

May/June 2013 Issue

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Member Spotlight: Linda J. Ravdin

Compiled by Maisa Jean Frank, Associate, Gray Plant Mooty

Annual Dinner



A reception was held prior to the dinner and program.

The WBA and WBA Foundation Annual Dinner was held Wednesday, May 22, 2013 at the National Building Museum. This signature event brought together lawyers, judges, legislators, and other professionals for the area's largest local bar association dinner.

The theme for the dinner, and for the WBA 2012-2013 bar year, was "Change Leadership," recognizing the power of women leaders who have championed change in the legal profession. During her opening remarks, 2012-2013 WBA President, Laura Possessky, of Gura & Possessky, PLLC, said, "Change leadership has been defined as 'championing the achievement of intended and real change.' While we are all navigating dramatic changes in the legal profession resulting from a new and post-crisis economy, leading change is different from managing change."...

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2013 Woman Lawyer of the Year

Introduction by the Honorable Patricia McGowan Wald of the Honorable Vanessa Ruiz, DC Court of Appeals

Events

Wednesday, July 10, 2013

[Solo & Small Practice Monthly Luncheon](#)

Presented by: Solo & Small Practice Law Forum

This event is open to lawyers from solo and small firms, as well as attorneys looking to join solo or small firm life.

Thursday, July 18, 2013

[Networking: Building Your Life One Contact at a Time](#)

Presented by: Career Development Committee

Ah, summer! The beach, the BBQs, the happy hours. Are you taking advantage of these opportunities? Do you want to learn the secrets of the number one tool for career advancement? Unlock the truth behind networking—it's not just about collecting cards! Hate the idea of "working a room?" We'll show you how to network effectively on your terms.

Find out why you need to make networking part of your professional and personal life in a fun and relaxed environment.

Tuesday, July 23, 2013

[The Under-Representation of Women Lawyers Before the Supreme Court](#)

Presented by: Amicus Committee

Currently, women lawyers comprise about only 17% of Supreme Court advocates. Our distinguished panel will discuss the under-representation of women who argue before the Supreme Court and whether the Supreme Court bar is truly seeing an increase of women appearing before them. Additionally, the panelists will discuss their career paths and how attorneys can build a career as an appellate attorney.

Tuesday, December 17, 2013

[Holiday Tea](#)



Linda J. Ravdin is a principal at **Pasternak & Fidis**, concentrating in divorce and family law for both traditional and nontraditional families. She is experienced in the resolution of alimony claims, property issues of all kinds, and custody and child support issues, and is a nationally known authority on premarital and postmarital agreements. Ms. Ravdin has dealt with the division of private, governmental, and international organization retirement benefits; stock options and deferred compensation; businesses and professional services practices; real estate; and securities. ...

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Step toe & Johnson LLP
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Cynthia Hemphill
Trow & Rahal, P.C.
chemphill@trowlaw.com

Staff Liaison
Carol Montoya, CAE
WBA
202-639-8880



Judge Patricia McGowan Wald
(credit: Mark Van Bergh Photography)

Introducing famous and interesting people turns out to be a much harder job than you might think. It's especially hard if they're actually nice people as well, and your friends. I could take up the next five minutes going down the absurdly long list of Vanessa Ruiz's accomplishments. Like Dr. Seuss' book, you cannot imagine the places she has gone or the things she has seen and done. But that would not do her justice and of course justice is what she and we are all about. So remembering my days on the DC Circuit where we reminded all lawyers appearing before us at oral argument not to read your briefs but assume (even if it was not always apparent) we had read them already, I am retreating to the appellate judge's role and treating this introduction as a kind of oral argument, dominated, as those who appeared before me will recall, by questions of my own. ...

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Remarks by the Honorable Vanessa Ruiz, DC Court of Appeals

It was a lovely surprise to receive a call from Laura Possessky, as president of the WBA, informing me of the Board's decision for this year's award. Would I accept it? Well, yes! And then I had the opportunity to choose who would introduce me and of course I reached for the moon, and Judge Pat Wald said yes. It is such a privilege to be here, both because of the award and the introduction. I simply should say thank you and sit down. And I will, but not just yet. ...

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Committees and Forums

Initiative 2.0: Creating a Path to Success in a Changing Economy

By Suzanne D. Reifman, Partner, Vinson & Elkins LLP, Co-chair, Initiative Committee; WBA President-Elect

Presented by: Communications Law Forum

The annual afternoon high tea promises to be a festive, delicious and congenial experience – the perfect way to celebrate the holiday season with your friends! Our Honored Guest is Jessica Rosenworcel, a Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission.

President's Column

By Jessica E. Adler, WBA President

When I moved to Washington, DC almost 13 years ago, the Women's Bar Association was one of the first organizations with which I became involved. It is difficult to convey the importance the WBA has had for me both personally and professionally. It has provided mentoring, networking, leadership, and speaking opportunities.

I am very excited and honored to serve as President of this wonderful organization and plan to further our mission, which is:

Maintaining the honor and integrity of the profession; promoting the administration of justice; advancing and protecting the interests of women lawyers; promoting their mutual improvement; and encouraging a spirit of friendship among our members. ...

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WBA Foundation

WBAF President's Letter

By Kirra L. Jarratt

On behalf of the WBA Foundation Board, I want to thank the Women's Bar Association family for your support during the past year and invite you to partner with us again as we begin the new bar year. In this second year of our three-year strategic plan, we remain focused



The Career Path Advancement Panel, l-r: Ellen Ostrow, Kim Keenan, Deborah Garza, Heather Bock, and Kate Neville

On May 9, the WBA continued its ground-breaking multi-part **Initiative on Retention and Advancement of Women** by presenting “Initiative 2.0: Creating a Path to Success in a Changing Economy” at the George Washington University Law School. The economic recession has had a disparate impact on women lawyers. ...

[read more ...](#)

Being a Nimble Job Seeker

By Stephanie Spear, The American Institute of Architects; Co-chair, Young Lawyers Committee

On April 3, the **Young Lawyers Committee** hosted “Being a Nimble Job Seeker.” The event attracted over 25 attendees, several of whom were first-time attendees to a WBA event. Speakers **Mary Legg** and **Kate Neville** answered a series of questions during a panel discussion and then took questions from the audience. ...

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Hit the Ground Running Bootcamp

By Cathleen Szebrat, The O’Toole Firm; Co-chair Diversity Committee



Sixty young professionals came out on a Saturday for the Bootcamp.

In April, the **Diversity Committee** partnered with **Ms. JD** to host a full-day training event entitled “Hit the Ground Running Bootcamp.” Thanks to the space and sponsorship from **Vinson**

intensely on raising more money, awarding larger grants, improving our communications, undergirding our infrastructure, and strengthening our relationship with the WBA.

How can you get involved? ...

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WBAF 2012-2013 Donors

Many thanks to our supporters! The following donors have made a gift the WBA Foundation between April 1, 2013 and May 31, 2013. These gifts will be used to support nonprofits that serve the legal and related needs of women and girls in the DC Metropolitan community. For a list of all fiscal year donors and recognition of giving levels, visit www.wbadcfoundation.org. ...

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& Elkins LLP, along with a grant from the Minority Corporate Counsel Association, we were able to present this training, attended by more than 100 people: approximately 70 young attorneys and law students and more than 40 faculty members from all areas of practice. ...

[read more...](#)

Women's Bar Association DC & WBA Foundation
2020 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 446
Washington, DC 20006
www.wbadc.org | admin@wbadc.org
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She quoted John Kotter, a leading expert on the subject, who distinguished change leadership from change management in a **[Forbes.com](#)** article: "Change leadership is associated with the bigger leaps that we have to make, associated with windows of opportunity that are coming at us faster, staying open less time, bigger hazards and bullets coming at us faster, so you really have to make a larger leap at a faster speed. Change leadership is going to be the big challenge in the future, and the fact that almost nobody is very good at it is – well, it's obviously a big deal."

Ms. Possessky cited the women sitting with her on the dais as an example of what change leadership looks like. **Caitlin Halligan**, General Counsel of the District Attorney's Office of the County of New York, provided the evening's keynote remarks. **The Honorable Patricia Wald** of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, was on hand to **introduce** the WBA's **2013 Woman Lawyer of the Year**, **the Honorable Vanessa Ruiz** of the

Photos by Mark Van Bergh Photography



A reception was held prior to the dinner and program.



l-r: Dawn Stern, Radiance Harris, Kaity Harbour, Mason Hubbard, and Melanie Garcia of DLA Piper



l-r: Judge Robert Richter, Judge Fred Weisberg, and Judge Hiram Puig-Lugo of the DC Superior Court

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The 2012-2013 WBA Foundation President, **Kirra L. Jarratt**, Legislative Counsel at the *American Bar Association*, also spoke during the Annual Dinner. She discussed the impact of the Foundation's grants to nonprofits serving the legal and related needs of women and girls in the DC Metropolitan area. She shared a [video](#) that highlighted the Foundation's most recent grantees and encouraged attendees to leverage their individual contributions with other donors to make a greater impact on the unavailability of legal services within our community.

The evening concluded with remarks by incoming WBA President **Jessica E. Adler**, The Law Office of Jessica E. Adler. She announced her theme of "Civility" for the coming bar year. She explained that this can be exemplified by mentoring, volunteering, and giving back. "I hope that you will all help me promote civility by helping others and will be conscious of these principles when you are in a position to demonstrate them and give back to our community," Ms. Adler said.



WBA Past President Paulette Chapman, Koonz McKenney Johnson DePaolis & Lightfoot LLP, and WBA Treasurer Josephine Harriott, Howard University



l-r: Emily Plocki, Mikka Gee Conway, Cheryl Aaron, and Daphne Frydman, of Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP



Our esteemed dais at the 2013 Annual Dinner, l-r: 2013-2014 WBA President Jessica Adler, 2013 Woman Lawyer of the Year the Honorable Vanessa Ruiz, WBA Foundation President Kirra Jarratt, The Honorable Patricia McGowan Wald, Caitlin Halligan, and 2012-2013 WBA President Laura Possesky



l-r: Denise Main, Courtney Casp, and Susan Griffen Finnegan, of Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner, LLP



Caitlin Halligan



Maria Mendoza, DC Law Students in Court Program, and Marlon Paz, Locke Lord LLP



WBA Foundation President Kirra L. Jarratt



Casselle Smith and Michelle Cohen, of Ifrah Law



Jessica Adler, 2013-2014 WBA President

2013 Honorary Committee

Thank you to our 2013 Honorary Committee. These women truly exemplify the power of women leaders. They have championed change by leading by example, advocating for justice, and promoting the advancement of women in the legal profession.

Brooksley Born, Former Chairperson, Commodity Futures Trading Commission
Judith Browne Dianis, Co-Director, The Advancement Project
Kim Keenan, General Counsel, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Anastasia Kelly, Co-Managing Partner (Americas), DLA Piper
The Honorable Gladys Kessler, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia
Stacey D. Stewart, USA President, United Way
The Honorable Annice M. Wagner, DC Court of Appeals
Beth A. Wilkinson, Partner, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP

2013 Host Committee

Many thanks to our Host Committee, which was comprised of prominent leaders in the Washington, DC legal community who support the WBA and the WBAF.

