

# DIVERSITY MATTERS

## EDITOR'S NOTE

### Reflecting on Black History Month & Marching Forward to Women's History Month

*I want to say a little something that's long overdue/The disrespect to the women has got to be through/To all the mothers and the sisters and the wives and friends/I want to offer my love and respect to the end*  
- Beastie Boys

On February 25, 2022, a historic announcement for the next Supreme Court Justice was made by President Joseph Biden. On that historic day, Ketanji Brown Jackson, who currently serves as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, became the first black woman nominated to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. Judge Jackson, who has been described as exceptionally qualified, has seen the justice system from all sides, as a public defender, a federal judge, a member of the US Sentencing Commission and has family members who serve in law enforcement. She should be a wonderful addition to the Court.

Women have done extraordinary things despite the obstacles set in front of them. This volume of Diversity Matters is dedicated to Women's History Month to celebrate the economic, political, and social contributions of women. Women's History Month was established by a presidential proclamation issued by President Jimmy Carter to draw attention to and improve the focus on women in historical studies in the 1980s.

As we emerge from the pandemic, it must be noted and recognized that women continue to face challenges and throughout the pandemic have held dynamic roles as caregivers, homeschoolers, and full-time executives, and persevered. In this issue, and throughout March, Weber Gallagher will highlight and honor the extraordinary women in our law firm, and our lives, who have succeeded despite the odds.



**Kenneth Sharperson**

**Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT!



**Laura Seider,**

Associate, Philadelphia

### What do you like about being on the DEI Committee?

The Committee is a great way to interact with members of the firm from other offices and practice areas that I would otherwise not have a chance to meet or work with. It's also a great opportunity to just listen to each other about things that are important to us outside of work. If you haven't been to the Breakroom yet, please give it a try!

### What do you like about working at WG?

WG has consistently offered me new ways to engage, both within the firm and in the community. There is a real focus on professional development, and not just productivity.

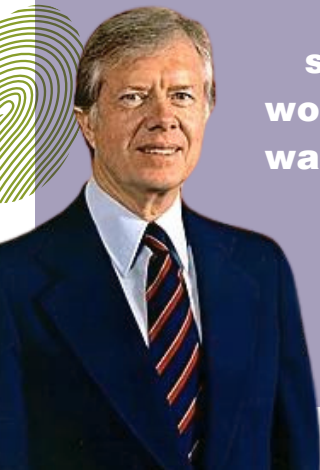
### What piece of advice would you give to young professionals?

Don't be afraid to step outside of your comfort zone. Say "yes" to joining that committee, hosting that webinar, or attending that marketing event. If you want to be noticed, be noticeable!

### What do you like to do outside of work?

I enjoy practicing yoga daily, and reading non-fiction in my free time.

**"From the first settlers who came to our shores, from the first American Indian families who befriended them, men and women have worked together to build this nation. Too often the women were unsung and sometimes their contributions went unnoticed. But the achievements, leadership, courage, strength and love of the women who built America was as vital as that of the men whose names we know so well."**



**President Jimmy Carter**

Message designating March 2-8, 1980 as National Women's History Week

## Weber Gallagher's D&I Committee Members

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Elizabeth Barreto    | Valerie Lyons      |
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| Lorraine Constantine | Dineth Quinones    |
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| Andrew Indeck        | Laura Seider       |
| Kristin Kostrub      | Kenneth Sharperson |
| Matthew Laver        | Tracy Walsh        |
| Andrea LeRoy         | Scott Wilson       |
| Ana Lopez-Diaz       | John Zurzola       |

## **She Shoots, She Scores: Equal Pay That Is**

By: Chelsea Seidel, Digital Marketing Coordinator, Philadelphia

“Equal pay” chants erupted across the stadium in France following the United States Women’s National Team’s (USWNT) World Cup win in 2019. Only a few months earlier, a lawsuit was filed by the USWNT alleging gender discrimination under the Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The world was well aware of the alleged discrimination faced by the world class athletes who had just defended their World Cup title and broke records along the way.

The 2019 World Cup isn’t the only success of the USWNT, in addition to their four World Cup wins, they have also secured four Olympic gold medal finishes and numerous other accolades. Operating under the US Soccer Federation (USSF), the women’s soccer team generates on average \$900,000 more revenue than the men’s National Team. Arguably the more popular team, the USWNT trains, travels, and even competes at lesser facilities than their male counterparts. Yet their jerseys sell out more and their names are more known across the United States. The men’s team has no World Cup wins nor Olympic medals.

