

# Alumni@Dentons

## July 2020

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**Kudos!**

We are pleased to share with our extended Dentons US family this issue of Alumni@Dentons.

Drop us a line at [alumni@dentons.com](mailto:alumni@dentons.com) and let us know what you liked about this edition and what you would like to see in the future. Also, keep us posted on what you have been up to and we will be happy to share it in our next issue.

“

**Be intentional in positioning yourself to take advantage of whatever unexpected opportunity or experience comes your way.**

– Alum Lisa Stauffer on advice she would give her younger self

# Message from our Dentons US managing partner

June and July are often the months where we celebrate summer, and our nation's birthday, *communally*—at concerts, parades, baseball games and fireworks. While these and many other cherished summer events have been cancelled or gone “virtual” this year, we hope you have been able to enjoy some quality time with friends and family, albeit in a more scaled-down fashion.

The Fourth was also a day when many of us reflected on the bravery, genius and foresight of those who drafted the Declaration of Independence, with its articulation of the “self-evident” truth that “all Men are created equal” (as well as its legitimation of resistance against established authority to ensure that these are more than mere words on a page). Almost 250 years later, our nation's commitment to the principles of liberty, equality and opportunity is being sorely tested by our response to systemic racism.

The brutal death of George Floyd and the weeks of protest that followed have had a profound impact on the Dentons community. Feelings of pain, grief, anger, frustration, and sadness were voiced in countless personal discussions among colleagues. And just as the tragic death of Mr. Floyd spurred a national conversation on race and the equal application of justice, it served as a call to action at Dentons, intensifying our commitment to diversity and inclusion and setting in motion a host of new initiatives aimed at combating systemic racism and establishing permanent institutional change.

In this edition of Alumni@Dentons, we detail some of the ways we responded to recent events—from a series of town hall meetings that have given everyone the opportunity to engage in this very important discussion, to redoubling our efforts to ensure that the diversity of our workforce fully reflects the communities we serve, to working with other law firms to analyze and advocate for or against laws and policies that encourage or perpetuate racial injustice.

If there is anything we can do to help you during these difficult times, please reach out to us or anyone at the Firm.

We wish you, and your families, good health and well-being.



**Mary Wilson**  
Managing Partner  
Dentons US  
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# Highlights

## Taking meaningful action against racism

Against the backdrop of a pandemic's continuing apprehension and toll, the tragic and cruel death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the ensuing demonstrations in countless communities in which we live and work remind us that our Firms' commitment to inclusion and respect and the role that we play, individually and as an institution, to eliminate racial inequality and injustice have never come with greater responsibility.

In a letter to the Firm bearing the subject line **"A Reflection as We Turn to June"** and in a follow-on **video**, Mike McNamara, CEO of Dentons US, expressed his deep sorrow at the pain caused by "grievous actions where race is an undeniable factor," pointing not only to Mr. Floyd's death while "in the custody of those sworn to protect," but also the "murder of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia" and the recent "abuse heaped on Asian Americans."

### Breaking the silence

In early June, the Firm initiated conversations about how to address the economic, racial and social challenges that historically have been faced by diverse colleagues. Leadership met with members of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Black Professional Alliance to offer support to colleagues in the US Region. Office managing partners convened town halls to explore racial justice, racial equity and race relations generally. The Firm urged all partners, lawyers, professionals and business services staff members to join in.

In addition to those conversations, we hosted a webinar titled "Change the Rules, Change the World," with **Michelle Silverthorn**, CEO of Inclusion Nation and a former practicing lawyer. Michelle discussed the challenge of achieving "authentic diversity" in an environment rife with "unconscious bias" and "macroaggressions" that she likened to "death by a thousand cuts." She asked tough questions like, "Is your workplace one where colleagues feel included and comfortable to be their authentic selves?" and offered advice on how to interrupt our unconscious biases, be better allies and advocate for meaningful change.

### Allyship training

Over 1,000 colleagues from around the world have gathered virtually for a series of Global Allyship Training Sessions that have provided an opportunity for reflecting on how we as individuals can contribute to making Dentons a more inclusive and diverse law firm. The sessions have covered privilege, intersectionality, the myth of meritocracy and the important role allies can play in amplifying marginalized voices.

### Law Firm Antiracism Alliance

Dentons is proud to be one of the eight foundational firms behind a new Law Firm Antiracism Alliance (LFAA), a coalition of over **240 law firms** and other organizations united to identify and dismantle structural and systemic racism. The LFAA is focused on bringing to bear the responsibility and resources of law firms alongside legal services organizations to use the talents of lawyers and professionals to effect change through pro bono, while also endeavoring to ensure law firms are a part of needed change. In joining to create the LFAA, we are committing to leverage our reach, resources and talent to assertively and intentionally undertake the work of antiracism.

Dentons' Pro Bono partner **Ben Weinberg** helped draft the founding charter. "I'm gratified by our collective resolve to accept responsibility for the unjust application of our laws and contribute to permanent change," he said. "The current situation is widespread and untenable."