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Ronald S. Flagg, Senior Counsel, Sidley Austin LLP

Ann K. Ford, Partner, DLA Piper
Lisa Horowitz, Principal, LBH Consulting
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Holly E. Loiseau, Litigation Partner, Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP
Monica G. Parham, Counsel, Crowell & Moring LLP
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Robert Greene Sterne, Director, Sterne, Kessler, Goldstein & Fox P.L.L.C.
Lee J. Tiedrich, Partner, Covington & Burling LLP
Gail Westover, Litigation Partner, Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP

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Introduction of 2013 Woman Lawyer of the Year

Introduction by the Honorable Patricia McGowan Wald of the Honorable Vanessa Ruiz, DC Court of Appeals

Introducing famous and interesting people turns out to be a much harder job than you might think. It's especially hard if they're actually nice people as well, and your friends. I could take up the next five minutes going down the absurdly long list of Vanessa Ruiz's accomplishments. Like Dr. Seuss' book, you cannot imagine the places she has gone or the things she has seen and done. But that would not do her justice and of course justice is what she and we are all about. So remembering my days on the DC Circuit where we reminded all lawyers appearing before us at oral argument not to read your briefs but assume (even if it was not always apparent) we had read them already, I am retreating to the appellate judge's role and treating this introduction as a kind of oral argument, dominated, as those who appeared before me will recall, by questions of my own.



*The Honorable Patricia McGowan Wald
(credit: Mark Van Bergh Photography)*

First, what should we expect the title Woman Lawyer of the Year to denote? The successful candidate has to stand out in an illustrious crowd of DC woman lawyers. And despite the temporal limitation in the title – Woman Lawyer of the Year, we expect the honoree to be outstanding not just this year, but last year, and next year, and many more after that. In short, no flash in the pan, but rather a woman who has walked the walk for many miles and along many byways as well as highways, someone who might have earned the award not just this year but in many other years. We're looking for a steady run of achievements, not a single Oscar-winning performance.

So how does Vanessa Ruiz stack up on those criteria? Pretty darn good. Five years out of law school while working in a Washington law firm, she argued and won in the Fourth Circuit and in the Supreme Court a civil rights case on behalf of African-American citizens and nonprofit housing groups challenging discriminatory housing practices. That was just the beginning. After successfully negotiating the world of big firm private practice, specializing in international commercial and intellectual property transactions, and later becoming in-house counsel for a major international concern, she founded a firm of her own. Several years after that, she moved on to public service in the DC Corporation Counsel office, ending up as its Chief. She has truly "been there, done that" in terms of lawyering in the trenches: big firm, little firm, and public service. And she is a true District of Columbia product, not a visitor—she really lives here.

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But of course being a top of the drawer lawyer may be enough for the Washingtonian annual supplement about Best Lawyers in DC, but there has to be something more for this plaudit ... And there is.

So my second question: What is so special about Vanessa that places her at the top of the list for the WBA's distinctive award? I remember as a young girl watching Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracey in a movie called Woman of the Year, which portrayed a dynamic foreign journalist hell bent on her career, who badly neglects not just her spouse but an adopted refugee child. Perhaps by current standards it was not sufficiently oriented toward the potentials of dual careers for women, but the underlying message was clear to me: relentless pursuit of one's own career ambitions is not the ticket to either personal happiness or making the most significant contribution to the world we live in.

During ALL her years of lawyering AND judging, about which I will speak in a moment, Vanessa Ruiz has been living a second life. She has been a relentless worker in the vineyards of the DC Bar, the American Bar Association, and the Hispanic bar associations, acting as mentor to young Hispanic-American women lawyers in their careers, and for greater access to legal services for unrepresented persons of all origins, but particularly for language access services for non-English speaking litigants and inmates in women's prisons. She is on the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In terms of sites visited and miles travelled, she is the unofficial Hillary Clinton of our city. The quality of her work is attested by the numerous awards she has received—the coveted Margaret Brent Award from the ABA, Judge of the Year from Hispanic National Bar Association, and Lifetime Achievement Award from the local Hispanic bar. In all these activities she has not only championed change—for access to justice, for diversity in our profession, for insuring the newcomers to our country are benefitted, not intimidated by our justice system—her very presence symbolized change in the top echelons of our government and judicial system.

Question No 3: Ruiz has been a judge in DC's highest court for almost 20 years. How does a judge isolated in the top floor of Judiciary Square become a change agent? An appellate judge must always operate within the boundaries of the law and the Constitution. But all thoughtful judges speaking candidly will admit that laws are not always crystal clear and frequently subject to different interpretations. Every day, different courts in different jurisdictions decide cases based on the same laws differently. Study after study has shown that judges, within textual and precedential limits, do bring their personal life experiences into play in the way they interpret facts and words in a statute. That includes being a woman and living in more than one culture. That is why it is so important to have both genders on the court in adequate numbers, as well as judges of the different ethnic groups that make up our changing populations. That is something the WBA has worked for and something Vanessa Ruiz has displayed in abundance in her work both on and off the court.

The DC Court of Appeals on which Judge Ruiz has served for 20 years has become known for its intelligent and compassionate jurisprudence, and Judge Ruiz's rulings have had a great deal to do with that. I can remember 35 years ago when, as a legal services lawyer, we had to bring our cases in the predecessor to the DCCA, the then-highest court of DC (where we never won anything), but were then allowed to go across the street on a certiorari type writ to the DC Circuit for review. The circuit was a different court then and we won stunning victories in family law, landlord and tenant, and consumer protection. Just across the street from one another different judges interpreting the same laws judging in fundamentally different ways. Now times have changed, and the DCCA is truly DC's court of last resort and fortunately it has become a respected and worthy forum as well as an independent one. And Judge Ruiz has been a critical part of that change process.

One last question: Do we want our Woman Lawyer of the Year to be not just a star lawyer or judge, not just an advocate for women of all kinds, but a wonderful human being, not like Katherine Hepburn in the movie? Here I call on personal experiences to validate her credentials. Vanessa is a loyal person, to her family—husband David and their children—and cuts no corners in the time and care she gives to them. For her friends she is enduring. After my husband's death a few years ago, rather than a note of condolence, she sent me the season schedule for a local theatre and told me to check off which ones I wanted to see—including escort service to and from, since I don't drive. She is loyal to her origins in the Hispanic community. She is independent and courageous. Back when I was on the Circuit, she was an outspoken defender of and contributor to the Gender and Race Task Force of the Circuit, which engendered a fair amount of controversy among some of my colleagues who thought it an inappropriate mission for judges to engage in. In short, she is always there for her family,

friends, and allies in the fight for justice on all fronts. And she is a very good cook.

Oral argument having concluded, I am delighted to introduce WBA's Woman Lawyer of the Year, Vanessa Ruiz.

2013 Woman Lawyer of the Year

Remarks by the Honorable Vanessa Ruiz, DC Court of Appeals

Photos by Mark Van Bergh Photography

It was a lovely surprise to receive a call from Laura Possessky, as president of the WBA, informing me of the Board's decision for this year's award. Would I accept it? Well, yes! And then I had the opportunity to choose who would introduce me and of course I reached for the moon, and Judge Pat Wald said yes. It is such a privilege to be here, both because of the award and the introduction. I simply should say thank you and sit down. And I will, but not just yet.



The Honorable Vanessa Ruiz

For years while I was in practice, I knew of Judge Wald and then, in the early to mid 90s — at around the time of the article on women in New York law firms that Caitlin mentioned — I was part of the DC Circuit's Task Force looking into gender, race, and ethnic bias in the courts. By then there had been such task forces in courts, federal and state, around the country, but this was the first federal court study to take on gender, race, and ethnicity at once. And this being the DC Circuit, it brought matters to a whole new level of inquiry, as well as scrutiny.

I transitioned from lawyer to judge while on the Task Force. And with my newly gained judicial eyes, was able to see how Judge Wald deployed her immense skills as a judge, one all-too aware of the corrosive effects of stereotypes that kept women and minorities back. She did so effectively, with consummate craft and tact. I have continued to be an admirer and student of Judge Wald the person and the judge. Her insightful opinions; range, and unending energy and willingness to give of herself are



Judge Ruiz and her family

an inspiration and a guide. And her professional accomplishments have been accompanied by a sizable family and for many years the wonderful Bob Wald, himself a mentor and inspiration. Thank you, Pat. Your leadership has wrought many positive changes.

And the Woman's Bar Association and WBA Foundation, how can I thank you? In 2009, you spearheaded my nomination for the Margaret Brent Award of the ABA's Commission on Women in the Profession. And now this. I cherish tonight's award from you, representing so many WBA members in this room. This is a legal community I know well, with whom I have worked for many years. It always amazes me how this huge hall is invariably filled with the energy of WBA enthusiasts. I feel very close to you.

We know the importance of people who believe in you and support you, are willing to go to bat for you. You have been, are that, in my life. Thank you. The feeling, as they say, is

mutual. One of the terrific attributes of this legal community is, first, that there are many of us, quite the critical mass; but more important, that we understand there are any number of ways we all can be supportive of each other, help one another. We need to continue to do that.



*Judge Ruiz and 2012 Woman Lawyer of the Year
Katia Garrett*

I do not believe that women — or anyone — can have it all. And rather than balance between work and home, I believe there are trade-offs one must make. But still I think I've made out fantastically well, and for that I have to thank my family, my close friends, my colleagues on the court, my many law clerks over the years. It goes without saying that none of us would be where we are without our families. And it especially needs to be recognized at times of celebration. My daughters Natalia and Alexia are here; I hope they are proud of me as I am of them, so proud. (Imagine where they would be today if they had not had a working mother!) My stepson Matthew also is here, as is my niece Roxana. It is great to have you here.

And then, my husband David Birenbaum. He is key. If there is a critical element to success and happiness outside of yourself, it is selecting your life partner.



Choose for love, and love wisely. And there I have been most fortunate.

When I mentioned the WBA's Woman Lawyer of the Year Award, David transmuted that to "Woman of the Year." I protested, rather feebly I confess, that I was Katherine Hepburn

in the movie with Spencer Tracy. But, darling, if that is the way you think of me, I will not prevent it. Since I took senior status last year, we have embarked on a series of travel, educational, and teaching adventures, both foreign and domestic, and our marriage (30 years this year) is on a second wind. David has assembled quite a number of dear friends who are here this evening and I thank you all for coming. I am indeed lucky in love and nurtured by friendship.

There is one person, not here, I want to mention: my father. He died several years ago and I am always afraid I will cry if I mention him. I will not mention my mother, because for sure I will cry. Anyway, I'm wearing her jewelry, so I've got her right here with me.

My father, Fernando Ruiz-Suria, was a lawyer, a litigator, in Puerto Rico. As a young girl I would listen to him tell stories about his cases. I thought he was always right so he must have been persuasive. He did not direct me to the study of law, to become a lawyer, or what kind of lawyer to be. But once I became a lawyer, I knew he expected me to become a really good one.

I do distinctly remember that from the time I was very young I felt that he supported and encouraged me in whatever I wanted to do. That he believed I was capable of doing things and that I would accomplish what I set out to do. His support was steady, quiet, and it was not demanding of anything specific in return. I was very shrewd in my selection of my father.

Once, when I was already in private practice here in DC, I inadvertently started a fire in the kitchen of my house that ended up requiring that I move out. I minimized the incident to my parents over the phone — I was embarrassed for a calamity of my own making — and assured them I was fine. The next day I received a call from my firm's receptionist saying I had an unidentified visitor. It was my Dad. He had hopped on a plane, came to verify that I was indeed alright. I was. He took me out to dinner and he returned home. That was it. I was left to

deal with the mess and the insurance company — that was my responsibility after all — but the expression of support and implicit offer of help if necessary were there, no questions asked.

