to address the issues of retention and promotion of women attorneys in the Firm, an area in which we have made progress, but can do more.”

– DEBORAH SKAKEL

Blank Rome thanks [Lisa Casey Spaniel](#) for her role as chair (2016–2018) and vice chair (2014–2016), and [Samantha Wallack](#) for her role as vice chair since 2014. Under their direction and leadership, our Women’s Forum has achieved significant industry milestones and recognition, and the Firm looks forward to celebrating the ongoing success of our Women’s Forum under its new leadership.

Blank Rome Recognized in Yale Law Women's Annual Report Honoring Female Friendly Firms

Blank Rome was honored in Yale Law Women's 2018 [Top Ten Female Friendly Firms Report](#) in the category of "Leadership & Promotions: At Least 50% of Attorneys Promoted to Equity Partner in 2017 Were Women." Yale Law Women's Top Ten is annually produced to "monitor trends in family friendliness among law firms ranked in the Vault 100, raise awareness of gender disparities within the legal profession, highlight progress being made in the industry, and identify areas for improvement." To create this year's report, Yale Law Women invited all firms listed in the [2017 Vault Law 100](#) to participate in their survey of family friendly policies.



Lisa Casey Spaniel (middle) and **Sophia Lee** (right) accept the 2017 Advancing Women Company Award.

Blank Rome Receives 2017 Advancing Women Company Award by Philadelphia Business Journal

Blank Rome received the 2017 Advancing Women Company Award by the *Philadelphia Business Journal*, and was honored at a reception along with 30 female honorees who received the "Women of Distinction" award based on their career accomplishments and community service.

Blank Rome Attorneys Recognized as Top Women in Law and the Community

- Partners [Linda Kornfeld](#), [Laura Reathaford](#), and [Stacy D. Phillips](#) Named 2018 [Top Women Lawyers](#) by *Daily Journal* (May 2018)
- Partners Linda Kornfeld and Stacy D. Phillips Named [Most Influential Women Attorneys](#) by *Los Angeles Business Journal* (April 2018)
- Partner [Jayme L. Butcher](#) Named [Woman of Influence](#) by *Pittsburgh Business Times* (March 2018)
- Partner [Laura Reathaford](#) Named [Woman of Promise](#) by Comerica Bank Women's Business Awards Program (March 2018)
- Partner [Stacy D. Phillips](#) Named [Woman of the Year](#) by the Los Angeles County Commission for Women (March 2018)



Stacy D. Phillips (center) accepts the Los Angeles Commission for "Women of the Year" award.



Laura Reathaford accepts Comerica Bank's "Woman of Promise" award at the March 28 Lakers game.



Grant Palmer (center) and fellow panelists at The Forum of Executive Women’s 2018 Leadership Symposium.

The Forum of Executive Women’s 2018 Leadership Symposium

Blank Rome Partner Grant S. Palmer presented at The Forum of Executive Women’s 2018 Leadership Symposium, held on April 13, 2018. His panel, “Step Right Up: You’ve Got What It Takes...To Succeed,” discussed how women, from CEOs thinking about a corporate board position and C-suite executives eyeing the top job to professionals moving up the ladder, can “step up” and utilize coaching to “go for it” successfully.

Women Leadership in Law Conference

Blank Rome Partners Linda Kornfeld and Stacy D. Phillips each moderated a panel at California Lawyer’s Women Leadership in Law Conference on May 2, 2018, which brought together law firm and in-house practitioners to participate in insightful discussions on recent topics important to the legal profession and of interest to women leaders. Linda, who co-chaired the event, moderated the “#MeToo in the Legal Profession” panel and Stacy spoke on the “Changes, Challenges, and Chances: Different Paths Taken by Different Women at the Top of Their Game” panel.

Women in Law: On the Front Lines of Change

Blank Rome Chairman and Managing Partner Alan J. Hoffman spoke on the “Cracks in the Ceiling: Women Navigating Large Firm Life” panel at the *Philadelphia Business Journal’s* special event on “Women in Law: On the Front Lines of Change,” held June 14, 2018. Throughout the event, prominent attorneys and legal leaders provided insight on why, for more than two decades, women have constituted 50 percent of all law school graduates, yet continue to make up less than 20 percent of equity partners at big firms.



Alan Hoffman (second to left) and fellow panelists speak at the *Philadelphia Business Journal’s* “Women in Law” event.



ELIZABETH E. KLINGENSMITH

Best Law Firms for Women: Interview with Liz Klingensmith

Blank Rome was named one of the **2017 Best Law Firms for Women** by *Working Mother* magazine, marking the **second year** that the Firm has been recognized for its commitment to creating one of the best women-friendly workplaces in the United States. Parker + Lynch Legal (a sponsor of the Best Law Firms for Women event) interviewed Partner **Liz Klingensmith** as part of a series featuring women attorneys with some of the winning firms to get their perspective on being a working mother.

FULL INTERVIEW

Why did you decide to become an attorney?

Growing up, I never dreamed of being a lawyer. Music was my thing. I studied music and English at Rice. After I graduated, I wanted to pursue a career in the nonprofit world and joined Houston Ballet to help with fundraising events and programs. Although rewarding and fun, I knew I needed to consider other career paths. I knew very little about the business world and thought I would be able to learn about more opportunities by taking a job with an executive search firm. We recruited a lot of attorneys, and I began thinking that maybe I could do law school. So, I took the LSAT, and was accepted into the University of Houston Law Center.

I loved law school—the reading, writing, critical thinking, and analysis. I knew I wanted to be a litigator the moment I stepped out of my first moot court round. Litigating is all about working with witnesses and evidence to put together a creative and persuasive story. I enjoy being able to influence and persuade other people to see my client’s point of view.

What challenges have you faced as a woman in the legal field?

As a woman, gaining credibility through effective communication and navigating a way into the “club” can be very challenging. How do you persuade people when you’re the only woman at the table? How do you create opportunity for yourself in an industry dominated by men? Communicate effectively, step out of your comfort zone, and meet people where they are.