## Why Juneteenth matters



*Presley Reed, a Washington, DC, partner and co-chair of the Firm's Black Professional Alliance, reflects on the meaning and resonance of Juneteenth.*

With the recent demonstrations demanding racial justice and equality, I think it is ironic that so many people, businesses and others are recognizing Juneteenth as a significant commemoration. Juneteenth was not widely celebrated on the East Coast. In fact, I was not aware of Juneteenth until I was 30 years old and moved to Texas to attend law school. And truthfully I still have mixed emotions about a celebration that marks the end of slavery two-and-a-half years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

Now, however, I think of Juneteenth as a reminder of more than 400 years of slavery; a reminder of the stark brutality of slavery and the enduring legacy of disparity in wealth, opportunity and access. Juneteenth also reminds me of the laws and policies that have evolved over the last 250 years to maintain those disparities. Disparities that too frequently result in anger, pain, frustration and indifference that festers in too many African-Americans. But most importantly, Juneteenth is a reminder of the strength, perseverance and resilience of those blacks and whites that have fought and, too frequently, died to end racial injustice.

So I ask each of you to take time to consider the true import of Juneteenth, to take time to increase our collective understanding of institutional racism and unconscious bias, and to take action to achieve justice and equality for all.

Happy Juneteenth.

# The New Dynamic: From surviving to thriving

The global pandemic has been as unpredictable as it is disruptive. Global Chairman Joe Andrew is **certain of one thing**: There will be no going “back to normal” for anyone anywhere anytime soon—if ever. Which is why he coined a new term to describe the world awaiting us as our local economies reopen: the New Dynamic.

Recognizing that many of our clients also are looking beyond the immediate legal and operational challenges caused by the pandemic to its longer-term impacts on their business resilience and strategies, we launched a **New Dynamic hub** that leverages our global legal insight from across 76 countries and the experience of more than 60 former general counsel as well as legal tech and operations specialists to help our clients navigate the post-pandemic world. The

hub offers the latest global legal news as well as guidance on achieving **digital transformation**; a **quick pivots** page with tips on building a more agile legal department; how to **scenario plan** for the months ahead; the importance of taking time out to reflect on their **leadership skills**; and sections on **supply chain resilience** and **environment, social & governance performance opportunities**.

## Dentons included on list of firms corporate counsel 'will go to the mat to keep'

"The pandemic is redefining corporate counsel objectives and in some cases their core role. Top legal decision makers tell us how a few law firms have really stepped it up, jumped in, and are truly committed. Clients point to 43 law firms leading the pack. These are the firms they would not only keep—but will go to the mat to keep if they are forced to choose."

—BTI Consulting Group

## Adding to our COVID-19 Hub

In March, Dentons launched a [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) hub](#) to help our clients and communities address the unprecedented legal challenges presented by the outbreak. More than 70,000 unique users have visited the hub to date and we continue to add tools and resources to it. Two recent additions include:

### **Return-to-Work Toolkit**

We created an "evolving" [Return-to-Work Toolkit](#) to help clients help our clients chart a course through a rapidly changing legal and regulatory landscape. It highlights the major legal issues, policies and documentation organizations must consider before revving up the assembly lines or reopening their communal coffee station.

In addition to being helpful with the everyday blocking and tackling of employment compliance, the toolkit should be useful in reviewing and updating employee handbooks and training materials. Benefits, insurance and retirement plans, insurance liability coverage, employment agreements, and communications policies to protect employees, customers, business partners and the public.

### **COVID-19 Global Tax Tracker**

The Tax team launched a [COVID-19 Global Tax Tracker](#) ("the facts you need, across multiple markets") to help multinationals quickly navigate the latest COVID-19 tax arrangements, by country and topic. The tracker answers such frequently asked questions as:

- What tax measures is the government taking for businesses?
- Can tax payments be deferred or prepayments/installments adjusted?
- Is it possible to reclaim value-added tax already paid to the tax authorities for invoices that are not paid by customers?
- Is it possible to claim a provisional carry-back of tax losses?
- Any impacts on ongoing tax audits, disputes or negotiations?



# Q&A

## Lisa Stauffer

Managing Senior Counsel – Bankruptcy and Business Restructuring,  
PNC Bank



### **What does an average day look like for you?**

I wouldn't say I have an "average" sort of day. They really vary. And since we have all been working from home, the kinds of things that fill my days now are a little different from the kinds of things that filled my days before. For example, I cover a handful of markets, so I still work with our law firms and clients in those markets, but I am not travelling to those markets, which I used to do on a pretty regular basis. I have also had to understand some of the impacts of COVID-19 on my clients and the bank's customers, which is obviously new.

Beyond those changes, I spend a lot of time counseling my clients on various workout and bankruptcy issues, act as a liaison between my clients and our law firm partners, provide a lot of guidance to our outside counsel on bank policy and how that influences our approach in a given situation, provide training on bankruptcy and workout issues and am a member of several working groups focusing on more specialized issues.