My father gave another incomparable gift that I cherish most: a sense of honor.

My father was an honorable man, a person of integrity. He taught me the importance of doing the right thing in the right way, of respecting others no matter who they are or where they come from. He was no radical, and he did well in his law practice, but he had a social conscience. He was not blind to the needs of others and he imparted that to me forever. Others recognized this integrity in him and I felt protected by its aura, thinking it would cover me as well. But it is not a genetic trait one inherits; it has to be developed, with effort.

“Honor” is an old-fashioned word and it can seem outdated. But I don’t think so; I believe honor lies at the core of a meaningful and satisfying professional life.

I say this now because one could spend a lot of time debating Sheryl Sandberg’s prescription to “Lean In” and Anne-Marie Slaughter’s response, while at the same time we ponder Marisa Mayer’s decision to bring people working at home back to Yahoo headquarters while she builds a nursery next to her CEO office. All three are women of substantive accomplishment and I am not saying that these are not discussions worth having about how women navigate the workplace for success along with family responsibilities. They are. (Those of you who know me, know I am a *leaner*.) But these preoccupations are also exhausting and can keep everyone spinning in place. Shouldn’t we be talking about the need for quality affordable child care so parents can have productive work lives without worrying whether the kids are alright?

But beyond the *how* is the *what* we do if we are to hope that the choices we make withstand our later examination. I return to honor because law is described as an honorable profession. To be an honorable lawyer requires doing the right thing, in the right way, being aware of others and their needs. Be forewarned: once you look, you will see.

What is there to see, what we are faced with as members of the legal profession, is not pretty. There is a disconnect between supply and demand. It is now apparent that many law graduates are underemployed or not finding any legal employment at all. A number of lawyers are burdened by significant student debt not only upon graduation from law school but for a number of years, so that their options are restricted and they are kept captive in certain jobs to pay that debt. Many are restless and dissatisfied; a misplaced resource. Those lawyers who try to operate smaller firms or provide more affordable services can have a precarious practice and sometimes barely make it.

Meanwhile those who provide legal services to the poor — never enough — have been cut even more by reduced government funding and plummeting IOLTA earnings; they are stretched too thin and able to represent only a fraction of those who need legal help. You’ve just seen in the video some of the innovative projects of WBA Foundation grantees. They do a lot with very little. Yet the situation is so dire that at a national access to justice conference I attended two weeks ago, one of the sessions was on the application of triage principles, like in a hospital emergency room when there is a mass catastrophe, to allocate scarce legal services.

At the same time there are those who are doing well, very well, *extremely* well actually. As Judge David Tatel mentioned only a few weeks ago, there is “big money” in certain sectors of law practice. Last year, he quoted, the top 100 law firms in the Country grossed almost \$71 billion, that’s with a “b.” And annual profits per partner were \$1.6 million. And here in the District of Columbia, according to a recent Legal Times article, the top 12 firms have gross annual revenues of more than \$7.5 billion. According to Judge Tatel’s calculation, one quarter of one percent of that amount would *double* the capacity to provide representation to the poor in our city. Think about that.

The reality is that below a very thin slice of clients who can afford to pay hefty legal fees, the majority, the *vast* majority of those who need legal representation simply cannot afford it. And increasingly, apart from those lawyers who make the big money, any number of lawyers and law students are struggling to find their place. This dislocation and misallocation of resources in the face of unmet need for legal services is a serious issue for a self-regulating profession. It should concern all of us.

Lawyers have skills and have knowledge that most do not. These are powerful tools; and those of us who are lawyers must deploy them responsibly. With a license to practice law, lawyers have a privilege, a franchise from which others are excluded. It comes with responsibilities.

We are fortunate in that there is a rich tradition and culture in this city for pro bono legal representation and I know that many of you here are active in it. But it is not enough. There is financial support to legal service providers, and I know that many of the law firms and individual lawyers here are contributors. But it is not enough.

Enough will be when no one has to go to court alone, without a lawyer, trying to keep a home, or children; or get child support; or seeking protection from abuse at home. And we are far, far away from that day. More than 90% of persons in landlord-tenant court go it alone. Most victims of domestic violence go it alone. Most persons in child custody and support disputes go it alone. And those are the people who make it to court. There are many more who don't know they have legal rights they could assert, or protections they could invoke; parents who can't navigate the system to get the educational or health services their children need, because they do not know how, perhaps because their English is not up to dealing with forms and bureaucracy.

Closing this yawning justice gap is primarily the collective responsibility of lawyers, whether we are practicing law, judges, or law students.

Changing something this big takes courage. Like honor, courage is not talked about often enough. But it is essential if one is going to tackle important problems with integrity, not just patching up with temporary fixes or letting the naysayers get the upper hand. And it means being ready to withstand criticism, for it will come. The justice gap is a big issue, and a profoundly important one, and it will take all of us to make things right.

I leave you with this: in thinking about our professional lives and the choices we make, it is much easier to "lean in" for something that is worth standing up for, with courage. That is change leadership.

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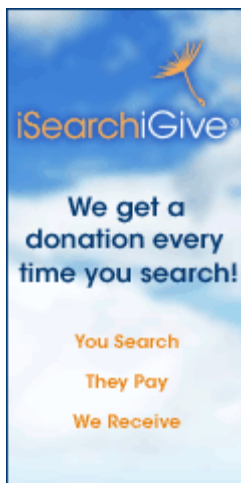
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WBA Foundation President's Letter



By Kirra L. Jarratt

On behalf of the WBA Foundation Board, I want to thank the Women's Bar Association family for your support during the past year and invite you to partner with us again as we begin the new bar year. In this second year of our three-year strategic plan, we remain focused intensely on raising more money, awarding larger grants, improving our communications, undergirding our infrastructure, and strengthening our relationship with the WBA.

How can you get involved?

Spread the word. The Foundation plans to award \$50,000 in **grants** this year to programs that further our mission of serving the legal and related needs of women and girls in the DC Metro area. Look for the release of our Request for Proposals in August with the first deadline for Letters of Intent due in October.

Attend an event. We will host our **Wine Tasting and Silent Auction fundraiser** in the fall, with the proceeds benefitting the **Founders Fellowship** program. This year, a student at the **Howard University School of Law** will receive a \$7,500 fellowship to work at a local nonprofit that furthers our mission. Our Grant Awards Reception will be held in March. We look forward to seeing you at other events throughout the year as well.

Connect. We are on **Facebook** and **Twitter** (@WBAF). We would love for you connect with us through these two platforms. Start by sharing our **newly released grantee highlights video** on your timeline, helping us reach beyond our current network to tell others about the tremendous work our grantees are doing in the community.

Volunteer. A number of folks have contacted the Foundation recently with offers to help collect stories from grantees and research other funding opportunities. **We welcome your ideas, energy, and resources!** Email info@wbacfoundation.org for more information or

Life One Contact at a Time

*Presented by: Career
Development Committee.*

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Presented by: Amicus Committee

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volunteer.

Donate. Starting in July, for the first time ever, you can designate the Foundation when you give through the United Way of the National Capital Area. Our **donor designation number is 8914**. [Click here](#) and give online now. Or, when you **renew your WBA membership**, give to the Foundation. **Leverage your individual donation** with those of others who believe in the importance of meeting the legal and related needs of women and girls in this area.

We cannot continue to do our work without your support. Again, thank you, and we look forward to partnering with you throughout the year.

Kirra L. Jarratt
2013-2014 WBAF President

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WBAF 2012-2013 Donors

Many thanks to our supporters! The following donors have made a gift the WBA Foundation between April 1, 2013 and May 31, 2013. These gifts will be used to support nonprofits that serve the legal and related needs of women and girls in the DC Metropolitan community. For a list of all fiscal year donors and recognition of giving levels, visit www.wbadcfoundation.org.

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Initiative 2.0: Creating a Path to Success in a Changing Economy

By Suzanne D. Reifman, Partner, Vinson & Elkins LLP, Co-chair, Initiative Committee; WBA President-Elect

On May 9, the WBA continued its ground-breaking multi-part **Initiative on Retention and Advancement of Women** by presenting "Initiative 2.0: Creating a Path to Success in a Changing Economy" at the George Washington University Law School. The economic recession has had a disparate impact on women lawyers. The obstacles women traditionally face have been compounded by the rapid transformations in the legal profession arising from the industry's response to bearish economic conditions. The half-day program focused on ways women can achieve success in these challenging times.



The Career Path Advancement Panel, l-r: Ellen Ostrow, Kim Keenan, Deborah Garza, Heather Bock, and Kate Neville

Initiative 2.0 consisted of three sessions as well as a networking lunch. The first session, "Transformation of the Legal Profession," was a panel moderated by [Lisa Horowitz](#), former Director of Professional Development at McDermott Will & Emery LLP. It offered perspectives on why the legal profession is changing and how. Speaking on the panel were [Dan Binstock](#), Partner at executive recruiter Garrison & Sisson, Inc.; [Alejandra Almonte](#), General Counsel, gategroup Americas; [Antoinette C. Bush](#), Partner, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP; and [Katie White](#), Director of Employer Outreach, Office of Professional Development and Career Strategy, The George Washington University Law School. Among other things, the panelists discussed how tough economic conditions combined with higher client expectations have created circumstances in which it has become harder for attorneys to get and keep jobs. However, the panelists also agreed that economic conditions have created opportunities for those who are more entrepreneurial and value-oriented and have learned to network and create their own "brand."

The second panel, "Career Path Advancement," was moderated by [Ellen Ostrow](#), founder of Lawyers Life Coach LLC. The panel was [Heather Bock](#), Executive Director, Center for the Study of the Legal Profession, Georgetown Law Center; [Deborah Garza](#), Partner, Covington

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& Burling LLP; [Kim Keenan](#), General Counsel, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; and [Kate Neville](#), Founder and Principal, Neville Career Consulting, LLC. During the discussion, the panelists offered valuable advice, which included recommendations for women to be proactive and invest in their careers at all stages. Ms. Keenan's tips on finding a new position and negotiating salary were particularly memorable. The panelists also discussed the importance of networking and developing relationships and they considered the various attributes of successful attorneys.

During the final session, the attendees and panelists participated in facilitated small group breakout sessions during which they identified problems in more detail and brainstormed proposed solutions. All agreed that Initiative 2.0 had been a valuable first step in bringing a number of concerns relating to the changing economy and legal market. A final report and additional programming to further address these issues are planned. To the extent you want to become involved in the WBA Initiative Committee, contact Suzanne Reifman at sreifman@velaw.com or 202-639-6577.

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Being a Nimble Job Seeker

By Stephanie Spear, The American Institute of Architects; Co-chair, Young Lawyers Committee

On April 3, the **Young Lawyers Committee** hosted “Being a Nimble Job Seeker.” The event attracted over 25 attendees, several of whom were first-time attendees to a WBA event.

Speakers **Mary Legg** and **Kate Neville** answered a series of questions during a panel discussion and then took questions from the audience. Topics included managing your job search, finding out more about potential employers, and how to avoid some common errors in networking and job searching. Ms. Legg is the owner of Firm Advice, Inc., a legal staffing firm. Ms. Neville owns Neville Career Consulting, specializing in advising attorneys interested in making a career move.