Men and women communicate differently. I always watch, listen, and pay close attention to how effective leaders, business generators, and practitioners, both men and women, communicate. Three communication tools that I use all the time are: Listen more, talk less. Validate and empathize. Be clear and direct. Let me give you an example:

Earlier in my career, a partner at my firm asked me to call a client and work through discovery requests. I was busy, and knew that I had to be efficient to get everything accomplished. I hadn’t worked with this client before and didn’t know what to expect. I made the call. For the next ten minutes, I listened to the client rant about how he didn’t want to respond to this or that, how he wouldn’t respond at all, how unfair everything was, how much he disliked so and so. I didn’t say a word. I just listened until the line went silent. Then I asked him, “do you feel better?” After a surprised pause he said, “why yes, yes, I do.” And I said very directly, “good, here’s what we’re going to do.” And we got it done. He still tells that story to this day.

There's still the challenge of breaking into the "club." I don't expect to be invited on hunting trips, and frankly, I wouldn't want to go, but every once in a while there is an opportunity to meet the guys on their turf. And it usually requires stepping out of my comfort zone.

Recently, a client invited me to a sporting clay shoot for charity. I'd never shot a gun, and felt pretty sure that I'd embarrass myself. But I accepted anyway. When I arrived the next morning, I found myself in a sea of men with shotguns, souped up golf carts, and tons of "gear." I immediately knew ballet flats were a bad choice. But I really listened, learned, and managed to shoot a clay at every stop! Not bad. I actually enjoyed myself and made meaningful professional connections. I stepped way outside of my comfort zone and it paid off!

What has been your greatest success, or what accomplishment are you most proud of, and why?

Oil and gas still falls short in the diversity category. Most of the time I'm the only woman in the room. Over time, I have become a trusted and strategic advisor to my clients in the oil and gas industry. Building those relationships by establishing trust and credibility with my clients is by far and away the accomplishment that I am most proud of.

Why do you love working for Blank Rome? How do they support women and their goals?

I cannot say enough good things about the opportunities and support Blank Rome provides women. Blank Rome participated in a hackathon hosted by Diversity Lab and implemented one of its pilot programs called the "Mansfield Rule." Arabella Mansfield was the first woman admitted to the practice of law in the United States. As a result of the program, women and diverse attorneys must make-up at least 30 percent of the candidate pool for firm leadership and governance roles, equity partner promotions, and lateral positions.

The firm also piloted a Women's Business Development Academy for a group of women partners. Through the program, women partners work with an outside business development coach and collaborate together on business development. In September, Blank Rome hosted its inaugural Women's Leadership Summit where women clients and women partners "hacked" through issues related to collaboration between outside and in-house counsel, contributing to our communities, and diversity and inclusion. Together we developed solutions to those issues. The firm plans to launch the winning hackathon ideas as pilot programs this year. Women are natural collaborators. Blank Rome creates opportunities for us to harness that strength and create pathways for our collective success.

What's one piece of advice you would give to women struggling to balance their home life and their careers?

Mindfulness is essential to success. Be fully present in the moment whether at work or at home, and let go of the guilt. I used to feel guilty at the office because I wasn't home with my family, and guilty at home because I wasn't at the office. Eventually, I started letting go of the guilt, and worked on staying engaged and focused whether at home or at work.

There will be times when work requires you to spend extra hours at the office and less time with your family; that just happens. But there's room to make choices based on what you value. I'll give you an example. With trial less than a week away, I was spending a lot of time at the office and away from home. A couple of nights before jury selection, my son had his very first cello concert. I simply had to be there. I brought up the conflict with my trial team. The work got covered and I didn't miss that first concert. I sent a picture along with a big thank you to my team. We didn't miss a beat and I didn't miss that concert. Practicing mindfulness and making value-based decisions means I can be my best self at work and at home. □

"Best Law Firms for Women: Interview with Liz Klingensmith," by Sharon McLaughlin was published in [Parker + Lynch Legal](#) on November 28, 2017. Click [here](#) to read the article online. Reprinted with permission.

Promoting LGBTQ+ Equality

Blank Rome is proud to have participated in multiple name and gender marker change projects this year. For many in the transgender community, securing a legal name change is an important step toward making their legal identities match their lived experience. A lack of appropriate identity documents can deter people from applying for jobs, school, and public benefits, and can lead to discrimination. The work involved in securing a legal name change is fairly straightforward for the attorney, but has a truly life-changing impact on the client.

Los Angeles Attorneys Attend Bet Tzedek's Name and Gender Marker Change Clinic

On Monday, May 14, 2018, attorneys from Blank Rome's Los Angeles office volunteered at a Name and Gender Marker Change Clinic, working with 14 transgender and gender-variant individuals to update their identification documents to reflect their correct name and gender identity.

This clinic was hosted by [Bet Tzedek](#), a nonprofit law firm that provides free, comprehensive legal services to low-income Los Angeles residents. Bet Tzedek was founded over 40 years ago by a lawyer and rabbi who saw the compelling unmet legal needs of elderly Holocaust survivors, and who, along with 19 friends, decided to donate five dollars each month for office space to serve those in need. Bet Tzedek has grown immensely since then, and served over 40,000 clients in 2017.



Attorneys from Blank Rome's Los Angeles office attend Bet Tzedek's Name and Gender Marker Change Clinic.

Philadelphia and New York Attorneys Participate in Transgender Name Change Project

More than 20 attorneys from Blank Rome's Philadelphia and New York offices have participated in the Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund, Inc. ("TLDEF") Name Change Project, which provides free legal name change services to low-income transgender and non-binary people through partnerships with some of the nation's most prestigious law firms and corporate law departments. Founded in 2003, TLDEF is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to end discrimination and achieve equality for transgender people, particularly those in our most vulnerable communities.

To honor their tireless efforts with this project, Blank Rome presented our participating attorneys with "Pro Bono Hero Awards" at the Firm's annual Pro Bono Recognition events held in June.