### **What led you to PNC?**

I think it was more the position that caught my attention. I wasn't really looking to move, but when I came across the posting for a workout lawyer, and I looked at the experience the position required, I was able to check a lot of boxes. The job was exciting and new and the more I thought about it, the more it made sense to me. The fact that PNC has such a presence and a good reputation in Pittsburgh made me comfortable with my decision.

### **What was it about PNC that appealed to you?**

Particularly in Pittsburgh, PNC has a strong reputation. The bank is very active and visible in the community and is generally

known to be a good place to work. The legal department is almost the same size as Cohen & Grigsby was at the time so, again, there was a certain familiarity and comfort that was appealing.

### **What do you enjoy most about working in-house?**

I like being embedded in, and getting to know the business, especially a complex business like a financial institution. The bank, and the legal landscape governing banks is dynamic, so I learn something new every day.

### **We hear that you are involved with PNC's Diversity and Inclusion program. Tell us about that role?**

I currently serve as the chair of the PNC Legal Department's Diversity & Inclusion Council. I was a vice chair before that, and I started on the Council by establishing our summer program. I actually ran the summer associates program and served on the recruiting committee at Cohen & Grigsby, which is why I was initially invited to do this work in the legal department.

As far as what I do on the Council, I work with an incredible group of people who are passionate about creating a diverse and inclusive work environment. I largely oversee the administration of the Council and facilitate the programs and the projects that members of our department are interested in hearing and Council members want to present. Of course, I also participate in many of the programs we put on, and then I am a liaison to the PNC umbrella D&I organization. I also spend time working with many of our partner law firms to find ways to collaborate on D&I initiatives and provide support in their efforts to improve diversity and inclusion within their organizations.

### **How did you become interested in the type of law you are currently practicing?**

I always thought I would go to court, and I liked the idea of having a discrete or niche area of the law as my guidepost, so when the need for bankruptcy lawyers arose as I was just starting my career, it made sense to me to start taking on that kind of work and learning the Bankruptcy Code. I never looked back.

### **In what ways did your time at Dentons Cohen & Grigsby (formerly Cohen & Grigsby) help prepare you for what you are doing today?**

I only did creditors' work and I represented a number of financial institutions when I was at Cohen & Grigsby, which meant that when I came to PNC, I was able to understand the lender side of the equation. My clients' needs when I was in private practice were pretty consistent with the needs of my internal PNC clients. And then, as I mentioned, I did a lot of recruiting and working with law students and new law school graduates. That work equipped me for the work I did when I first joined the D& I Council.

### **Tell us about a few of your favorite memories of the firm?**

One of the best experiences of my career was working with Bill Kelleher. I know that isn't a specific memory, but it's the thing I appreciated the most about my time at Cohen & Grigsby. Bill is knowledgeable and experienced and I learned so much about bankruptcy and the practice of law from him. Even when we disagreed on a particular matter (which happened from time to time) he brought so much credibility and confidence to his position. I learned how important those characteristics were in being a good advocate. Plus, sometimes it was just fun to argue!

### **Are there any aspects of working in a law firm that you miss?**

I miss the people! Specifically, I worked with a great team in the Creditors' Rights group, but beyond that, I developed so many strong relationships with lawyers throughout the organization. I also mentored many a summer associate and new lawyer, many of whom are partners now and many of whom I still keep up with.

### **Any advice you would give your younger self?**

I would advise against spending too much time plotting out my career, and more time developing skills like tenacity and agility. It is so easy to get set on a particular course and then feel stuck. Be intentional in positioning yourself to take advantage of whatever unexpected opportunity or experience comes your way.

### **What do you like to do outside of work? Any special interests?**

I have gotten really into hot yoga in the past 6 or 7 years, and last year, I completed a 200-hour yoga teacher training course. I taught a 5:30 a.m. heated power yoga class through the winter, but, as with many other things, the studio had to shut down in mid-March. We are up and running virtually now, so I still teach a weekly class online.

### **Do you have advice for lawyers who are interested in following a similar career path?**

I would start by referring to the advice I would give my younger self! I wish I could say that I am exactly where I planned to be, but the truth is, I went where the opportunities were, I gravitated toward good people and good mentors, and I kept an open mind. I think the law firm is the best place to get the foundational legal training to go in house later, so I can say that for those who are interested in going in house, it makes sense to put in some real time in the law firm environment, honing your craft and building relationships.

### **How has the pandemic affected you and your work?**

Logistically, I save a lot of time by not commuting to work and back every day, which I appreciate. I am still able to do most everything at home that I did in the office, but I miss the human interaction. Substantively, given the nature of what I do, as this pandemic goes on I anticipate I will get much busier and I have already seen some evidence of that.

## SNR Dentons alum pens 11th book



Douglas MacKinnon, a former senior managing director in the energy and public policy areas of legacy firm SNR Dentons, a former White House and Pentagon writer, a regular contributor to the op-ed pages of major newspapers, and the author of 10 books, has just published his first science fiction/fact novel, [The Dawn of a Nazi Moon](#) (Permuted Press, 2020).