Both Ms. Legg and Ms. Neville emphasized the deliberate, detail-oriented nature of job searching, encouraging attendees to keep an ongoing record of all networking contacts, job applications, and other contacts that fall within the path of job seeking. The record should include dates and names of each contact, as well as how you know the contact. Ms. Legg iterated the importance of the follow-up, saying that the initial thank-you note should be sent within 24 hours of the first interview; an email follow-up after two weeks; and a voicemail two weeks after that. Ms. Neville encouraged research and preparation for an interview, and being prepared to ask thoughtful questions about the organization and the position.

Thank you to our sponsors! Door prizes were sponsored by the Young Lawyers Committee and **Uber** car service. The space was donated by the **American Institute of Architects**.

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Hit the Ground Running Bootcamp

By Cathleen Szebrat, The O'Toole Firm; Co-chair Diversity Committee

In April, the **Diversity Committee** partnered with **Ms. JD** to host a full-day training event entitled “Hit the Ground Running Bootcamp.” Thanks to the space and sponsorship from **Vinson & Elkins LLP**, along with a grant from the Minority Corporate Counsel Association, we were able to present this training, attended by more than 100 people: approximately 70 young attorneys and law students and more than 40 faculty members from all areas of practice. The day focused on building skills in the areas of communication, networking and, self-promotion. The event was led by our Diversity Committee Co-chair and self-proclaimed “Cruise Director,” **Tonya Gaskins**. Thanks to the strategic planning and implementation of Co-chairs Ms. Gaskins and **Zazy Lopez**, and our instructors, the day included many useful tools and takeaways.



Sixty young professionals came out on a Saturday for the Bootcamp.

Eileen Billinson, Director of Litigation at WilmerHale, started off the day with a dynamic presentation on communicating with impact. Ms. Billinson explained that in order to effectively communicate, we need to be prepared with the message we want to relay. Ms. Billinson’s presentation was followed by a breakout session where participants were asked to brief a fictitious partner on the Lilly Ledbetter case. Each participant was provided with constructive feedback on her communication style, tone, and the impact the message had on the ‘acting’ partner.



Bootcamp speaker Kelly Hoey.

The second presentation, “Build Strategic Relationships,” was led by **Diane Darling**, a self-

proclaimed introvert (although we found that difficult to believe) who teaches networking skills. Ms. Darling humorously explained how her methodology of asking quirky questions has opened many doors and opportunities for her. Ms. Darling stated that “without the ability to inspire, motivate, and engage others, even the most brilliant person will hit a wall.” Ms. Darling’s lecture was followed by a networking lunch where attendees utilized the skills learned during the lecture to meet their fellow colleagues and begin to build their own networks.

The final presenter, **Kelly Hoey**, Co-founder and Managing Director of Women Innovate Mobile, closed out the training sessions for the day with a presentation on “Demonstrating Your Value.” Ms. Hoey challenged participants to not be afraid to take a seat at the table and be sure to choose a strategically located seat. Ms. Hoey also said “done is better than perfect.” For those of us striving for perfection on each and every project we work on, this was a refreshing statement. Her presentation was followed by a breakout session where participants had the opportunity to present their achievements to their colleagues. Our esteemed instructors provided each participant with constructive feedback on how to ensure their achievements were not lost in translation.



Small group discussions were a key component of the bootcamp learning experience.

Our training ended on a sweet note with a dessert reception and an opportunity to mix and mingle. Attendees were able to demonstrate the leadership skills gained from the productive day of training and make valuable contacts at the same time.

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Member Spotlight: Linda J. Ravdin

Compiled by Maisa Jean Frank, Associate, Gray Plant Mooty

Linda J. Ravdin is a principal at **Pasternak & Fidis**, concentrating in divorce and family law for both traditional and nontraditional families. She is experienced in the resolution of alimony claims, property issues of all kinds, and custody and child support issues, and is a nationally known authority on premarital and postmarital agreements. Ms. Ravdin has dealt with the division of private, governmental, and international organization retirement benefits; stock options and deferred compensation; businesses and professional services practices; real estate; and securities. She also incorporates tax planning services as part of negotiating family dissolution settlements. Ms. Ravdin is an experienced litigator, but she works with clients to use mediation or other forms of alternative dispute resolution, and is trained in collaborative law.



Linda J. Ravdin

Immediately after graduating from The George Washington University Law School in 1974, Ms. Ravdin established a successful solo practice in the District of Columbia, handling court-appointed criminal matters. In the early 1980s, Ms. Ravdin's practice started to evolve into other areas, and within a few years it concentrated in family law. She joined Pasternak & Fidis as a partner in 2002, and practices family law in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Ms. Ravdin is a Fellow of the **American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers** and a **Fellow of the American Bar Foundation**. Both the Washingtonian and Bethesda Magazine have included her in their lists of the best divorce lawyers in the Washington area.

Ms. Ravdin co-authored the **DC Domestic Relations Manual** with **Judge Diane Brenneman**, and has written three books on premarital agreements and domestic partnership agreements in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Virginia, including one co-authored with her law partner, Marcia C. Fidis. She has also taught a variety of continuing legal education programs on family law topics and is an experienced mediator and a volunteer with the DC Superior Court Family Court Alternative Dispute Resolution Program.

Ms. Ravdin has been married for 27 years. Her son is working on a Ph.D. in applied math, and her stepson is married with a little girl. She travels frequently with her husband and particularly enjoys visiting France and Italy. Ms. Ravdin skis in Utah whenever she has the chance (which is not often enough), and enjoys collecting modern art and baking. She and her husband attend the theatre (Round House, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Studio, Arena Stage, Woolly Mammoth, Theatre J) and love to eat at interesting restaurants.

Why did you join the Women's Bar Association?

I joined the WBA in 1974, right after graduating from law school. **Sarah Brown**, for whom I worked as an investigator at the Public Defender Service during my third year of law school (they paid me \$2.50 an hour and I had to buy my own gas), invited me to a dinner meeting. I had never heard of the WBA and did not know there were so many women lawyers in DC or that we had our own bar association. I had a great time at that meeting and met many interesting women, including some who went to law school when there were only a few women attending and they were very isolated. I remember thinking how brave they were.

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Then, as more women came out of law school, many joined the WBA and it became a more dynamic and powerful organization, a force in the DC legal community, and a great place for women lawyers to start creating a network and finding mentors. I personally found mentors and made many friends through the WBA.

What committees/forums have you been involved in?

I have been involved with the Program Committee, Solo and Small Practice Forum, Working Parents Committee, and Senior Lawyers Committee. I also served as Secretary and wrote articles for the newsletter, including profiles of WBA members who had started their own practices (which seemed radical at the time, but isn't anymore).

How did you get involved? How do you stay involved?

In 1982, I volunteered for the Program Committee, chaired by **Janine Harris**. The following year **Mary Katherine (Kay) Donohoe** and I were asked to co-chair the Program Committee. We did that for two years, planning a total of 20 evening programs. It was a lot of fun and it gave me the opportunity to meet many interesting women lawyers who came to speak at our programs. Kay was able to arrange for **Justice Sandra Day O'Connor** to address the WBA just after she became the first woman on the Supreme Court. That was a thrill! I stayed involved for a number of years, going to WBA meetings and events on average of two or three times a week until my son was born and I stopped going out after work for a number of years. I still maintain friendships with many of the women I first met in those early years.

What benefits do you get from being a part of the WBA?

Those before me started the WBA when women lawyers were excluded from the DC Bar Association and, in doing so, did a great service to those of us who came after. I get the benefit of knowing I can contribute to an organization that gave me a lot when I needed it and that continues to provide a platform where women lawyers can take leadership roles, learn the things they don't teach in law school, and form lifelong friendships.

Do you have a mentor/hero?

It's difficult to point to one person. When I started out doing court-appointed criminal work, there were a number of older male lawyers who took it upon themselves to critique my performance in court, but they did it in a way that allowed me to hear them and learn from them. I was soon able to identify the lawyers whose work I admired and I eventually developed a whole network of lawyers to whom I could go for help and who were generous with their time. **Deborah Luxenberg**, who is my contemporary but who started out doing family law years before I did, is someone I went to often in my early years of handling domestic relations matters and she was always willing to talk to me.

What words of advice do you have for women new to the profession?

Get involved in professional organizations; don't just pay your dues and go to meetings. Volunteer to serve on committees, write articles, speak, and participate actively in the organization's work.

What is the best advice you have received?

Take lots of vacations, go out to restaurants, read books, see movies, hang out with friends, go to the theatre, have fun.

What other organizations are you involved in?

I am active in the [ABA Family Law Section](#), where I serve on the Council and am a member of the Publications Development Board. I am also a member of the Board of Trustees of [Round House Theatre](#) in Bethesda.

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- [Welcome New Members](#)

Adler Named a Rising Star

WBA President Jessica Adler was named a Rising Star in Family Law in Washington DC by Super Lawyers. The selection process for the Rising Stars list is the same as the Super Lawyers selection process, but to be eligible for inclusion in Rising Stars, a candidate must be either 40 years old or younger or in practice for 10 years or less. While up to five percent of the lawyers in each state are named to Super Lawyers, no more than 2.5 percent are named to the Rising Stars list.

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WBA Members are Successful Candidates for the DC Bar & ABA House of Delegates

Congratulations to the WBA members who were elected to the positions on the DC Bar Board of Governors.

Brigida Benitez, Steptoe & Johnson LLP—President-Elect
Sara Kropf, Law Office of Sara Kropf PLLC—Secretary
Kirra L. Jarratt, American Bar Association—Board of Governors
Susan M. Kovarovics, Bryan Cave LLP—Board of Governors
Bridget Bailey Lipscomb, U.S. Department of Justice—Board of Governors
Michelle Thomas, M.C. Thomas & Associates, PC —Board of Governors
Courtney L. Weiner, Lewis Baach PLLC—ABA House of Delegates
Martha V. Clarke, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency—Corporation, Finance and Securities Law Section Steering Committee
Michelle F. Bercovici, Alden Law Group PLLC—Labor and Employment Law Section Steering Committee
Courtney L. Weiner, Lewis Baach PLLC—Litigation Section Steering Committee

Mendoza Cited in National Law Journal Article

Maria Mendoza, a WBA Co-chair for the Mentoring, Diversity and Amicus Brief Committees, was highlighted in an article “**Inadmissible**” in the April 22 issue of the National Law Journal ([See the online version](#), which is available with premium access to the NLJ site.) The write up talks about **Carolyn Fuentes**, a federal defender who “made history in the annals of U.S. Supreme Court advocacy on April 17” when she “became the first Hispanic woman to argue twice before the high court.”

The article cites and relies on Ms. Mendoza in raising this point of history, referring to her as a “DC attorney who has compiled statistics about the short list of Hispanics who have appeared before the justices through history.” Ms. Mendoza organized the WBA’s Supreme Court swearing in ceremony that took place in January of this year.

Welcome New Members

Elizabeth Austern
Margaret A. Bauer
Sandra Britt
Yvette Butler
Jennifer Carrier
Meghan Casey
Eileen L. Coen
Tonya Condell
Veronica Isabel Diaz
Diane Eikenberry
Ashley Evans
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Karon Fowler
Anna Gomez
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Christine Greene
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Theresa Hyatte
Jessica E. Jacobs
Nancy Marie Johnson
Anita Marie Josey-Herring
Diana A. Konate
Elizabeth Landau

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Women's Bar Association DC & WBA Foundation
2020 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 446
Washington, DC 20006
www.wbadc.org | admin@wbadc.org
202-639-8880 | 202-639-8889 fax

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President's Column



By Jessica E. Adler

When I moved to Washington, DC almost 13 years ago, the Women's Bar Association was one of the first organizations with which I became involved. It is difficult to convey the importance the WBA has had for me both personally and professionally. It has provided mentoring, networking, leadership, and speaking opportunities.