Attorneys from Blank Rome's Philadelphia office accept the Firm's "Pro Bono Hero Awards." Pictured from left are **Samar Aryani-Sabet**, **Bradford Craig**, **Dalila Berry**, **Sophia Lee**, and **Kathy Ochroch**



Deborah Franzblau accepts the HRC's 100% CEI Award. Pictured with **Chad Griffin**, president of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation.
Photo credit: B. Proud Photography

Blank Rome Named "Best Place to Work for LGBTQ Equality" by Human Rights Campaign Foundation

The Human Rights Campaign ("HRC") Foundation announced in November that Blank Rome received a perfect score of 100 percent on the 2018 Corporate Equality Index ("CEI"), a national benchmarking survey and report on corporate policies and practices related to LGBTQ workplace equality. With this score, Blank Rome has been designated for the third year in a row as a "Best Place to Work for LGBTQ Equality" by the HRC. On April 9, 2018, Blank Rome Partner [Deborah A. Franzblau](#), who serves as co-chair of the Firm's [Diversity & Inclusion Committee](#) and LGBT Affinity Group, attended the HRC's 100% CEI Awards in New York City, which honored the companies that received a perfect CEI score this year. □

Michelle Gitlitz Leads Initiatives for Diversity in Blockchain

Blank Rome Partner Michelle Ann Gitlitz, who serves as co-chair of the Firm's **Blockchain Technology & Digital Currencies** group and vice chair of the **Women's Forum**, is leading initiatives aimed at increasing diversity in the blockchain industry. She recently assisted the subcommittees at the United Nations in incorporating diversity best practices into their missions during the Blockchain for Impact Global Summit on June 4, 2018, through a nonprofit that she co-founded, **Diversity in Blockchain, Inc.** She also presented on diversity and inclusion at the Women on the Block Conference during Blockchain Week in New York City in May, and led a panel on women leaders in blockchain at MIT's Legal Forum for Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain last October.

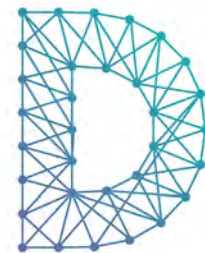
Diversity in Blockchain, Inc. is a nonprofit organization committed to creating equal, open, and inclusive opportunities in the blockchain industry. This year, it will participate in partnerships to provide forums for education, discussion, and engagement, including through the *Annual Report on the State of Diversity in Blockchain* (to be released in Q4 of 2018) and the first-ever Blockchain Diversity Awards, which will honor trailblazers from varying backgrounds and celebrate industry pioneers.

Incubated in MIT's Legal Forum in conjunction with the MIT Media Lab in Q1 of 2018, Diversity in Blockchain, Inc. was founded by Michelle Gitlitz, Anna Ashurov (vice president, Goldman Sachs), Shawwna Hoffman (IBM Global Cognitive Legal co-leader, Watson AI & Quantum Computing), Susan Joseph (B3i North American representative, blockchain expert consultant), Joshua Ashley Klayman Kuzar (co-chair of Blockchain practice, Morrison & Foerster LLP), and Susan Poole (blockchain founder, advisor & consultant).

For more information, please read Diversity in Blockchain, Inc.'s press release: [Diversity in Blockchain, Inc. Partners with Blockchain for Impact to Lead Best Practices for Diversity in the Industry.](#) □



MICHELLE ANN GITLITZ



**DIVERSITY
IN BLOCKCHAIN**



Michelle Gitlitz (second from left) and fellow Diversity in Blockchain, Inc. members at the Blockchain for Impact Global Summit.



Michelle Gitlitz speaking on “Women Leaders in AI & Blockchain” panel at the MIT Legal Forum on AI & Blockchain conference held in October 2017.

Leadership Council on Legal Diversity Fellows Alumni Leadership Symposium

A group of Blank Rome attorneys traveled to Hollywood, California, to represent the Firm at the Seventh Annual Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (“LCLD”) Fellows Alumni Leadership Symposium, held June 21–23, 2018. In attendance were Blank Rome Partners [Charles J. Monterio](#), [Saminaz Akhter](#), and [Cheryl S. Chang](#) and Associates [Megan R. Wood](#) and [Melanie S. Carter](#). The LCLD comprises more than 285 corporate chief legal officers and law firm managing partners, working to build a more open and diverse legal profession.

Blank Rome is proud to participate in both the LCLD Fellows and Pathfinders Programs. The Fellows Program helps retain and mobilize the leadership of diverse professionals who are employed in corporations, law firms, hospitals, academia, and other institutions. Meanwhile, the Pathfinders Program is designed to provide young, diverse lawyers with practical tools for developing and leveraging professional networks, foundational leadership skills, and career development strategies. □



Charles Monterio, Megan Wood, Saminaz Akhter, Cheryl Chang, and Melanie Carter
at the LCLD Awards Ceremony, held at Paramount Studios.



A Conversation with Judge James T. Giles

By: Huaou Yan

Judge James T. Giles, who recently joined Blank Rome as of counsel, needs little introduction. After graduating from Amherst College in 1964 and Yale Law School in 1967, he began an illustrious career, first as a field attorney with the National Labor Relations Board, then as an associate with Pepper Hamilton LLP in 1968—the firm’s first black lawyer—and, in 1974, as the first attorney of color to be elected to the firm’s partnership. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter nominated him to serve as a United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, and he rendered distinguished service on that court for nearly 29 years—including as chief judge from 1999 through 2005—before stepping away in 2008 to return to the practice of law.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to speak with Judge Giles recently, chiefly about his judicial career, trying to capture some history not found on his official résumé.

An abridged and lightly edited transcript of our conversation follows on the next page.



Huaou Yan is a fifth-year litigation associate in Blank Rome’s Philadelphia office. Prior to joining the Firm, Huaou served as a law clerk for the Honorable James Knoll Gardner of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

A Conversation with Judge James T. Giles



The Honorable James T. Giles

in the Lynchburg iron foundry. Dad was a World War II veteran who, as a very young man, had been called upon to fight fiercely in Germany in the Battle of the Bulge. He never spoke to me directly about that war experience, but I believe that, like most other colored troops in that era, he was greatly affected by the U.S. Army's denigrating racial segregation policies and practices, which persisted even as he was prepared to die for his country. In civilian life, I don't think that he had any motivating optimism that the *de jure* segregationist laws and attitudes prevailing in the Commonwealth of Virginia would ever change. On the other hand, my mother was optimistic that through solid foundational education one could pull one's self up by his own and others' bootstraps.

My early education was in a one-room school, taught by my grandmother who also taught many other people from the area. Public education and the world as I knew it were racially segregated. I was ever aware that very cruel things could be done to people of color with impunity. That was both frightening and stultifying. How to cope with the irrationality of racial segregation while maintaining self-respect was learned intuitively as a matter of survival. "Be respectful but don't bow and scrape," echoes in my memory.