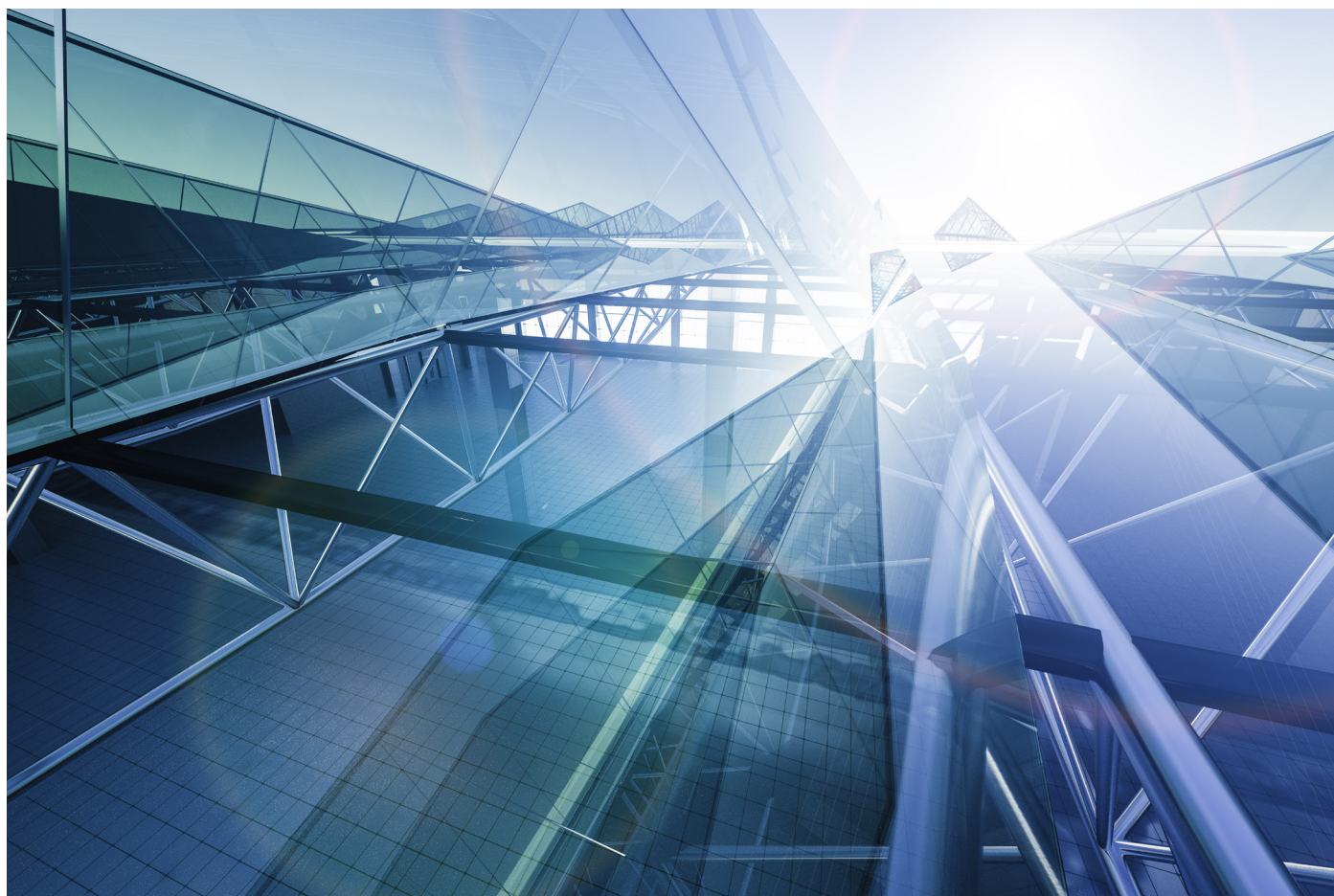
From Amazon Raves and Reviews:

**“Real-world history and space technology blended into a jaw-dropping, can’t put down novel.”**

- William F. Readdy, Captain, US Navy (Ret.) and three-time space shuttle astronaut and commander.

**“MacKinnon has long dealt with ‘deep state’ issues. They don’t get any deeper or more mysterious than this book.”**

- Marty Martin, senior CIA operations officer and special forces operative.





# Sector Spotlight

## Real estate team pivots during coronavirus crisis

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, commercial real estate has changed significantly amidst unprecedented uncertainty across office, hotel, retail, multifamily and other property types. To proactively respond to clients' concerns and needs, our Real Estate group got itself quickly up to speed on all things COVID-19 and is now positioning the group assist clients with protective and opportunistic matters as we enter Q3 and Q4.

We anticipate extraordinary opportunities for investment in distressed real estate assets and non-performing loan portfolios. The Firm's **Distressed Real Estate and Debt Funds** team, including **John Snyder**, partner and chair of the US Real Estate practice; **Donald Hammett**, partner and chair of the US Corporate practice; and partners **Raleigh Johnston**, **Sara Werner** and **Todd Stennes**, is prepared to advise clients as mortgage forbearances expire and lenders prepare for the biggest wave of delinquencies in history.