The numbers of the USWNT versus the men’s team speak for themselves. Approximately \$3,662,480 is spent on development for USWNT, yet \$7,438,159 is spent on development for men. A top player on the USWNT can earn a maximum of \$4,950 per game if they played 20 friendlies and won them all. On the flip side, the men’s team can earn an average of \$13,166 for the same number of games and wins. All men’s games are played on grass while the USWNT is forced to play on turf. It is widely known that turf, while cheaper to maintain, is a big injury risk for athletes.

The fight for equal pay started before the filing in March 2019. In 2016, five players filed a discrimination complaint with the EEOC. The complaint sat for more than two years before the players were allowed to pursue their right to sue the USSF without going through the EEOC. Given 90 days, 28 USWNT officially signed on and the suit was filed all while preparing to attend the 2019 World Cup. Following their return, a Federal Judge ruled against the USWNT. The Judge ruled that



because of the number of games the women played per year, they made more than their male counterparts. The ruling was appealed, and a settlement was reached in February 2022.

The USWNT fought years of discrimination and had originally asked for \$66 million. The settlement came in well below at \$22 million and would be split among the players, along with a \$2 million fund to support players after retirement. Part of the money would also be allocated to assist with growing the women’s side of soccer. Additionally, the settlement requires World Cup bonuses for men and women will be equal for all future appearances. It is important to note, none of this money gets released until a new Collective Bargain Agreement (CBA) is reached between the USSF and the USWNT.

As Megan Rapinoe, a member of the USWNT said, “There’s no real justice in this other than this never happening again. With the settlement of the working conditions and this settlement which is contingent upon a CBA that will have equal pay going forward, there’s no other way to look at it than just a monumental win for women’s sports and women’s soccer, in particular.”

There is hope going into negotiations for the new CBA that equal pay can be achieved. USSF President and former player Cindy Parlow Cone believes the CBA could be signed as soon as this March.

The road of victory is close for the USWNT, and this fight is one for the history books. The USWNT continues to be leaders in women’s history and provides inspiration around the world for reaching equal representation.

The statistics in this article are originally from CNN.com



# **INFLUENTIAL BLACK WOMEN LAWYERS**

By: Kenneth E. Sharperson, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Bedminister

The strength and perseverance of women in the legal profession, and, in particular, black women, has a well-documented history. Indeed, while Judge Jackson's nomination marks the latest milestone in the history of black women lawyers, and black women remain underrepresented as judges in the nation's court system, black women have a significant history that dates back over 150 years.

## **The First**

The first black woman lawyer in the United States was Charlotte E. Ray. After graduating from college in 1869, Ray became a teacher at Howard University. At 19, Ray began teaching at Howard University, although her goal was to join the school's law program. She applied to the program under the name "C.E. Ray" to disguise her gender.

In 1872, Ray graduated from the Howard University School of Law and was admitted to the District of Columbia Bar that same year, making her the first black female attorney in the United States. Sadly, Ray eventually stopped practicing because she was unable to maintain a steady client flow due to racial and sexist prejudice, and later moved to New York and became a teacher in Brooklyn.

## **Barrier Breaker**

Elreta Melton Alexander was the first black woman to graduate from Columbia Law School in 1945. After she graduated, she returned to North Carolina to practice law. In 1964, she lost a case in which she defended four black men accused of raping a white woman, however, she used the trial to call attention to race-based jury selection procedures which are still prevalent in 2022.

In 1968, she became the first black woman in the country to be an elected district court judge.

Following her success as a district court judge, in 1974, Alexander ran for Chief Justice of North Carolina's Supreme Court, and despite her qualifications, she lost to a fire extinguisher salesman with no legal expertise. Ironically, the state later amended its Constitution to require that candidates have a law degree to be elected.

## **The Trailblazer**

Many historians have noted that the first black woman Supreme Court Justice should have been the eminently qualified Constance Baker Motley, who was the first African American woman appointed to the federal bench. Motley was said to have been touted for the Supreme Court as early as the 1960s.