I am very excited and honored to serve as President of this wonderful organization and plan to further our mission, which is:

Maintaining the honor and integrity of the profession; promoting the administration of justice; advancing and protecting the interests of women lawyers; promoting their mutual improvement; and encouraging a spirit of friendship among our members.

In the 2013-2014 bar year, we will focus on civility, including helping others. This can be done through many avenues such as mentoring, volunteering, and giving back. Throughout my involvement with the WBA, I have seen countless examples of such civility and have been very fortunate to have been the recipient of much help from other members. Our organization really does live by its mission, in that we help advance and protect other women lawyers, promote their improvement, and encourage friendship.

I hope that you will all help me promote civility by helping others and will be conscious of these principles when you are in a position to demonstrate them and give back to our community.

In practicing civility and helping others, everyone wins. Some of my fondest memories stem from this. Giving to others brings me great joy and I end up getting more in return than what I gave. Anne Frank said: "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." And according to Dr. Seuss, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

Since this wonderful organization was founded in 1917, the WBA has helped to champion and advance women lawyers. Our programming helps give members tools to thrive. Many of our members, both current and past, have been trailblazers in creating paths for the rest of us to succeed. I am very proud to be part of this amazing organization and hope you will join me and the WBA in continuing to help advance women in the legal profession.

Jessica E. Adler
2013-2014 President

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Women's Bar Association DC & WBA Foundation
2020 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 446
Washington, DC 20006
www.wbadc.org | admin@wbadc.org
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Annual Dinner

The WBA and WBA Foundation Annual Dinner was held Wednesday, May 22, 2013 at the National Building Museum. This signature event brought together lawyers, judges, legislators, and other professionals for the area's largest local bar association dinner.

The theme for the dinner, and for the WBA 2012-2013 bar year, was "Change Leadership," recognizing the power of women leaders who have championed change in the legal profession. During her opening remarks, 2012-2013 WBA President, Laura Possessky, of Gura & Possessky, PLLC, said, "Change leadership has been defined as 'championing the achievement of intended and real change.' While we are all navigating dramatic changes in the legal profession resulting from a new and post-crisis economy, leading change is different from managing change." ...

Introduction of 2013 Woman Lawyer of the Year

Introduction by the Honorable Patricia McGowan Wald of the Honorable Vanessa Ruiz, DC Court of Appeals
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Remarks by the Honorable Vanessa Ruiz, DC Court of Appeals

It was a lovely surprise to receive a call from Laura Possessky, as president of the WBA, informing me of the Board's decision for this year's award. Would I accept it? Well, *yes!* And then I had the opportunity to choose who would introduce me and of course I reached for the moon, and Judge Pat Wald said yes. It is such a privilege to be here, both because of the award and the introduction. I simply should say thank you and sit down. And I will, but not just yet. ...

President's Column

By Jessica E. Adler, WBA President

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WBA Foundation

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Committee & Forum Highlights

Initiative 2.0: Creating a Path to Success in a Changing Economy

Being a Nimble Job Seeker

Hit the Ground Running Bootcamp

Member Spotlight: Linda J. Ravdin

Compiled by Compiled by Maisa Jean Frank, Associate, Gray Plant Mooty

Linda J. Ravdin is a principal at **Pasternak & Fidis**, concentrating in divorce and family law for both traditional and nontraditional families. She is experienced in the resolution of alimony claims, property issues of all kinds, and custody and child support issues, and is a nationally known authority on premarital and postmarital agreements. Ms. Ravdin has dealt with the division of private, governmental, and international organization retirement benefits; stock options and deferred compensation; businesses and professional services practices; real estate; and securities ...

Member News

Adler Named a Rising Star

WBA Members are Successful Candidates for the DC Bar & ABA House of Delegates

Mendoza Cited in National Law Journal Article

Welcome New Members

Events

Wednesday, July 10, 2013

Solo & Small Practice Monthly Luncheon

Presented by: Solo & Small Practice Law Forum

This event is open to lawyers from solo and small firms, as well as attorneys looking to join solo or small firm life.

Thursday, July 18, 2013

Networking: Building Your Life One Contact at a Time

Presented by: Career Development Committee

Ah, summer! The beach, the BBQs, the happy hours. Are you taking advantage of these opportunities? Do you want to learn the secrets of the number one tool for career advancement? Unlock the truth behind networking—it's not just about collecting cards! Hate the idea of "working a room?" We'll show you how to network effectively on your terms.

Find out why you need to make networking part of your professional and personal life in a fun and relaxed environment.

Tuesday, July 23, 2013

The Under-Representation of Women Lawyers Before the Supreme Court

Presented by: Amicus Committee

Currently, women lawyers comprise about only 17% of Supreme Court advocates. Our distinguished panel will discuss the under-representation of women who argue before the Supreme Court and whether the Supreme Court bar is truly seeing an increase of women appearing before them. Additionally, the panelists will discuss their career paths and how attorneys can build a career as an appellate attorney.

Tuesday, December 17, 2013

Holiday Tea

Presented by: Communications Law Forum

The annual afternoon high tea promises to be a festive, delicious and congenial experience – the perfect way to celebrate the holiday season with your friends! Our Honored Guest is Jessica Rosenworcel, a Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission.

Annual Dinner

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She quoted John Kotter, a leading expert on the subject, who distinguished change leadership from change management in a Forbes.com article: "Change leadership is associated with the bigger leaps that we have to make, associated with windows of opportunity that are coming at us faster, staying open less time, bigger hazards and bullets coming at us faster, so you really have to make a larger leap at a faster speed. Change leadership is going to be the big challenge in the future, and the fact that almost

Photos by Mark Van Bergh Photography



A reception was held prior to the dinner and program.

nobody is very good at it is – well, it’s obviously a big deal.”

Ms. Possessky cited the women sitting with her on the dais as an example of what change leadership looks like. **Caitlin Halligan**, General Counsel of the District Attorney’s Office of the County of New York, provided the evening’s keynote remarks. **The Honorable Patricia Wald** of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, was on hand to **introduce** the WBA’s **2013 Woman Lawyer of the Year, the Honorable Vanessa Ruiz** of the DC Court of Appeals.

The 2012-2013 WBA Foundation President, **Kirra L. Jarratt**, Legislative Counsel at the *American Bar Association*, also spoke during the Annual Dinner. She discussed the impact of the Foundation’s grants to nonprofits serving the legal and related needs of women and girls in the DC Metropolitan area. She shared a **video** that highlighted the Foundation’s most recent grantees and encouraged attendees to leverage their individual contributions with other donors to make a greater impact on the unavailability of legal services within our community.

The evening concluded with remarks by incoming WBA President **Jessica E. Adler**, The Law Office of Jessica E. Adler. She announced her theme of “Civility” for the coming bar year. She explained that this can be exemplified by mentoring, volunteering, and giving back. “I hope that you will all help me promote civility by helping others and will be conscious of these principles when you are in a position to demonstrate them and give back to our community,” Ms. Adler said.



l-r: Dawn Stern, Radiance Harris, Kaity Harbour, Mason Hubbard, and Melanie Garcia of DLA Piper



l-r: Judge Robert Richter, Judge Fred Weisberg, and Judge Hiram Puig-Lugo of the DC Superior Court



WBA Past President Paulette Chapman, Koonz McKenney Johnson DePaolis & Lightfoot LLP, and WBA Treasurer Josephine Harriott, Howard University



l-r: Emily Plocki, Mikka Gee Conway, Cheryl Aaron, and Daphne Frydman, of Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP



Our esteemed dais at the 2013 Annual Dinner, l-r: 2013-2014 WBA President Jessica Adler, 2013 Woman Lawyer of the Year the Honorable Vanessa Ruiz, WBA Foundation President Kirra Jarratt, The Honorable Patricia McGowan Wald, Caitlin Halligan, and 2012-2013 WBA President Laura Possessky



l-r: Denise Main, Courtney Casp, and Susan Griffen Finnegan, of Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner, LLP



Caitlin Halligan



Maria Mendoza, DC Law Students in Court Program, and Marlon Paz, Locke Lord LLP



WBA Foundation President Kirra L. Jarratt



Casselle Smith and Michelle Cohen, of Ifrah Law



Jessica Adler, 2013-2014 WBA President

2013 Honorary Committee

Thank you to our 2013 Honorary Committee. These women truly exemplify the power of women leaders. They have championed change by leading by example, advocating for justice, and promoting the advancement of women in the legal profession.

Brooksley Born, Former Chairperson, Commodity Futures Trading Commission

Judith Browne Dianis, Co-Director, The Advancement Project

Kim Keenan, General Counsel, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Anastasia Kelly, Co-Managing Partner (Americas), DLA Piper

The Honorable Gladys Kessler, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia

Stacey D. Stewart, USA President, United Way

The Honorable Annice M. Wagner, DC Court of Appeals

Beth A. Wilkinson, Partner, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP

2013 Host Committee

Many thanks to our Host Committee, which was comprised of prominent leaders in the Washington, DC legal community who support the WBA and the WBAF.

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Ellen M. Jakovic, Partner, Kirkland & Ellis LLP
Holly E. Loiseau, Litigation Partner, Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP
Monica G. Parham, Counsel, Crowell & Moring LLP
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Lee J. Tiedrich, Partner, Covington & Burling LLP
Gail Westover, Litigation Partner, Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP

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Introduction of 2013 Woman Lawyer of the Year

Introduction by the Honorable Patricia McGowan Wald of the Honorable Vanessa Ruiz, DC Court of Appeals

Introducing famous and interesting people turns out to be a much harder job than you might think. It's especially hard if they're actually nice people as well, and your friends. I could take up the next five minutes going down the absurdly long list of Vanessa Ruiz's accomplishments. Like Dr. Seuss' book, you cannot imagine the places she has gone or the things she has seen and done. But that would not do her justice and of course justice is what she and we are all about. So remembering my days on the DC Circuit where we reminded all lawyers appearing before us at oral argument not to read your briefs but assume (even if it was not always apparent) we had read them already, I am retreating to the appellate judge's role and treating this introduction as a kind of oral argument, dominated, as those who appeared before me will recall, by questions of my own.



*The Honorable Patricia McGowan Wald
(credit: Mark Van Bergh Photography)*

First, what should we expect the title Woman Lawyer of the Year to denote? The successful candidate has to stand out in an illustrious crowd of DC woman lawyers. And despite the temporal

limitation in the title – Woman Lawyer of the Year, we expect the honoree to be outstanding not just this year, but last year, and next year, and many more after that. In short, no flash in the pan, but rather a woman who has walked the walk for many miles and along many byways as well as highways, someone who might have earned the award not just this year but in many other years. We're looking for a steady run of achievements, not a single Oscar-winning performance.