Fourth grade resulted in a dramatic elevation in my educational structure—I went from a one-room country school to a two-room country school in Nelson County. When my parents moved from Nelson County to Lynchburg, I was enrolled in the elementary school there in fifth grade.

Lynchburg's public schools continued to be segregated well into the 70s. "All deliberate speed" was not a concept understood by the powers that be as reasonable speed. It was an excuse to drag feet rather than to implement *Brown v. Board of Education*. Virginia was the South's leader in resisting *Brown*. One county not far from Lynchburg closed all its public schools and only gave grants to white students to go to "private schools." That was an arrogant form of state action that deprived a whole generation of black kids of public education. In the 50s and 60s, "separate but equal" was viewed by many as the "God-given" way of American life that was to be preserved no matter what the "communist Earl Warren Supreme Court" said.

Despite my high school's small size—in my class there were about 100 students—our school was very competitive in sports and everything that was in competition in the educational system in Virginia. We had, as many other black schools had, excellent teachers—persons who, because of race segregation, had acquired graduate degrees in the subjects taught, but were not able to apply their education in jobs other than teaching in segregated schools. So, in terms of educational quality, we had inspired, informed teachers who equipped us well for what we would likely have to encounter after graduation. As one would expect, most graduates were compelled to leave Lynchburg to

Q Judge, your impressive résumé is a matter of public record. But can you tell me a little about your pre-law background—some things that might not jump out to the reader of your résumé?

Judge Giles: I grew up in the vicinity of Lynchburg, Virginia, south of Charlottesville by some 50 miles and not far from the historic Appomattox Courthouse, where General Lee surrendered to General Grant. I spent quite a bit of my early youth in rural Nelson County, Virginia, where I was greatly influenced by my maternal grandparents with whom I spent hot and humid, playful summers. My mother was a domestic worker, and my father was a laborer

find job opportunities or higher education. A high percentage of male graduates volunteered for military service.

Academically, I did well in high school. I was valedictorian and class president, a member of the football team, active in dramatic arts and chorus, and even was captain of the student safety patrol. Pauline Weeden, vice principal, and subsequently assistant treasurer of the Commonwealth in the Governor Wilder administration, was the sorority sister of Patricia Roberts Harris, Esquire, later Dean of Howard University Law School and U.S. Secretary, both of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, but who in 1959 was associated with the National Scholarship and Service Fund for Negro Students. Mrs. Weeden introduced me to Mrs. Harris, who had a relationship with Harvard University. At the end of my junior year, Mrs. Harris encouraged me to apply to attend Andover Academy in Massachusetts for a summer program sponsored by Harvard. The Andover experience was a great “wake up” call. I discovered that I knew a lot less about science and math than the full-time Andover students. Despite receiving the award for the greatest academic improvement at the end of the summer program—an award of dubious academic distinction—I left Andover with a severely bruised ego. It had been a maturing experience, but I was not eager to repeat it. I was content with the scholarship opportunity I had at Virginia Union University in Petersburg, Virginia. When Harvard College sent me an application for admission to its freshman class, I didn’t fill it out. My silent excuse was that it was too long.

Mrs. Harris contacted Vice Principal Weeden about my lack of diligence. I voiced my lame brain excuse that the Harvard application was too long. Thankfully, Weeden and Harris did not give up on me. I imagine that Harris said to herself, “Well, an Amherst College application is shorter and he will have no room for excuses.” She took no chances. She visited my parents. My father just looked at me. Needless to say, I applied to Amherst College. I was accepted.

Upon admission, I thought I wanted to go into medicine, but freshman physics dissuaded me and many in my class from that daydream.



Don’t tell me the only reason why you’re a lawyer is because you couldn’t pass physics.

Judge Giles: I passed. But I realized that if I kept going, I wasn’t going to pass anything else that had to do with pre-med. A bedside manner was just one of the components that one would need to have to be a good doctor, I concluded. I wasn’t impressed with history because, given the history that I had experienced up to that time, I wasn’t very eager to celebrate racial segregation or other kinds of segregation on which American history seemed to be taught.



So when and why did you decide to become a lawyer?

Judge Giles: Well, I became an English major. I guess that was a form of escapism. I found a way of looking at some of the 19th century writers—Melville, Hawthorne, and Clemens. Their writings to me reflected a kind of guilt trip on the state of race relations in America during their time. So I enjoyed writing about that. I was determined to become a teacher because my grandparents and the people that I had known who had been great forces in my life were all teachers. I was accepted for the Harvard Masters in Teaching program, and I was all prepared to go to Harvard when Dean Porter at the college called me to his office and inquired on my post-graduation plans. He suggested that given the times, I might think seriously about applying to law school. I recall he said something like, “There are teachers, but now your people really need lawyers.” Which was true.

I applied to several law schools. Yale admitted me.

In terms of job opportunities, there weren’t law firm opportunities like we think of them today.



What were the law firm opportunities at that time?

Judge Giles: This was 1964. Established law firms had not yet come to the conclusion that there was going to be a cultural change in the world such that minority lawyers would be beneficial contributors to the economic success of any firm. Law firms were tolerating their clients’ biases. You have to appreciate that this was a time when *Brown v. Board of Education* was under attack, and there were real efforts to impeach Chief Justice Earl Warren. President Kennedy had been assassinated. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 legislation was imperiled. There was no Public Accommodations Act. There was no Voting Rights Act. There were powerful, political forces trying to maintain the status quo of racial division—separateness in America.

Thankfully, there were powerful forces—lawyers who were committed by oath of their profession to the essential principle of Equal Justice Under Law, the fundamental democratic principle engraved above the entrance to the U.S. Supreme Court. They have fought, and are continuing to fight, the good fight every day for me and for you and for us all, for our equal opportunity under law. I am grateful every day for their tireless efforts and personal sacrifices in trying to save America from abandoning that basic principle as was unfortunately done in *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Korematsu v. United States*, two of the worst race decisions in Supreme Court history. □