The multidisciplinary, geographically dispersed team offers the following services:

**Real estate and debt funds.** Dentons has long provided market-leading advice on the formation of underperforming real estate and distressed debt funds, as well as ongoing advice to fund sponsors, securities issuers, investors, lenders, REITs and other market participants at every stage of the funds' lifecycle. Our lawyers draw on a deep understanding of fund structures, capital-raising strategies, investment opportunities, exit strategies, corporate and securities law, bankruptcy and tax issues.

**Securities compliance.** Our corporate and regulatory lawyers advise on compliance the Investment Advisers Act, Investment Company Act and other US federal and state securities laws, whether you are selling fund interests or managing the deployment of invested funds.

**Purchase and sale of real estate and loans.** With Dentons' nationally recognized Real Estate, Tax, Corporate and Restructuring Insolvency and Bankruptcy practices, our team can marshal the talent, at virtually a moment's notice, to assist clients in structuring, negotiating, documenting and closing acquisition and disposition transactions.

### 7 pre-enforcement tips for lenders in a distressed real estate market

Five Dentons real estate finance and restructuring lawyers—partners **Rick Stempler**, **Gregory Fennell**, **Jonathan Jacobs** and **Chris Milenkevich** and senior managing associate **Lauren Macksoud**—share their top practical tips for lenders during the current distressed real estate market in an information-packed [webinar](#) that focuses on pre-enforcement matters, draws upon lessons learned during recent experiences negotiating forbearance agreements and loan modifications—and clocks in at under 40 minutes.

1. Make a list of all transaction parties and figure out facts on the ground
2. Make sure you fully understand the how and what of notices
3. Don't assume that the default you know about is the only default out there
4. Take stock of your guarantees and don't make assumptions about the guaranty or the guarantor
5. Create specific deadlines with the borrower (realistic ones, too)
6. Make sure you are prepared to navigate your borrower's Bankruptcy filing
7. Assemble the right team for next steps

**Tax structuring.** We regularly assist clients in the tax-efficient structuring of funds, including investments by domestic, foreign non-profit and other investors that have particular tax needs, and advise on the structuring of partnerships, joint ventures and limited liability companies..

**Restructuring, insolvency and bankruptcy.** Our RIB team has represented a broad range of parties-in-interest confronted with distressed real estate assets, both inside and outside of formal bankruptcy proceedings, including in the hospitality, health care, commercial and residential segments of the real estate market.

**Asset Management.** Our asset management practice is focused on maximizing the income from owning real property and reducing the burden of managing operational real estate. Our clients own properties across all major asset classes—retail, office, multifamily, industrial and hospitality—and acquire or invest in niche areas, such as nursing homes or assisted living facilities, health and life sciences facilities, storage facilities. We pride ourselves on understanding the commercial drivers and risks unique to each asset class and having the skills and experience to support our clients' investment goals.



# Careers

## Recent laterals

Our Honolulu office welcomed **Amy Chiang** as counsel in our Real Estate practice. Amy's extensive in-house experience includes managing legal and compliance matters for an Asia-focused hedge fund with offices in Hong Kong, Santa Monica, Tokyo, London and Honolulu.

**Leonard Silverstein** joined our Atlanta office as a senior counsel in the Corporate group. He was previously with legacy firm McKenna Long & Aldridge LLP, where he advised both publicly traded and privately held companies in various sectors, including real estate.

Our Litigation practice welcomed counsel **Bob Guida** to our Short Hills, NJ office. Returning to private practice after more than 30 years in-house at a leading insurance company, he brings extensive knowledge of the sector's products and processes.

**Michael Dorelli** joined the Indianapolis office as counsel in the Litigation and Dispute Resolution group. He represents clients in business litigation and professional liability disputes. He has more than 20 years' experience handling trials, arbitrations and appeals.

**Joseph (Joe) Champion** rejoined our Corporate and Public Policy and Regulation practice groups as counsel in the Indianapolis office. He provides transactional and regulatory advice to municipalities and highly-regulated businesses, specifically focused on municipal economic development, gaming and legislative affairs.

**Brian Greer** joined our Restructuring, Insolvency and Bankruptcy practice as a partner in New York. He has substantial experience across a wide range of industries.

**Marshall Feiring** joined our New York office where he will be a partner in the Capital Markets group. He has extensive experience in the formation and operation of complex investment vehicles.

## Summer associate program goes virtual

Dentons US brought 34 talented law students to the Firm for a four-week, entirely virtual, summer associate program. Rather than giving work assignments, the program's focus was on training and learning sessions, a pro bono project designed for remote working, global webinars, one-on-one mentoring, and several virtual networking opportunities, including a trivia night, a painting class (see right) and an online scavenger hunt. Our lawyers were encouraged to help with the bonding process by reaching out to summers for a "virtual coffee break or a quick chat."