So how does Vanessa Ruiz stack up on those criteria? Pretty darn good. Five years out of law school while working in a Washington law firm, she argued and won in the Fourth Circuit and in the Supreme Court a civil rights case on behalf of African-American citizens and nonprofit housing groups challenging discriminatory housing practices. That was just the beginning. After successfully negotiating the world of big firm private practice, specializing in international commercial and intellectual property transactions, and later becoming in-house counsel for a major international concern, she founded a firm of her own. Several years after that, she moved on to public service in the DC Corporation Counsel office, ending up as its Chief. She has truly "been there, done that" in terms of lawyering in the trenches: big firm, little firm, and public service. And she is a true District of Columbia product, not a visitor—she really lives here.

But of course being a top of the drawer lawyer may be enough for the Washingtonian annual supplement about Best Lawyers in DC, but there has to be something more for this plaudit ... And there is.

So my second question: What is so special about Vanessa that places her at the top of the list for the WBA's distinctive award? I remember as a young girl watching Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracey in a movie called Woman of the Year, which portrayed a dynamic foreign journalist hell bent on her career, who badly neglects not just her spouse but an adopted refugee child. Perhaps by current standards it was not sufficiently oriented toward the potentials of dual careers for women, but the underlying message was clear to me: relentless pursuit of one's own career ambitions is not the ticket to either personal happiness or making the most significant contribution to the world we live in.

During ALL her years of lawyering AND judging, about which I will speak in a moment, Vanessa Ruiz has been living a second life. She has been a relentless worker in the vineyards of the DC Bar, the American Bar Association, and the Hispanic bar associations, acting as mentor to young Hispanic-American women lawyers in their careers, and for greater access to legal services for unrepresented persons of all origins, but particularly for language access services for non-English speaking litigants and inmates in women's prisons. She is on the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In terms of sites visited and miles travelled, she is the unofficial Hillary Clinton of our city. The quality of her work is attested by the numerous awards she has received—the coveted Margaret Brent Award from the ABA, Judge of the Year from Hispanic National Bar Association, and Lifetime Achievement Award from the local Hispanic bar. In all these activities she has not only championed change—for access to justice, for diversity in our profession, for insuring the newcomers to our country are benefitted, not intimidated by our justice system—her very presence symbolized change in the top echelons of our government and judicial system.

Question No 3: Ruiz has been a judge in DC's highest court for almost 20 years. How does a judge isolated in the top floor of Judiciary Square become a change agent? An appellate judge must always operate within the boundaries of the law and the Constitution. But all thoughtful judges speaking candidly will admit that laws are not always crystal clear and frequently subject to different interpretations. Every day, different courts in different jurisdictions decide cases based on the same laws differently. Study after study has shown that judges, within textual and precedential limits, do bring their personal life experiences into play in the way they interpret facts and words in a statute. That includes being a woman and living in more than one culture. That is why it is so important to have both genders on the court in adequate numbers, as well as judges of the different ethnic groups that make up our changing populations. That is something the WBA has worked for and something Vanessa Ruiz has displayed in abundance in her work both on and off the court.

The DC Court of Appeals on which Judge Ruiz has served for 20 years has become known for its intelligent and compassionate jurisprudence, and Judge Ruiz's rulings have had a great deal to do with that. I can remember 35 years ago when, as a legal services lawyer, we had to bring our cases in the predecessor to the DCCA, the then-highest court of DC (where we never won anything), but were then allowed to go across the street on a certiorari type writ to the DC Circuit for review. The circuit was a different court then and we won stunning victories in family law, landlord and tenant, and consumer protection. Just across the street from one another different judges interpreting the same laws judging in fundamentally different ways. Now times have changed, and the DCCA is truly DC's court of last resort and fortunately it has become a respected and worthy forum as well as an independent one. And Judge Ruiz has been a critical part of that change process.

One last question: Do we want our Woman Lawyer of the Year to be not just a star lawyer or judge, not just an advocate for women of all kinds, but a wonderful human being, not like Katherine Hepburn in the movie? Here I call on personal experiences to validate her credentials. Vanessa is a loyal person, to her family—husband David and their children—and cuts no corners in the time and care she gives to them. For her friends she is enduring. After my husband's death a few years ago, rather than a note of condolence, she sent me the season schedule for a local theatre and told me to check off which ones I wanted to see—including escort service to and from, since I don't drive. She is loyal to her origins in the Hispanic community. She is independent and courageous. Back when I was on the Circuit, she was an outspoken defender of and contributor to the Gender and Race Task Force of the Circuit, which engendered a fair amount of controversy among some of my colleagues who thought it an inappropriate mission for judges to engage in. In short, she is always there for her family, friends, and allies in the fight for justice on all fronts. And she is a very good cook.

Oral argument having concluded, I am delighted to introduce WBA's Woman Lawyer of the Year, Vanessa Ruiz.

2013 Woman Lawyer of the Year

Remarks by the Honorable Vanessa Ruiz, DC Court of Appeals

Photos by Mark Van Bergh Photography

It was a lovely surprise to receive a call from Laura Possessky, as president of the WBA, informing me of the Board's decision for this year's award. Would I accept it? Well, *yes!* And then I had the opportunity to choose who would introduce me and of course I reached for the moon, and Judge Pat Wald said yes. It is such a privilege to be here, both because of the award and the introduction. I simply should say thank you and sit down. And I will, but not just yet.

For years while I was in practice, I knew of Judge Wald and then, in the early to mid 90s — at around the time of the article on women in New York law firms that Caitlin mentioned — I was part of the DC Circuit's Task Force looking into gender, race, and ethnic bias in the courts. By then there had been such task forces in courts, federal and state, around the country, but this was the first federal court study to take on gender, race, and ethnicity at once. And this being the DC Circuit, it brought matters to a whole new level of inquiry, as well as scrutiny.

I transitioned from lawyer to judge while on the Task Force. And with my newly gained judicial eyes, was able to see how Judge Wald deployed her immense skills as a judge, one all-too aware of the corrosive effects of stereotypes that kept women and minorities back. She did so effectively, with consummate craft and tact. I have continued to be an admirer and student of Judge Wald the person and the judge. Her insightful opinions; range, and unending energy and willingness to give of herself are an inspiration and a guide. And her professional accomplishments have been accompanied by a sizable family and for many years the wonderful Bob Wald, himself a mentor and inspiration. Thank you, Pat. Your leadership has wrought many positive changes.

And the Woman's Bar Association and WBA Foundation, how can I thank you? In 2009, you spearheaded my nomination for the Margaret Brent Award of the ABA's Commission on Women in the Profession. And now this. I cherish tonight's award from you, representing so many WBA members in this room. This is a legal community I know well, with whom I have worked for many years. It always amazes me how this huge hall is invariably filled with the energy of WBA enthusiasts. I feel very close to you.

We know the importance of people who believe in you and support you, are willing to go to bat for you. You have been, are that, in my life. Thank you. The feeling, as they say, is mutual. One of the terrific attributes of this legal community is, first, that there are many of us, quite the critical mass; but more important, that we understand there are any number of ways we all can be supportive of each other, help one another. We need to continue to do that.

I do not believe that women — or anyone — can have it all. And rather than balance between work and home, I believe there are trade-offs one must make. But still I think I've made out fantastically well, and for that I have to thank my family, my close friends, my colleagues on the court, my many law clerks over the years. It goes without saying that none of us would be where we are without our families. And it especially needs to be recognized at times of celebration. My daughters Natalia and Alexia are here; I hope they are proud of me as I am of them, so proud. (Imagine where they would be today if they had not had a working mother!) My stepson Matthew also is here, as is my niece Roxana. It is great to have you here.

And then, my husband David Birenbaum. He is key. If there is a critical



The Honorable Vanessa Ruiz



Judge Ruiz and her family



Judge Ruiz and 2012 Woman Lawyer of the Year Katia Garrett

element to success and happiness outside of yourself, it is selecting your life partner.

Choose for love, and love wisely. And there I have been most fortunate. When I mentioned the WBA's Woman Lawyer of the Year Award, David transmuted that to "Woman of the Year." I protested, rather feebly I confess, that I was Katherine Hepburn in the movie with Spencer Tracy. But, darling, if that is the way you think of me, I will not prevent it. Since I took senior status last year, we have embarked on a series of travel, educational, and teaching adventures, both foreign and domestic, and our marriage (30 years this year) is on a second wind. David has assembled quite a number of dear friends who are here this evening and I thank you all for coming. I am indeed lucky in love and nurtured by friendship.



There is one person, not here, I want to mention: my father. He died several years ago and I am always afraid I will cry if I mention him. I will not mention my mother, because for sure I will cry. Anyway, I'm wearing her jewelry, so I've got her right here with me.

My father, Fernando Ruiz-Suria, was a lawyer, a litigator, in Puerto Rico. As a young girl I would listen to him tell stories about his cases. I thought he was always right so he must have been persuasive. He did not direct me to the study of law, to become a lawyer, or what kind of lawyer to be. But once I became a lawyer, I knew he expected me to become a really good one.

I do distinctly remember that from the time I was very young I felt that he supported and encouraged me in whatever I wanted to do. That he believed I was capable of doing things and that I would accomplish what I set out to do. His support was steady, quiet, and it was not demanding of anything specific in return. I was very shrewd in my selection of my father.

Once, when I was already in private practice here in DC, I inadvertently started a fire in the kitchen of my house that ended up requiring that I move out. I minimized the incident to my parents over the phone — I was embarrassed for a calamity of my own making — and assured them I was fine. The next day I received a call from my firm's receptionist saying I had an unidentified visitor. It was my Dad. He had hopped on a plane, came to verify that I was indeed alright. I was. He took me out to dinner and he returned home. That was it. I was left to deal with the mess and the insurance company — that was my responsibility after all — but the expression of support and implicit offer of help if necessary were there, no questions asked.

My father gave another incomparable gift that I cherish most: a sense of honor.

My father was an honorable man, a person of integrity. He taught me the importance of doing the right thing in the right way, of respecting others no matter who they are or where they come from. He was no radical, and he did well in his law practice, but he had a social conscience. He was not blind to the needs of others and he imparted that to me forever. Others recognized this integrity in him and I felt protected by its aura, thinking it would cover me as well. But it is not a genetic trait one inherits; it has to be developed, with effort.

"Honor" is an old-fashioned word and it can seem outdated. But I don't think so; I believe honor lies at the core of a meaningful and satisfying professional life.

I say this now because one could spend a lot of time debating Sheryl Sandberg's prescription to "Lean In" and Anne-Marie Slaughter's response, while at the same time we ponder Marisa Mayer's decision to bring people working at home back to Yahoo headquarters while she builds a nursery next to her CEO office. All three are women of substantive accomplishment and I am not saying that these are not discussions worth having about how women navigate the workplace for success along with family responsibilities. They are. (Those of you who know me, know I am a *leaner*.) But these preoccupations are also exhausting and can keep everyone spinning in place. Shouldn't we be talking about the need for quality affordable child care so parents can have productive work lives without worrying whether the kids are alright?

But beyond the *how* is the *what* we do if we are to hope that the choices we make withstand our later examination. I return to honor because law is described as an honorable profession. To be an honorable lawyer requires doing the right thing, in the right way, being aware of others and their needs. Be forewarned: once you look, you will see.

What is there to see, what we are faced with as members of the legal profession, is not pretty. There is a disconnect between supply and demand. It is now apparent that many law graduates are underemployed or not finding any legal employment at all. A number of lawyers are burdened by significant student debt not only upon graduation from law school but for a number of years, so that their options are restricted and they are kept captive in certain jobs to pay that debt. Many are restless and dissatisfied; a misplaced resource. Those lawyers who try to operate smaller firms or provide more affordable services can have a precarious practice and sometimes barely make it.