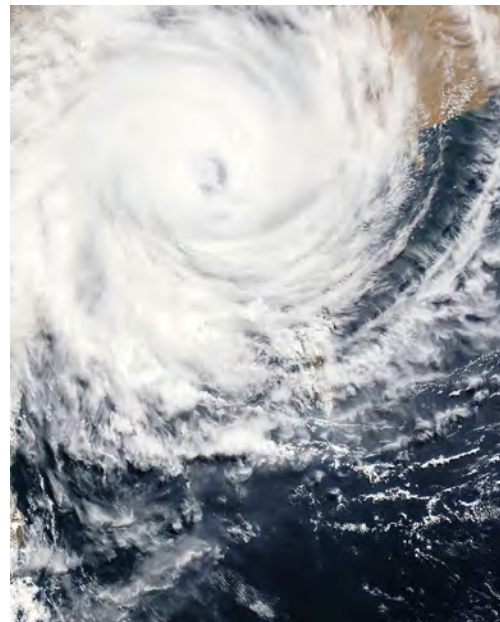
Houston Strong: Championing Diversity to Overcome Adversity

Blank Rome Houston's Office 2018 Diversity Theme

In late August 2017, Hurricane Harvey caused historic and catastrophic flooding, claiming 88 lives, leaving thousands of families displaced, and causing billions of dollars in damage. Houstonians worked together to help one another irrespective of religion, race, or political affiliation. In the aftermath, the Houston Astros began to wear patches of their team's logo with the word "strong" added, designed to inspire strength in the aftermath of the terrible storm.

"Houston Strong" became a rallying cry to the first World Series championship in the franchise's history. Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner credited the Astros for giving the thousands of people having to rebuild and repair their homes a much-needed distraction and sense of pride.

The Blank Rome Houston Staff Diversity Committee (Candace Childress, Andre Davison, Felicia Grace, Maureen Jerding, Julie Seifert, Tameka Smith, and Santiago Vallejo) chose to honor the City of Houston, its diversity, its champion citizens, and its baseball team through the 2018 diversity theme, "Houston Strong: Championing Diversity to Overcome Adversity."



Tameka Smith, Andre Davidson, and Felicia Grace hold "Certificates of Appreciation" for their participation in the MLK Jr. Children's March & "Feed the Hungry" Project.



Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service Initiatives

The Blank Rome Houston Staff Diversity Committee sponsored a series of Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service initiatives throughout January. They also held a luncheon event at Blank Rome's Houston office on January 12, 2018, which featured a powerful discussion on race, equality, and Dr. King's service and legacy, and offered resources for MLK Day projects and events throughout Houston.

Community service initiatives included donation of money, coats, blankets, hygiene products, and non-perishable foods to Star of Hope; monetary donations to the Black Heritage Society 40th Annual MLK Jr. Parade & Celebration; and participation in the MLK Jr. Children's March & "Feed the Hungry" Project, which distributed 700 blankets, 100 boxes of food, and 100 boxes of school supplies to the community.

The Blank Rome Houston Staff Diversity Committee also hosted events in celebration of Blank History Month and Asian Pacific American History Month. Learn more about them starting on page 19.

Andre Davison Receives the 2018 Honorable Nathaniel R. Jones Diversity Award

Andre Davison, the research technology manager in Blank Rome's Houston office, was presented with the Honorable Nathaniel R. Jones Diversity Award at an awards ceremony held on June 12, 2018, in the Houston office. Andre leads the Blank Rome Houston Staff Diversity Committee and has coordinated innovative and informative programs for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Black History Month, and other occasions.

Inaugurated in 2013, the Honorable Nathaniel R. Jones Diversity Award is bestowed annually upon a Blank Rome attorney or professional who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in promoting diversity within the Firm. To honor the occasion, following the award ceremony the Firm held a book signing and cocktail reception with Blank Rome Of Counsel Judge [Nathaniel R. Jones](#) for his memoir, *Answering the Call: An Autobiography of the Modern Struggle to End Racial Discrimination in America*.



Honoree Andre Davison at the Honorable Nathaniel R. Jones Diversity Award event.



Andre Davison (center), pictured with **Alan Hoffman** (left) and **Christopher Lewis** (right), accepts the Honorable Nathaniel R. Jones Diversity Award.

Blank Rome Participates in Houston Bar Association's Communities in Schools Summer Legal Internship

Blank Rome's Houston office is pleased to welcome **Blair Hubbard** as a summer intern through the Houston Bar Association's Communities in Schools Summer Legal Internship. Blair recently graduated from Lamar High School in Houston, and is interested in going to law school and becoming a civil rights attorney or litigator.

[Communities in Schools, Inc. of Houston](#) is a campus-based dropout prevention program that works with the school system on over 100 campuses in underserved communities to provide direct social services to at-risk students and connect students with available community resources. Through its partnership with the Houston Bar Association, students receive an eight-week internship that provides enrichment activities, college readiness seminars, a mock trial, and meet and greets with local judges.

Blank Rome Partner [Susan L. Bickley](#) previously chaired the program and Candace Childress, office administrator for Blank Rome's Houston office, annually participates in an orientation at the beginning of the program, providing the interns with an employer's perspective on their upcoming roles. Blank Rome is proud to have participated in the program for more than 19 years. Some of our former interns have gone on to law school, and all attended college and cited the program as providing them a meaningful start in their professional careers. □



Blair Hubbard (far left) and **Judge Nathaniel Jones** with guests at his recent book signing reception.

Celebrating Heritage History Months

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Leaders Among Us

Blank Rome proudly sponsored “Leaders Among Us,” part of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of D.C.’s In-House Counsel Dinner Series. The dinner took place on May 24, 2018, at The Palm Tysons Corner in McLean, VA. The featured speaker for the event was Atul Saran, executive vice president of corporate development and general counsel of Emergent Biosolutions Inc. Guests consisted of in-house counsel from the D.C., Maryland, and Virginia area.



Saminaz Akhter (far left) and Sophia Lee (far right) with clients at the “Leaders Among Us” dinner.



Alan Hoffman, Sophia Lee (far left) and Christopher Lewis (far right) with panelists (from left) Nydia Han, Reggie Shuford, Will Gonzalez, and Tsiwen Law.



Sophia Lee (far left) and Christopher Lewis (far right) with (from left) Hon. Ida K. Chen, Hon. Ashely M. Chan, and Hon. Stella M. Tsai.

#ThisIsAmerica: A Conversation About Race in America

Blank Rome and the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania hosted “#ThisIsAmerica: A Conversation About Race in America,” on May 22, 2018, at Blank Rome’s Philadelphia office. The event featured a partial viewing of #ThisIsAmerica, a timely documentary created by 6abc’s Nydia Han, followed by an insightful panel conversation about race in America. The panel was moderated by Nydia Han, 6abc consumer reporter and co-anchor of Action News Sunday mornings, and featured panelists Will Gonzalez, executive director of Ceiba and former president of the Hispanic Bar Association of Pennsylvania; Tsiwen Law, civil trial lawyer with his law firm, Law & Associates, L.L.C. and a founder of APABA-PA; and Reggie Shuford, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania.