Patriotic pops



# Wellness tips: Working remotely

## 6 tips for staying physically and mentally healthy while working from home

1. **Schedule breaks in your calendar.** Break up the monotony of working from home by scheduling breaks into your calendar. Whether you use the time to take a walk, stretch your legs or rearrange your sock drawer, scheduling breaks can help you remain focused throughout the day.
2. **Take some time to meditate.** Morning meditation can gently release grogginess and help set the conditions for a more successful day. A midday meditation break can be an effective way to de-stress after a long meeting or difficult conversation. Meditating at the end of a long day can help you decompress, prepare for the day ahead or even think creatively. Apps like [Headspace](#) make meditating easy and accessible to anyone.
3. **Schedule a call or Zoom lunch with a colleague.** Working remotely does not mean that you have to work alone! Stay connected with a colleague or colleagues by scheduling a working (or non-working) lunch via telephone or Zoom.
4. **Exercise to relieve stress.** Try the virtual workout offered by your gym or one of the many free online options to relieve stress. Physical activity produces endorphins, which improve sleep, which reduces stress. Exercise also helps you stay mentally focused and keeps your energy levels high throughout the day.
5. **Eat lunch away from your desk.** When working from home, you can spend extended hours sitting at our desk. The simple act of eating lunch away from your desk can help you to escape your chair and elevate your mood.
6. **Set a routine for your work day.** The “Groundhog Day” quality of working at home result in getting caught up in one project to the exclusion of all others. To assist in your time management and to help keep you focused, time management methods such as time blocking, task batching and day theming can be simple, yet effective ways to take back control of your workday.





# Social Impact

## Helping get a Georgia hate crimes bill across the finish line



Sam Olens



Edward Lindsey

Two Dentons' lawyers—counsel and former Georgia Attorney General Sam Olens and partner Edward Lindsey, supported by our Public Policy team in Atlanta, were active in achieving passage of the historic legislation. The bill was signed by Governor Brian Kemp on June 26.

Representing the Anti-Defamation League, and supported by members of our Public Policy team in Atlanta, Sam and Edward were instrumental in finding a successful path

forward for the bill, which will impose additional penalties for crimes motivated by a victim's race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability status. Sam and Edward were involved in extensive negotiations with legislative leadership, and Sam provided compelling testimony. Prior to this historic achievement, Georgia was one of only four states without hate crime legislation. This bill is also the first to acknowledge sexual orientation and gender identity in the Georgia code.

## Filing an amicus brief in a landmark LGBTQ+ employment discrimination case



Peter Stockburger



Evan Wolfson

The Supreme Court, in the middle of Pride Month no less, ruled to protect all Americans against employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. We are also proud of our role in advancing the court's determination in *Bostock v. Clayton County, GA*. The Firm filed an amicus brief in the case on behalf of approximately 40 former government officials who had been involved in shaping and enforcing civil rights law, including former senior leaders of the EEOC; the US Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Justice and Labor; and other agencies. New York senior counsel **Evan Wolfson** and San Diego partner **Peter Stockburger** led the year-long effort.

Defending three wrongly fired plaintiffs—the court also considered two companion cases, *Altitude Express v. Zarda* and *Harris v. EEOC*—the team argued that “[t]he decisions reached by the EEOC and others—that Title VII’s prohibition of the ‘entire spectrum’ of sex discrimination encompasses

discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, including transgender status—were the product of long, careful, and conscientious study and independent consideration across multiple agencies. These deliberate determinations have been embraced and amplified by numerous courts, including several en banc Circuits, and are coherent and correct as a matter of law.”

The court agreed. In a 6-3 decision upholding the Second Circuit in *Zarda* and the Sixth Circuit in *Harris*, and overturning the Eleventh Circuit in *Bostock*, it held that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 covers discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation—enshrining new legal protections nationwide for LGBTQ+ Americans at a time when their right to equal treatment under the law is being vigorously challenged on a number of fronts.

# Diversity and Inclusion

## Launching a Practice Group Diversity Partner program

The Firm announced that it is augmenting actions to ensure all women and diverse lawyers and colleagues have an equal opportunity to develop and succeed, with a particular urgency on increasing the number and retention of African American lawyers. One way we hope to achieve this is by accelerating diversity and inclusion at the practice group level—the business units through which we guide our Firm—through the creation of a Practice Group Diversity Partner program.

The practice group diversity partners will work closely with practice group leaders to review and ensure transparency and equity around the assignment of work, decisions around hiring and transition, who is selected for client development opportunities, and who is promoted. The practice group diversity partners will monitor metrics on a regular basis to make sure we are achieving our goals and importantly meeting our clients' and own expectations, and provide the critical thought and guidance needed to support the success of our diverse talent.

## Asian American and Pacific American Heritage Month

A fireside chat with *Korematsu* lawyer Dale Minami and a documentary screening

One of the highlights of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, celebrated in May was a firm-wide [webcast](#) featuring **Dale Minami**, a co-founder of both the Asian Law Caucus and the Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area in conversation with **Louise Ing**, a Honolulu partner and co-chair of the Firm's Asian, South Asian, Pacific-American Professionals affinity group. Mr. Minami recounted the extraordinary experience of his legal team's 1983 successful fight to overturn the conviction of Fred Korematsu for violating a WW II-era executive order that mandated

his relocation. He also reflected on the danger of bias and stigmatic behavior, the tension between civil liberties and governmental action, the role of lawyers in pushing back to protect the civil rights of all in our communities, and how the current pandemic has fueled demonization of Asian and Asian American communities.