Meanwhile those who provide legal services to the poor — never enough — have been cut even more by reduced government funding and plummeting IOLTA earnings; they are stretched too thin and able to represent only a fraction of those who need legal help. You've just seen in the video some of the innovative projects of WBA Foundation grantees. They do a lot with very little. Yet the situation is so dire that at a national access to justice conference I attended two weeks ago, one of the sessions was

on the application of triage principles, like in a hospital emergency room when there is a mass catastrophe, to allocate scarce legal services.

At the same time there are those who are doing well, very well, *extremely* well actually. As Judge David Tatel mentioned only a few weeks ago, there is “big money” in certain sectors of law practice. Last year, he quoted, the top 100 law firms in the Country grossed almost \$71 billion, that’s with a “b.” And annual profits per partner were \$1.6 million. And here in the District of Columbia, according to a recent Legal Times article, the top 12 firms have gross annual revenues of more than \$7.5 billion. According to Judge Tatel’s calculation, one quarter of one percent of that amount would *double* the capacity to provide representation to the poor in our city. Think about that.

The reality is that below a very thin slice of clients who can afford to pay hefty legal fees, the majority, the *vast* majority of those who need legal representation simply cannot afford it. And increasingly, apart from those lawyers who make the big money, any number of lawyers and law students are struggling to find their place. This dislocation and misallocation of resources in the face of unmet need for legal services is a serious issue for a self-regulating profession. It should concern all of us.

Lawyers have skills and have knowledge that most do not. These are powerful tools; and those of us who are lawyers must deploy them responsibly. With a license to practice law, lawyers have a privilege, a franchise from which others are excluded. It comes with responsibilities.

We are fortunate in that there is a rich tradition and culture in this city for pro bono legal representation and I know that many of you here are active in it. But it is not enough. There is financial support to legal service providers, and I know that many of the law firms and individual lawyers here are contributors. But it is not enough.

Enough will be when no one has to go to court alone, without a lawyer, trying to keep a home, or children; or get child support; or seeking protection from abuse at home. And we are far, far away from that day. More than 90% of persons in landlord-tenant court go it alone. Most victims of domestic violence go it alone. Most persons in child custody and support disputes go it alone. And those are the people who make it to court. There are many more who don’t know they have legal rights they could assert, or protections they could invoke; parents who can’t navigate the system to get the educational or health services their children need, because they do not know how, perhaps because their English is not up to dealing with forms and bureaucracy.

Closing this yawning justice gap is primarily the collective responsibility of lawyers, whether we are practicing law, judges, or law students.

Changing something this big takes courage. Like honor, courage is not talked about often enough. But it is essential if one is going to tackle important problems with integrity, not just patching up with temporary fixes or letting the naysayers get the upper hand. And it means being ready to withstand criticism, for it will come. The justice gap is a big issue, and a profoundly important one, and it will take all of us to make things right.

I leave you with this: in thinking about our professional lives and the choices we make, it is much easier to “lean in” for something that is worth standing up for, with courage. That is change leadership.

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President’s Column



By Jessica E. Adler

When I moved to Washington, DC almost 13 years ago, the Women’s Bar Association was one of the first organizations with which I became involved. It is difficult to convey the importance the WBA has had for me both personally and professionally. It has provided mentoring, networking, leadership, and speaking opportunities.

I am very excited and honored to serve as President of this wonderful organization and plan to further our mission, which is:

Maintaining the honor and integrity of the profession; promoting the administration of justice; advancing and protecting the interests of women lawyers; promoting their mutual improvement; and encouraging a spirit of friendship among our members.

In the 2013-2014 bar year, we will focus on civility, including helping others. This can be done through many avenues such as mentoring, volunteering, and giving back. Throughout my involvement with the WBA, I have seen countless examples of such civility and have been very fortunate to have been the recipient of much help from other members. Our

organization really does live by its mission, in that we help advance and protect other women lawyers, promote their improvement, and encourage friendship.

I hope that you will all help me promote civility by helping others and will be conscious of these principles when you are in a position to demonstrate them and give back to our community.

In practicing civility and helping others, everyone wins. Some of my fondest memories stem from this. Giving to others brings me great joy and I end up getting more in return than what I gave. Anne Frank said: "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." And according to Dr. Seuss, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

Since this wonderful organization was founded in 1917, the WBA has helped to champion and advance women lawyers. Our programming helps give members tools to thrive. Many of our members, both current and past, have been trailblazers in creating paths for the rest of us to succeed. I am very proud to be part of this amazing organization and hope you will join me and the WBA in continuing to help advance women in the legal profession.

Jessica E. Adler
2013-2014 President



WBA Foundation:

- [WBAF President's Letter](#)
- [WBAF 2012-2013 Donors](#)

WBA Foundation President's Letter



By Kirra L. Jarratt

On behalf of the WBA Foundation Board, I want to thank the Women's Bar Association family for your support during the past year and invite you to partner with us again as we begin the new bar year. In this second year of our three-year strategic plan, we remain focused intensely on raising more money, awarding larger grants, improving our communications, undergirding our infrastructure, and strengthening our relationship with the WBA.

How can you get involved?

Spread the word. The Foundation plans to award \$50,000 in **grants** this year to programs that further our mission of serving the legal and related needs of women and girls in the DC Metro area. Look for the release of our Request for Proposals in August with the first deadline for Letters of Intent due in October.

Attend an event. We will host our **Wine Tasting and Silent Auction fundraiser** in the fall, with the proceeds benefitting the **Founders Fellowship** program. This year, a student at the **Howard University School of Law** will receive a \$7,500 fellowship to work at a local nonprofit that furthers our mission. Our Grant Awards Reception will be held in March. We look forward to seeing you at other events throughout the year as well.

Connect. We are on **Facebook** and **Twitter** (@WBAF). We would love for you connect with us through these two platforms. Start by sharing our **newly released grantee highlights video** on your timeline, helping us reach beyond our current network to tell others about the tremendous work our grantees are doing in the community.

Volunteer. A number of folks have contacted the Foundation recently with offers to help collect stories from grantees and research other funding opportunities. **We welcome your ideas, energy, and resources!** Email info@wbacfoundation.org for

more information or volunteer.

Donate. Starting in July, for the first time ever, you can designate the Foundation when you give through the United Way of the National Capital Area. Our **donor designation number is 8914.** [Click here](#) and give online now. Or, when you **renew your WBA membership**, give to the Foundation. **Leverage your individual donation** with those of others who believe in the importance of meeting the legal and related needs of women and girls in this area.

We cannot continue to do our work without your support. Again, thank you, and we look forward to partnering with you throughout the year.

Kirra L. Jarratt
2013-2014 WBAF President

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WBAF 2012-2013 Donors

Many thanks to our supporters! The following donors have made a gift the WBA Foundation between April 1, 2013 and May 31, 2013. These gifts will be used to support nonprofits that serve the legal and related needs of women and girls in the DC Metropolitan community. For a list of all fiscal year donors and recognition of giving levels, visit www.wbadcfoundation.org.

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Committee & Forum Highlights:

Event Recaps

Initiative 2.0: Creating a Path to Success in a Changing Economy
Being a Nimble Job Seeker
Hit the Ground Running Bootcamp

Initiative 2.0: Creating a Path to Success in a Changing Economy

By Suzanne D. Reifman, Partner, Vinson & Elkins LLP, Co-chair, Initiative Committee; WBA President-Elect

On May 9, the WBA continued its ground-breaking multi-part **Initiative on Retention and Advancement of Women** by presenting “Initiative 2.0: Creating a Path to Success in a Changing Economy” at the George Washington University Law School. The economic recession has had a disparate impact on women lawyers. The obstacles women traditionally face have been compounded by the rapid transformations in the legal profession arising from the industry’s response to bearish economic conditions. The half-day program focused on ways women can achieve success in these challenging times.



The Career Path Advancement Panel, l-r: Ellen Ostrow, Kim Keenan, Deborah Garza, Heather Bock, and Kate Neville

Initiative 2.0 consisted of three sessions as well as a networking lunch. The first session, “Transformation of the Legal Profession,” was a panel moderated by **Lisa Horowitz**, former Director of Professional Development at McDermott Will & Emery LLP. It offered perspectives on why the legal profession is changing and how. Speaking on the panel were **Dan Binstock**, Partner at executive recruiter Garrison & Sisson, Inc.;

Alejandra Almonte, General Counsel, gategroup Americas; **Antoinette C. Bush**, Partner, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP; and **Katie White**, Director of Employer Outreach, Office of Professional Development and Career Strategy, The George Washington University Law School. Among other things, the panelists discussed how tough economic conditions combined with higher client expectations have created circumstances in which it has become harder for attorneys to get and keep jobs. However, the panelists also agreed that economic conditions have created opportunities for those who are more entrepreneurial and value-oriented and have learned to network and create their own “brand.”

The second panel, “Career Path Advancement,” was moderated by **Ellen Ostrow**, founder of Lawyers Life Coach LLC. The panel was **Heather Bock**, Executive Director, Center for the Study of the Legal Profession, Georgetown Law Center; **Deborah Garza**, Partner, Covington & Burling LLP; **Kim Keenan**, General Counsel, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; and **Kate Neville**, Founder and Principal, Neville Career Consulting, LLC. During the discussion, the panelists offered valuable advice, which included recommendations for women to be proactive and invest in their careers at all stages. Ms. Keenan’s tips on finding a new position and negotiating salary were particularly memorable. The panelists also discussed the importance of networking and developing relationships and they considered the various attributes of successful attorneys.

During the final session, the attendees and panelists participated in facilitated small group breakout sessions during which they identified problems in more detail and brainstormed proposed solutions. All agreed that Initiative 2.0 had been a valuable first step in bringing a number of concerns relating to the changing economy and legal market. A final report and additional programming to further address these issues are planned. To the extent you want to become involved in the WBA Initiative Committee, contact Suzanne Reifman at sreifman@velaw.com or 202-639-6577.

Being a Nimble Job Seeker

By Stephanie Spear, The American Institute of Architects; Co-chair, Young Lawyers Committee

On April 3, the **Young Lawyers Committee** hosted “Being a Nimble Job Seeker.” The event attracted over 25 attendees, several of whom were first-time attendees to a WBA event.

Speakers **Mary Legg** and **Kate Neville** answered a series of questions during a panel discussion and then took questions from the audience. Topics included managing your job search, finding out more about potential employers, and how to avoid some common errors in networking and job searching. Ms. Legg is the owner of Firm Advice, Inc., a legal staffing firm. Ms. Neville owns Neville Career Consulting, specializing in advising attorneys interested in making a career move.

Both Ms. Legg and Ms. Neville emphasized the deliberate, detail-oriented nature of job searching, encouraging attendees to keep an ongoing record of all networking contacts, job applications, and other contacts that fall within the path of job seeking. The record should include dates and names of each contact, as well as how you know the contact. Ms. Legg iterated the importance of the follow-up, saying that the initial thank-you note should be sent within 24 hours of the first interview; an email follow-up after two weeks; and a voicemail two weeks after that. Ms. Neville encouraged research and preparation for an interview, and being prepared to ask thoughtful questions about the organization and the position.

Thank you to our sponsors! Door prizes were sponsored by the Young Lawyers Committee and **Uber** car service. The space was donated by the [American Institute of Architects](#).