New York and Houston Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Events

Blank Rome’s New York office hosted a lunch & learn event on May 16, 2018, where Jerry Vattamala, Democracy Program Director of the Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund, discussed the organization’s work and impact. Blank Rome’s Houston office hosted a special event on May 10, 2018, where Judges Hannah Chow and Harry Gee Jr. discussed their experiences in the legal field and how their Asian heritage has influenced the decisions they have made.

The African Diaspora to America

Blank Rome's New York **Attorney of Color Affinity Group ("NYAOCAG")**, in collaboration with the Firm's Diversity & Inclusion Committee, hosted a lively and interactive showcase on February 28, 2018, highlighting the ways in which the African Diaspora has and continues to shape American culture today. Attorneys and staff had the opportunity to participate in demonstrations on African masking and head wrapping, and learn the historical significance behind these sacred practices. A variety of African, West Indian, and Southern American foods and traditional drinks were served throughout the evening. The event culminated in an interactive performance art piece with live drumming.



Houston Astros Black History Month Event

The Blank Rome Houston Staff Diversity Committee held a Black History Month event on February 9, 2018, which honored three prominent Houston Astros African American baseball players: Jimmy Wynn, Bob Watson, and J.R. Richard. Each individual's story was an example in perseverance and strength to overcome difficult circumstances, and highlighted the Houston office's 2018 diversity theme.

Blank Rome Partners **John A. Adkins**, **Christopher D. Keirs**, **Michael K. Bell**, **Doug J. Shoemaker**, and **Keith Lutsch** donated three pairs of Houston Astros tickets for a raffle, and the Firm provided a baseball-themed lunch. As part of the service initiative for Black History Month, the Firm's Houston staff and attorneys donated five dollars for a "Jeans Day" where everyone wore Houston Astros championship gear. Through those donations, \$185 was raised and donated to the Save the Children Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund, which is committed to serving the children and families most affected by Hurricane Harvey for the next two years.

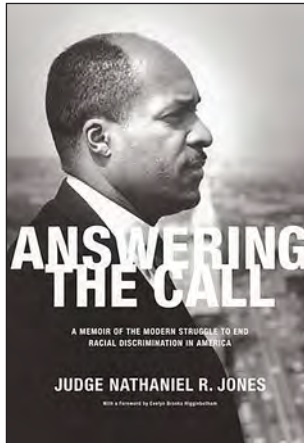
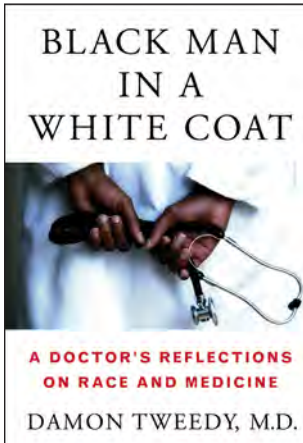


Felicia Grace, Santiago Vallejo, Tameka Smith, Candace Childress, Andre Davison, and Julie Seifert at the Houston Astros event.

Learn more about Blank Rome's Houston office's 2018 diversity theme, "Houston Strong: Championing Diversity to Overcome Adversity," on page [16](#).

Race, Medicine, and the Law

Blank Rome, Duke Philadelphia, and Duke Black Alumni hosted “Race, Medicine, and the Law” on February 1, 2018, at Blank Rome’s Philadelphia office. The program featured a conversation about race, medicine, the law, and society between Damon Tweedy, M.D. ’00, author of *Black Man in a White Coat: A Doctor’s Reflections on Race and Medicine* and Blank Rome Of Counsel Judge [Nathaniel R. Jones](#), author of *Answering the Call: An Autobiography of the Modern Struggle to End Racial Discrimination in America*. The panel was moderated by Edith Arrington ’95 and Shawn Jones ’08. A reception for all attendees followed the program.



Matthew Comisky, Charisse Lillie, Judge Nathaniel Jones, Damon Tweedy, and Theodore McKee, former chief judge of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, at the Race, Medicine, and the Law event.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH



Blank Rome chairman, partners, and professional staff at the Hispanic Heritage Month event.

Exploring Salsa & Bachata

Blank Rome’s NYAOCAG hosted an interactive event on October 10, 2017, to celebrate the history, contribution, and cultures of Americans whose ancestors come from South America, Central America, Mexico, Spain, and the Caribbean. Attendees delighted in a wide array of drinks and dishes from various Hispanic countries while reading about historical events that led to the creation of 20+ Hispanic flags. Attorneys and

staff also enjoyed a Salsa and Bachata dance lesson and then hit the dance floor together to show off what they learned.

Also in honor of Hispanic Heritage History Month, a committee consisting of members of the NYAOCAG, launched the Firm-wide “BR Supports PR” campaign to raise money for those impacted by the devastating and destructive effects of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico last fall. The campaign successfully raised and disbursed over \$18,000. □

Blank Rome Welcomes the 2018 Summer Associate Class

HOUSTON



Neil Young is a first-year law student at The University of Houston Law Center where he is a member of the Health Law Organization, Student Bar Association, and American Bar Association.

Fun Fact: Neil has been in the audience at *The Price Is Right*.

LOS ANGELES



Thilini Chandrasekera is a first-year law student at UCLA School of Law, and received her B.S. in Economics from Duke University.

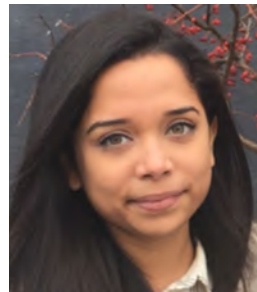
Fun Fact: Thilini once lived in a tent for two months in order to attend a basketball game (it's a Duke tradition).

NEW YORK



Oscar Basantes is a first-year law student at Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University where he is a Land Use Law Center Research Scholar.

Fun Fact: Oscar lived in China for two months while working for the NBA and just got married on May 27 in Las Vegas.



Subrina Chowdhury is a second-year law student at Fordham University School of Law, and received her B.A. in Political Science and History from Fordham University.