Motley was an accomplished civil rights lawyer and has been called the chief legal tactician of the Civil Rights Movement. She helped litigate *Brown v. Board of Education*. She desegregated schools and universities in the South. She represented Martin Luther King Jr. in Birmingham, and she won nine of the 10 cases that she argued before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Motley moved into politics in 1964, becoming the first black female state senator in New York. A year later, she was elected as the first female president of the Manhattan borough.

In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson named Motley a Federal Court Judge, the first African American woman to hold the position. Yet, despite her accomplishments, the American Bar Association rated Motley merely "qualified" (the middle tier) for a federal judgeship, asserting that she lacked trial experience in New York even though she had litigated almost 200 cases in federal trial and appellate courts nationwide.

As we end our celebration of Black History Month and begin our celebration of Women's History Month, we remember the accomplishments and contributions of these three lawyers to case law and the legal community.



# WINTER OLYMPICS REWIND

By: Scott Wilson, Partner, Mt. Laurel



With the completion of the Winter Olympics, it seems only fitting to look at the first black athletes to win gold medals in the Winter Olympics.

During the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics, Vonetta Flowers made history by winning gold as the brakewoman in the two-woman event. By so doing, she became the first black athlete to win a gold in the Winter Olympics. Originally a sprinter at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, she dreamed of being a summer Olympian. However, after failing to make the team she turned to bobsled and quickly rose to the top of her sport. The 2002 Winter Olympics was the first to feature the two-woman bobsled event. Flowers and her driver, Jill Bakken, defeated fourteen other teams to win gold. They edged two German teams to take gold. After retiring from competition, Flowers became a mother of three children. She resides in Jacksonville, Florida as a stay-at-home mother and homeschooler.



The first black athlete to win an individual gold medal in the Winter Olympics was speedskater, Shani Davis. In 2006 at the Turin, Italy games, Davis won gold in the 1000 meters. He repeated as gold medalist in 2010. Davis had a glittering career in which he set nine world records and won four Olympic medals. Davis was born and raised in Chicago. His name fittingly translates as “to adventure”. He initially started out as a roller skater before moving to ice-skating. His is unique among skaters for reaching elite levels in both the long and short track disciplines. He retired in 2019 and embarked on a coaching career.

## Black History Resources

- [The Library of Congress: Black History Month](#)
- [Facts about Black History Month](#)
- [NPR: The Story Behind Black History Month and Why it's Celebrated in February](#)

## Women's History Resources

- [The National Women's History Alliance](#)
- [National Women's History Museum](#)
- [Time Magazine: This Is How March Became Women's History Month](#)

In honor of **Women's History Month**, the women in our firm share a piece of advice they wish they could give their younger selves to **#BreakTheBias**.



**Suzanne Utke, Partner**

"Accept every challenge that interests you and know that you may not even know it will interest you until you 'try it on for size.' Success can come as a wonderful surprise."

**Preeya Bansal, Associate**

"It's okay to prioritize your own wants and needs."



**Kristen Swift, Partner**

"Trust and respect are earned. Never compromise yourself or your values."

**Jennifer Laver, Partner**

"Always know your worth and ask for what you deserve. No one will advocate for you better than yourself."



**Valerie Lyons, Chief Marketing Officer**

"Don't be afraid to follow your passion. It will lead to bigger and greater things than you could ever imagine!"

**Catherine De Angelis, Partner**

"Don't wait to be noticed, demand to be noticed."



# Join Us

For a conversation about overcoming adversity with **Lisa Smith**  
Recovery Coach, Speaker, Writer & Consultant

**Date:**

Wednesday, March 23

**Time:**

12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Join Weber Gallagher and our special guest, Lisa Smith, for an interactive discussion during Women's History Month.

During this exciting presentation, Lisa Smith reflects on her story and how that led her to be at the forefront of the movement to advanced wellbeing in the legal profession. She will cover issues like managing stigmas, dealing with imposter syndrome, and mitigating the need to be perfect as an attorney.

Lisa is the author of the acclaimed memoir, *Girl Walks Out of a Bar*, which recounts her descent into and recovery from “high-functioning” alcohol and cocaine addiction in big New York City law firms.

The first 50 people who register and attend the event will receive a copy of Lisa's book, "Girl Walks Out of a Bar."

For those needing CLE credits, this event offers one ethics CLE.

**RSVP HERE**