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Hit the Ground Running Bootcamp

By Cathleen Szebrat, The O'Toole Firm; Co-chair Diversity Committee

In April, the **Diversity Committee** partnered with **Ms. JD** to host a full-day training event entitled "Hit the Ground Running Bootcamp." Thanks to the space and sponsorship from **Vinson & Elkins LLP**, along with a grant from the Minority Corporate Counsel Association, we were able to present this training, attended by more than 100 people: approximately 70 young attorneys and law students and more than 40 faculty members from all areas of practice. The day focused on building skills in the areas of communication, networking and, self-promotion. The event was led by our Diversity Committee Co-chair and self-proclaimed "Cruise Director," **Tonya Gaskins**. Thanks to the strategic planning and implementation of Co-chairs Ms. Gaskins and **Zazy Lopez**, and our instructors, the day included many useful tools and takeaways.



Sixty young professionals came out on a Saturday for the Bootcamp.

Eileen Billinson, Director of Litigation at WilmerHale, started off the day with a dynamic presentation on communicating with impact. Ms. Billinson explained that in order to effectively communicate, we need to be



Bootcamp speaker Kelly Hoey.

prepared with the message we want to relay. Ms. Billinson's presentation was followed by a breakout session where participants were asked to brief a fictitious partner on the Lilly Ledbetter case. Each participant was provided with constructive feedback on her communication style, tone, and the impact the message had on the 'acting' partner.

The second presentation, "Build Strategic Relationships," was led by **Diane Darling**, a self-proclaimed introvert (although we found that difficult to believe) who teaches networking skills. Ms. Darling humorously explained how her methodology of asking quirky questions has opened many doors and opportunities for her. Ms. Darling stated that "without the ability to inspire, motivate, and engage others, even the most brilliant person will hit a wall." Ms. Darling's lecture was followed by a networking lunch where attendees utilized the skills learned during the lecture to meet their fellow colleagues and begin to build their own networks.

The final presenter, **Kelly Hoey**, Co-founder and Managing Director of Women Innovate Mobile, closed out the training sessions for the day with a presentation on "Demonstrating Your Value." Ms. Hoey challenged participants to not be afraid to take a seat at the table and be sure to choose a strategically located seat. Ms. Hoey also said "done is better than perfect." For those of us striving for perfection on each and every project we work on, this was a refreshing statement. Her presentation was followed by a breakout session where participants had the opportunity to present their achievements to their colleagues. Our esteemed instructors provided each participant with constructive feedback on how to ensure their achievements were not lost in translation.



Small group discussions were a key component of the bootcamp learning experience.

Our training ended on a sweet note with a dessert reception and an opportunity to mix and mingle. Attendees were able to demonstrate the leadership skills gained from the productive day of training and make valuable contacts at the same time.

Member Spotlight: Linda J. Ravdin

Compiled by Maisa Jean Frank, Associate, Gray Plant Mooty

Linda J. Ravdin is a principal at **Pasternak & Fidis**, concentrating in divorce and family law for both traditional and nontraditional families. She is experienced in the resolution of

alimony claims, property issues of all kinds, and custody and child support issues, and is a nationally known authority on premarital and postmarital agreements. Ms. Ravdin has dealt with the division of private, governmental, and international organization retirement benefits; stock options and deferred compensation; businesses and professional services practices; real estate; and securities. She also incorporates tax planning services as part of negotiating family dissolution settlements. Ms. Ravdin is an experienced litigator, but she works with clients to use mediation or other forms of alternative dispute resolution, and is trained in collaborative law.



Linda J. Ravdin

Immediately after graduating from The George Washington University Law School in 1974, Ms. Ravdin established a successful solo practice in the District of Columbia, handling court-appointed criminal matters. In the early 1980s, Ms. Ravdin's practice started to evolve into other areas, and within a few years it concentrated in family law. She joined Pasternak & Fidis as a partner in 2002, and practices family law in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Ms. Ravdin is a Fellow of the [American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers](#) and a [Fellow of the American Bar Foundation](#). Both the Washingtonian and Bethesda Magazine have included her in their lists of the best divorce lawyers in the Washington area.

Ms. Ravdin co-authored the [DC Domestic Relations Manual](#) with [Judge Diane Brenneman](#), and has written three books on premarital agreements and domestic partnership agreements in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Virginia, including one co-authored with her law partner, Marcia C. Fidis. She has also taught a variety of continuing legal education programs on family law topics and is an experienced mediator and a volunteer with the DC Superior Court Family Court Alternative Dispute Resolution Program.

Ms. Ravdin has been married for 27 years. Her son is working on a Ph.D. in applied math, and her stepson is married with a little girl. She travels frequently with her husband and particularly enjoys visiting France and Italy. Ms. Ravdin skis in Utah whenever she has the chance (which is not often enough), and enjoys collecting modern art and baking. She and her husband attend the theatre (Round House, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Studio, Arena Stage, Woolly Mammoth, Theatre J) and love to eat at interesting restaurants.

Why did you join the Women's Bar Association?

I joined the WBA in 1974, right after graduating from law school. [Sarah Brown](#), for whom I worked as an investigator at the Public Defender Service during my third year of law school (they paid me \$2.50 an hour and I had to buy my own gas), invited me to a dinner meeting. I had never heard of the WBA and did not know there were so many women lawyers in DC or that we had our own bar association. I had a great time at that meeting and met many interesting women, including some who went to law school when there were only a few women attending and they were very isolated. I remember thinking how brave they were. Then, as more women came out of law school, many joined the WBA and it became a more dynamic and powerful organization, a force in the DC legal community, and a great place for women lawyers to start creating a network and finding mentors. I personally found mentors and made many friends through the WBA.

What committees/forums have you been involved in?

I have been involved with the Program Committee, Solo and Small Practice Forum, Working Parents Committee, and Senior Lawyers Committee. I also served as Secretary and wrote articles for the newsletter, including profiles of WBA members who had started their own practices (which seemed radical at the time, but isn't anymore).

How did you get involved? How do you stay involved?

In 1982, I volunteered for the Program Committee, chaired by [Janine Harris](#). The following year [Mary Katherine \(Kay\) Donohoe](#) and I were asked to co-chair the Program Committee. We did that for two years, planning a total of 20 evening programs. It was a lot of fun and it gave me the opportunity to meet many interesting women lawyers who came to speak at our programs. Kay was able to arrange for [Justice Sandra Day O'Connor](#) to address the WBA just after she became the first woman on the Supreme Court. That was a thrill! I stayed involved for a number of years, going to WBA meetings and events on average of two or three times a week until my son was born and I stopped going out after work for a number of years. I still maintain friendships with many of the women I first met in those early years.

What benefits do you get from being a part of the WBA?

Those before me started the WBA when women lawyers were excluded from the DC Bar Association and, in doing so, did a great service to those of us who came after. I get the benefit of knowing I can contribute to an organization that gave me a lot when I needed it and that continues to provide a platform where women lawyers can take leadership roles, learn the things they don't teach in law school, and form lifelong friendships.

Do you have a mentor/hero?

It's difficult to point to one person. When I started out doing court-appointed criminal work, there were a number of older male lawyers who took it upon themselves to critique my performance in court, but they did it in a way that allowed me to hear them and learn from them. I was soon able to identify the lawyers whose work I admired and I eventually developed a whole network of lawyers to whom I could go for help and who were generous with their time. [Deborah Luxenberg](#), who is my contemporary but

who started out doing family law years before I did, is someone I went to often in my early years of handling domestic relations matters and she was always willing to talk to me.

What words of advice do you have for women new to the profession?

Get involved in professional organizations; don't just pay your dues and go to meetings. Volunteer to serve on committees, write articles, speak, and participate actively in the organization's work.

What is the best advice you have received?

Take lots of vacations, go out to restaurants, read books, see movies, hang out with friends, go to the theatre, have fun.

What other organizations are you involved in?

I am active in the [ABA Family Law Section](#), where I serve on the Council and am a member of the Publications Development Board. I am also a member of the Board of Trustees of [Round House Theatre](#) in Bethesda.

Member News

- **Members in the News:**
 - **WBA Members Running for DC Bar & ABA House of Delegates**
 - **WBA Members are Successful Candidates for the DC Bar & ABA House of Delegates**
 - **Mendoza Cited in National Law Journal Article**
 - **Welcome New Members**
-

Adler Named a Rising Star

WBA President Jessica Adler was named a Rising Star in Family Law in Washington DC by Super Lawyers. The selection process for the Rising Stars list is the same as the Super Lawyers selection process, but to be eligible for inclusion in Rising Stars, a candidate must be either 40 years old or younger or in practice for 10 years or less. While up to five percent of the lawyers in each state are named to Super Lawyers, no more than 2.5 percent are named to the Rising Stars list.

WBA Members are Successful Candidates for the DC Bar & ABA House of Delegates

Congratulations to the WBA members who were elected to the positions on the DC Bar Board of Governors.

Brigida Benitez, Steptoe & Johnson LLP—President-Elect

Sara Kropf, Law Office of Sara Kropf PLLC—Secretary

Kirra L. Jarratt, American Bar Association—Board of Governors

Susan M. Kovarovics, Bryan Cave LLP—Board of Governors

Bridget Bailey Lipscomb, U.S. Department of Justice—Board of Governors

Michelle Thomas, M.C. Thomas & Associates, PC —Board of Governors

Courtney L. Weiner, Lewis Baach PLLC—ABA House of Delegates

Martha V. Clarke, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency—Corporation, Finance and Securities Law Section Steering Committee

Michelle F. Bercovici, Alden Law Group PLLC—Labor and Employment Law Section Steering Committee

Courtney L. Weiner, Lewis Baach PLLC—Litigation Section Steering Committee

Mendoza Cited in National Law Journal Article

Maria Mendoza, a WBA Co-chair for the Mentoring, Diversity and Amicus Brief Committees, was highlighted in an article

“**Inadmissible**” in the April 22 issue of the National Law Journal ([See the online version](#), which is available with premium access to the NLJ site.) The write up talks about **Carolyn Fuentes**, a federal defender who “made history in the annals of U.S. Supreme Court advocacy on April 17” when she “became the first Hispanic woman to argue twice before the high court.”

The article cites and relies on Ms. Mendoza in raising this point of history, referring to her as a “DC attorney who has compiled statistics about the short list of Hispanics who have appeared before the justices through history.” Ms. Mendoza organized the WBA’s Supreme Court swearing in ceremony that took place in January of this year.

Welcome New Members

Elizabeth Austern
Margaret A. Bauer
Sandra Britt
Yvette Butler
Jennifer Carrier
Meghan Casey
Eileen L. Coen
Tonya Condell
Veronica Isabel Diaz
Diane Eikenberry
Ashley Evans
Whitney Evans
Jennifer Feldman
Catherine Flanagan
Karon Fowler
Anna Gomez
Janelle Gordon
Allison Granger
Christine Greene

Li Guo
Lanae Holbrook
Caroline Hong
Theresa Hyatte
Jessica E. Jacobs
Nancy Marie Johnson
Anita Marie Josey-Herring
Diana A. Konate
Elizabeth Landau
M. Hannah Lauck
Mary Catherine Martin
Sejal Patel
Cornelia T.L. Pillard
Mary Reding
Kristan Rizzolo
Amanda S. Roth
Sara Safriet
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Shikha
Singhvi
Stephanie
Mari Smith
Theresa
Smyth
Terese
Tadros
Ibarra
Cynthia
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Venkatesh
Nakia
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