Fun Fact: Subrina enjoys painting and sketching during her free time.



Vanessa Bateau is a first-year law student at William and Mary Law School where she was selected to participate in the Leadership Institute.

Fun Fact: Vanessa enjoys playing basketball and creating narrative/documentary films in her spare time.



Andrae Nelson is a second-year law student at Brooklyn Law School where he is the career development chair of the Black Law Students Association.

Fun Fact: Andrae will be spending the first semester of his 3L year in Hong Kong.



Grace Chamoun is a second-year law student at Brooklyn Law School and a member of the Moot Court Honor Society and the *Journal of Law and Policy*.

Fun Fact: Grace is fluent in Arabic.

PHILADELPHIA



Jacob Brownstein is a second-year law student at Drexel University Thomas R. Kline School of Law, and is also working towards an LL.M. in Taxation at Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law.

Fun Fact: *Jacob backpacked through Europe during the summer of 2012.*



Kristen Kispert is a second-year law student at Rutgers Law School where she is a staff editor of the *Rutgers University Law Review*.

Fun Fact: *Kristen has a twin sister.*



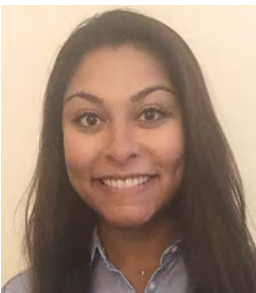
Michaela Cronin is a second-year law student at Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law where she is a staff writer on the *Villanova Law Review*.

Fun Fact: *Michaela has a twin sister.*



Sander Saba is a first-year law student at Temple University Beasley School of Law where they are a member of the Student Bar Association Budget Committee and Temple OUTLAWS.

Fun Fact: *Sander knows American Sign Language ("ASL") and has performed in a theater production in ASL.*



Serena Gopal is a first-year law student at Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law where she is an executive board member of the Juvenile Law Society as well as a member of the Immigration Law Society.

Fun Fact: *Serena trained her dog to bring her a food bowl when she is hungry and ring a bell when she wants water.*



Joseph Sengoba is a second-year law student at Temple University Beasley School of Law where he is a member of the Black Law Students Association as well as the vice president of Temple OUTLAWS.

Fun Fact: *Joe plays on a dodgeball team in a city-wide league and once won a game by catching a ball with his knees.*



Amanda Jonas is a first-year law student at the University of Pennsylvania Law School and, prior to law school, was a teacher in the Teach for America Program.

Fun Fact: *The inventor of the Ferris wheel was/is Amanda's distant relative.*



Christopher Tarbell is a second-year law student at Temple University Beasley School of Law where he is the symposium & articles editor of the *Temple Law Review*.

Fun Fact: *After separating from active duty, Chris spent 40 days traveling and hiking in several national parks.*

WASHINGTON, D.C.



Hien “Grant” Doan is a first-year law student at the University of Georgia School of Law where he is a student ambassador for the International Law Center and a member of Corsair Law Society.

Fun Fact: *While on a trip to Iceland, Grant and a friend took a ferry to an island north of the country (Akureyri) to go hiking, only to find out that the only hostel on the island had closed for renovation. Luckily, they befriended the boat captain and he let them stay at his house. On that same trip, they also got to try fermented shark—Icelandic folks swear by its delicacy, but Grant is still not a huge fan.*



David Panzarella is a second-year law student at Georgetown University Law Center where he is the president of the Georgetown Law ACLU.

Fun Fact: *David volunteered for the Maryland SPCA and fostered dogs for a Maryland-based pit bull rescue.*



Caroline Saunders is a second-year law student at the George Washington University Law School where she is a staff editor of the *AIPLA Quarterly Journal* and writer for the *Intellectual Property and Entertainment Law Brief*.

Fun Fact: *Caroline has a second-degree black belt in Taekwondo, although she is pretty much out of practice nowadays.*



Natalie Radabaugh is a second-year law student at the George Washington University Law School where she is a member of the *International Law in Domestic Courts Journal*.

Fun Fact: *Natalie is a die-hard fan of English soccer and had the opportunity to travel to and play soccer in England when she was in high school. □*

Blank Rome’s 2018 summer associates at the diversity and inclusion reception held this June in Philadelphia.



More Blank Rome in the News

In addition to the accolades and stories featured throughout this edition of *Perspectives*, below are some recent recognitions, appointments, and events that our attorneys have topped headlines with. For a full list of recent news items, visit [Diversity News & Views](#).

AWARDS



Lauren O'Donnell, Alan Hoffman, and Melissa Fundora Murphy receive *The Legal Intelligence's* 2018 Professional Excellence Awards.

Alan Hoffman, Melissa Fundora Murphy, and Lauren O'Donnell Receive 2018 Professional Excellence Awards

As part of *The Legal Intelligence's* 2018 Professional Excellence Awards, Blank Rome Chairman and Managing Partner [Alan J. Hoffman](#) was named a "Lifetime Achievement Award Winner" and Associates [Melissa Fundora Murphy](#) and [Lauren E. O'Donnell](#) were named "Lawyers on the Fast Track."

Dayna Finkelstein Receives the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia's 2018 Young Leadership Award

Blank Rome Partner [Dayna C. Finkelstein](#) was honored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia as a recipient of the Mrs. Isadore Kohn Young Leadership Award in honor of representing the best of Jewish values in her professional career and in her contributions to the Jewish community.

Victoria Guilfoyle Receives *Philadelphia Business Journal* 2018 "40 under 40" Award

Blank Rome Partner [Victoria A. Guilfoyle](#) was named to the Class of 2018 "40 under 40" by the *Philadelphia Business Journal*, which recognizes young professionals in Greater Philadelphia for outstanding success and contributions to their community.

Jason Kim Named a 2018 Most Influential Minority Attorney by *Los Angeles Business Journal*

Blank Rome Partner [Jason S. Kim](#) was named to the "Most Influential Minority Attorneys in Los Angeles" list by the *Los Angeles Business Journal*, which recognizes "particularly stellar" minority attorneys in the Los Angeles region who have experienced much success in their careers and have made an impact in their practice and communities.