Separately, Louise hosted a screening and discussion of the documentary *Alternative Facts*, which explores key court cases involving the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.



Louise Ing

Dale Minami

# Asian American and Pacific American Heritage Month Q&As with colleagues



**Tonya Vachirasomboon**  
Partner, Indianapolis

## **How has being diverse contributed to your success?**

I have had the opportunity to live and work in a variety of markets. These opportunities, together with my diverse background, have helped in developing relationships and navigating complex transactions on a global level.

## **What is your advice for less experienced diverse lawyers?**

I have been fortunate to have numerous mentors and sponsors at the Firm, and I believe that mentorship and sponsorship are absolutely critical to one's advancement. It is important to identify those who will be invested in your long-term success.

## **Who has inspired you to embrace your diversity?**

My mother instilled in me a sense of pride in our Thai background, culture and heritage, and she taught me the value of diversity and the importance of lifting up others. These values are central to how I approach my work to this day.



**Jennifer Sun**  
Shareholder,  
Pittsburgh

## **How does being diverse contribute to your success as a lawyer?**

A diverse background is one facet of who I am as a lawyer. To me, it is not the most prominent trait of my experience and growth as a lawyer but it is an attribute that is always with me and one that others see. Our background, knowledge, experiences and perceptions shape the way we view and approach issues, events, people and our environment in ways that we might not even recognize. Awareness of how these elements shape the handling of legal issues and identification of solutions is critical to client service.

## **What is your advice for less experienced diverse lawyers?**

Find ways to connect with your peers, colleagues and community early and often. At the end of the day, the business of law is about relationships. Forming them early on in your career—whether based on your practice, school, community or outside interests—will enable you to build client relationships as you progress in your career.



**Nick Puji**  
Partner, Los Angeles

## **How does being diverse contribute to your success as a lawyer?**

As a Sikh who wears a turban and keeps unshorn hair, being diverse helps me stand out and catch (hopefully positive) attention from clients, courts and even opposing counsel. I believe that being a minority and looking different from most people around me encouraged me to work harder to make a positive impression, “fit in” and connect with people around me. I believe those sharpened survival/fitting-in skills now help me as a lawyer because they allow me to better connect with and understand clients' objectives and motivations, and ideally be persuasive to other lawyers and judges.

### **What is your advice for less experienced diverse lawyers?**

First and foremost, apply yourself and work hard to soak in as much information and as many experiences as possible. This will enhance your “product offering” as a lawyer. Second, take note that, because you may look different than most lawyers, you have the advantage of gaining a reputation faster—so do everything you can to make it positive. Third, be creative and be yourself. We deal with unique and difficult problems on a daily basis. The more we can pull from our own diverse backgrounds and perspectives, the stronger edge we have in tackling the challenges we face.



**Isabella Hsu**  
Managing Associate,  
Los Angeles

### **How does being diverse contribute to your success as a lawyer?**

Being diverse inspires me to continually learn and understand different perspectives. In a team setting, offering these additional perspectives means the team can collectively consider an idea that might otherwise have been overlooked and ultimately lead to more innovative solutions for clients.

### **What is your advice for less-experienced diverse lawyers?**

Be proud of your individual cultural background and experiences. Your diversity of knowledge, thought and experiences are what make your contributions valuable and can be your advantage on a deal or in a courtroom.

### **Who has inspired you to embrace your diversity?**

My immigrant parents raised me in a bilingual, bicultural environment. I am proud to have grown up with that experience, as it means I can enjoy the best parts of two cultures.





# Pride Month 2020

## Webinar and discussion: LGBTQ+ representation in media and pop culture

In honor of **Pride Month**, our Purple Pride+ affinity group (fka LGBTQ+ Professional Network) hosted a [webinar](#) examining the impact of LGBTQ+ representation in the media and popular culture. The program, which drew more than 400 attendees, featured New York senior counsel **Evan Wolfson**, the founder and president of Freedom to Marry, which drove the successful strategy that won same-sex couples the right to marry throughout the US; **Sarah Kate Ellis**, president and CEO of GLAAD, the media-monitoring organization that rewrote the script for LGBTQ acceptance; and *Washington Post* editorial board member and MSNBC contributor **Jonathan Capehart**. The lively discussion, co-moderated by Purple Pride+ co-chairs managing director **James Richardson** and associate **Talia Linneman**, ranged from the evolution of LGBTQ+ news coverage since the Stonewall uprising, a seminal event that was all but ignored by mainstream media at the time, to the role of popular culture in normalizing what was once considered deviant, to the latest hill to climb: fair and balanced coverage of the transgender, nonbinary,

“**If Barack Obama says it and Michele Obama wears it, my mother loves it’**

- **Jonathan Capehart**, on his born-again Christian mother’s acceptance of gay marriage and the power of a President to a change a mind

## Pride Month Q&As with colleagues



**James Richardson**  
Managing Director,  
Washington, DC

### What does LGBTQ+ pride mean to you?

Pride means being liberated from expectations—yours and mine—that I need to be anything other than who I am.