Katherine Franco Named "Outstanding Diversity Role Model" Finalist at *Houston Business Journal's* Diversity in Business Awards

Blank Rome Associate [Katherine Franco](#) was named an "Outstanding Diversity Role Model" finalist at the *Houston Business Journal's* inaugural Diversity in Business Awards, which honored the companies and business professionals who are promoting and advancing diversity in Houston.



Katherine Franco accepts *Houston Business Journal's* "Outstanding Diversity Role Model" award.

Christopher Lewis Appointed to Delaware River Port Authority Board of Commissioners

Blank Rome Partner [Christopher A. Lewis](#) was appointed for a five-year term to the Delaware River Port Authority (“DRPA”) Board of Commissioners. The DRPA is a regional transportation agency that serves as steward of four bridges that cross the Delaware River between Pennsylvania and New Jersey: the Ben Franklin, Walt Whitman, Commodore Barry, and Betsy Ross Bridges. Through its Port Authority Transit Corporation (“PATCO”), the DRPA also operates a transit line between Camden County, New Jersey, and Center City Philadelphia.



Michelle Gervais Appointed Executive Board Member of WISE Tampa Bay Chapter

Blank Rome Partner [Michelle M. Gervais](#) was appointed to serve as an executive board member of the newly formed Women in Sports and Events (“WISE”) Tampa Bay Chapter, a role that she was selected for by Tampa Bay’s professional and collegiate sports teams, with whom she will serve.

Sophia Lee Elected to the APABA-PA Board of Directors

Blank Rome Partner [Sophia Lee](#) was elected to the board of directors of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania (“APABA-PA”) for a one-year term, where she will focus on APABA-PA’s continuing engagement in the legal and broader communities, and provide strategic direction and planning for the organization’s ongoing health and welfare.

Sophia Lee (center) being inducted to the APABA-PA’s board of directors.





Members of the NYAOCG at the fall meet & greet happy hour.

Meet & Greet Fall Happy Hour

NYAOCAG hosted a happy hour last fall at Zengo, in Midtown Manhattan, to welcome the new first-year associates who had recently joined the Firm. The group also invited current law students from the 2017 NY summer associate class to attend as well as the incoming 2018 summer associates. The past and incoming summer associates used the event to gain additional insight about the Firm and its diversity and inclusion initiatives, and how to succeed as a summer associate and junior attorney.

Lunar New Year Luncheon

NYAOCAG hosted a luncheon in February to celebrate the Lunar New Year and usher in the Year of the Dog. Sharing a meal of various East Asian dishes and drinks, attorneys learned about how different cultures celebrate the holiday and shared their own cultural traditions. No Lunar New Year celebration would be complete without red envelopes and fortunes. Attorneys also had the opportunity to read their fortunes and take a little bit of luck with them for the New Year.



Malissa Osei, Saloni Patel, Naadia Chowdhury, and Ernestine Mings at the Lunar New Year luncheon.

Drexel Law Career Panel

Blank Rome Partner [Sophia Lee](#) spoke on Drexel Law’s Asian Pacific American Law Students Association and Latin American Law Students Association Career Panel on March 27, 2018, which discussed techniques and skills to use to find an internship, skills and performance to excel during the internship, and networking and creating connections. The discussion also focused on particular challenges faced by minority students, be it race, gender, or other labels.



Sophia Lee (second from right) and fellow panelists at the Drexel Law Career Panel.

2018 1L Leadership Council on Legal Diversity Scholars Summit

Blank Rome Partner [Saminaz Akhter](#) co-led two breakout sessions at the 2018 1L Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (“LCLD”) Scholars Summit, held May 22–24, 2018. Saminaz and Amy Tarr (assistant general counsel at Exelon Corporation), both LCLD Fellows, led the Corporate Practice Group Area sessions and other LCLD Fellows led sessions on data privacy, litigation, and white collar crime/criminal law.

Learn from the Experts: How to Succeed As a Diverse Lawyer in Pittsburgh

Blank Rome Partner [James J. Barnes](#) presented at the Pittsburgh Legal Diversity & Inclusion Coalition program, “Learn from the Experts: How to Succeed as a Diverse Lawyer in Pittsburgh,” on May 7, 2018. The complimentary program offered a panel of highly accomplished, diverse attorneys who shared the secrets to their success in attaining the highest ranks in the field. □



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION MISSION STATEMENT

Blank Rome is committed to excellence in our fields of endeavor. We recognize that a diversity of ideas, backgrounds, and experiences is essential to fulfilling this commitment. We endeavor to recruit, hire, promote, and retain—on the basis of demonstrated talent and initiative—individuals throughout our Firm representing, among other things, different races, genders, ethnic groups, religions, sexual orientation, and national origins. We also endeavor to be inclusive of individuals with disabilities.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

CO-CHAIRS

Christopher A. Lewis
Deborah A. Franzblau

EX-OFFICIO

Hon. Nathaniel R. Jones
Mark Blondman
Julie Dressing
Brooke T. Iley
Ori Portnoy
Donna M. Branca

HOUSTON

Susan L. Bickley
Jeremy A. Herschaft
Russell T. Wong
Candace Childress
Andre Davison

LOS ANGELES

Cheryl S. Chang
Joseph M. Doloboff
Jason S. Kim

NEW YORK

Beth Bernstein Connors
Morgan Fraser Mouchette
Mayling C. Blanco
Kathleen A. Cunningham
Diana M. Eng
Michael A. Scheffler
Deborah Skakel
Samantha Wallack
Nk Udogwu

PHILADELPHIA

Lisa Casey Spaniel
Yelena M. Barychev
Linsey B. Bozzelli
Sophia Lee
Mark I. Rabinowitz
Greg F. Vizza
Melissa Morrissey

PRINCETON

Adrienne C. Rogove

WASHINGTON

Charles J. Monterio
Marianne Talbot
Karyn Cleveland-Barnes

WILMINGTON

Victoria A. Guilfoyle



Cincinnati • Fort Lauderdale • Houston • Los Angeles • New York • Philadelphia • Pittsburgh • Princeton • San Francisco • Shanghai • Tampa • Washington • Wilmington

©2018 Blank Rome LLP. All rights reserved. Please contact Blank Rome for permission to reprint. Notice: The purpose of this update is to identify select developments that may be of interest to readers. The information contained herein is abridged and summarized from various sources, the accuracy and completeness of which cannot be assured. This update should not be construed as legal advice or opinion, and is not a substitute for the advice of counsel.