### What is your advice for less experienced LGBTQ+ lawyers?

Being yourself isn't a liability. Be loud, be fabulous, be campy, but above all, be you.

### Who has inspired you to embrace your identity?

A colleague here at Dentons, actually—Evan Wolfson—with whom I had the privilege to work on the coalition behind the Supreme Court case that affirmed the freedom to marry for gay and lesbian couples nationwide. At the time, I was out privately but not professionally, and through the process felt called live truthfully, so I outed myself in the [Washington Post](#).



**Julius Carter**  
Associate, Chicago

### **What does LGBTQ+ pride month mean to you?**

It is a time to reflect on our past, and an opportunity to imagine a better future. Specifically, it commemorates the Stonewall uprising against police brutality. In 1969 LGBTQ+ citizens stood up and said, "ENOUGH." This cry is echoed today in the Black Lives Matter movement. For decades, black and brown LGBTQ+ people have resisted the misuse of police power. And our fight is not over. Say their names: George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Ahmaud Arbery.

To end slavery, we fought a war. To end Jim Crow, we marched on Washington, sat at lunch counters, were blasted by firehoses. What will you do to end racism?

### **What is your advice for less experienced LGBTQ+ lawyers?**

Remain visible. Recognize that you add value. And acknowledge and repay those who have invested in you.



**Talia Linneman**  
Associate,  
Washington, DC

### **What does LGBTQ+ pride mean to you?**

To me, pride is most meaningful as an opportunity to learn about history. To show our pride, we can tell the stories of people like Marsha P. Johnson, a black trans woman who was instrumental in the Stonewall riots. She wasn't everyone's cup of tea, but she changed the world. Her story prompts us to ask ourselves: Who are the troublesome people, who aren't like me or who I don't understand, and is there something I can learn from them?

Marsha was also homeless at times. Today, many young people are kicked out of their homes because they are LGBTQ+. That is why SMYAL (Supporting and Mentoring Youth Advocates and Leaders) and similar organizations are so important. They advocate to end homelessness in the DC metro area, while providing LGBT youth with opportunities for personal growth.

### **What is your advice for less experienced LGBTQ+ lawyers?**

Learn from others, but trust yourself. Seek out people of different experiences and try to connect with them (and really listen). But at the end of the day, know that you have your own wisdom to decide what is right for you.

### **Who has inspired you to embrace your identity?**

I have encountered certain people who were unlike anyone else, and unabashedly so. They enriched my life and made me feel that the world was a more interesting and more beautiful place. They could have hidden who they were, or shaped themselves to be more like everyone else, but they didn't. And that was a gift to me—the realization that just being yourself can be a gift to others.



**Nick Kacprowski**  
Partner, Honolulu

### **What is your advice for less experienced LGBTQ+ lawyers?**

My advice for all less experienced lawyers is to do pro bono work. My advice for less experienced LGBTQ+ lawyers is to do pro bono work to benefit LGBTQ+ people. There is certainly no lack of opportunities. I would also advise LGBTQ+ lawyers to network with other LGBTQ+ lawyers. You will develop professional and personal relationships that will enrich your career and life.

### **Who has inspired you to embrace your identity?**

I have been inspired by various people over the course of my life. Right now, it's my three-year-old daughter. When just the two of us are out and about I am often asked by strangers "Where's her mom?" It's so easy to deflect the question and say something like "Oh, it's just the two of us today." And more often than I care to admit, I take that easy way out. But that does a disservice to me and my daughter. The harder and more awkward way to answer is to patiently and kindly explain that she has two dads and no mom—and she's lucky because she has two fantastic parents.



# Kudos!

**Michael Bamberger**, a senior counsel in New York and one of the nation's leading First Amendment authorities, was honored to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from the *New York Law Journal*. For more than 40 years, Michael has dedicated his career to protecting free speech, including defending publishers in defamation actions and counseling media clients in their review of potentially defamatory and infringing material.

**Chris Thel**, a shareholder in Pittsburgh was named by the *Legal Intelligencer* as one of the state's "most effective dealmakers" based on deal volume (quantity and dollar value) and his skill at "getting both sides to sign on the dotted line."

Phoenix Litigation senior managing associate **Erin Bass** was selected to receive an award from the US District Court for the District of Arizona for her outstanding skill in, and dedication to, pro bono service in 2019.

Washington, DC, partner **Shari Klevens** was selected as a 2020 Minority Corporate Counsel Association Rainmaker finalist.

New Jersey Litigation senior managing associate **Kelly Lloyd Lankford** was honored by the *New Jersey Law Journal's* 2020 Professional Excellence Awards.

St. Louis Litigation partner **Sarah Carlson** was selected as a winner of *Missouri Lawyer Media's* 2020 Diversity and Inclusion Awards.

*Public Utilities Fortnightly* named Washington, DC, Energy managing associate **Matthew Bly** to its annual "Fortnightly Under Forty" list.

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