

B2B

**INSIGHTS FROM DEDICATED
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DIVERSITY LEADERS**



**DIVERSITY, EQUITY,
INCLUSION &
ACCESSIBILITY**

**2023'S DEIA SNAPSHOT: PROGRESS
CONTINUES; CHALLENGES REMAIN**



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Dear Reader:

As 2023 draws to a close, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) remains a perennial hot-button topic that companies, no matter what business they're in, must contend with not only to function on a day-to-day basis but to sustain future growth.

It is clear that implementing DEIA initiatives is vital for recruiting and retaining talent as well as attracting investors, but many businesses are slow to adopt clear objectives and actionable strategies. More awareness, transparency and effort are needed to drive change and instill a sense of acceptance among the workforce across America.

On October 19, LA. Times B2B Publishing hosted the 2023 DEIA Forum at the SLS Hotel in Beverly Hills. A number of informative panel discussions, featuring diversity leaders from a variety of industries, enlightened attendees with firsthand advice and insights on several relevant topics, including the urgent need for increased accessibility, how DEIA proponents are breaking barriers and belonging in a remote workspace culture. We summarize each panel here in the pages of this magazine.

I would like to thank each of the sponsors who helped make the event possible. We greatly appreciate the support of Diamond Sponsor *The Change Company* and Platinum Sponsors *CommonSpirit Health*, *Easterseals Southern California*, *Phaidon International* and *University of West Los Angeles*.

New this year is the Top Rated Workplaces in Southern California Survey where we rank small and midsize-large companies based on employees' anonymous replies to a questionnaire sent out by our partner DataJoe. The results follow several informative articles on trending DEIA news.

In the remaining pages, we're proud to recognize individuals at numerous Southern California companies who are spearheading change and leading the way to creating more inclusive workplaces. We hope you are inspired by their achievements in this realm.

A digital version which can be read and shared is available at latimes.com/diversity2023. We will be promoting the publication of the magazine, and I invite you to follow us:

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Contact us with comments or questions at b2bpublishing@latimes.com.



Anna Magzanyan

Chief Strategy & Revenue Officer and Chief of Staff to Executive Chairman



The selection of visionaries and the production of the magazine was organized by LA. Times B2B Publishing and did not involve the editorial staff of the LA. Times.

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Modern Employees Seek More LGBT+ Inclusive Employers

The recently published Deloitte Global 2023 LGBT+ Inclusion @ Work Report explores the experiences of more than 5,400 non-Deloitte LGBT+ respondents who work in various sectors across 13 countries through the lens of both sexual orientation and gender identity.

THE REPORT PROVIDES AN in-depth view into the experiences of LGBT+ people in the workplace, including the steps their employers are taking to further LGBT+ inclusion and the impact this has on them, their levels of comfort in being out at work and their experiences of non-inclusive behavior.

“The survey findings reinforce that when organizations foster diversity and demonstrate a commitment to LGBT+ inclusion, it can have a positive impact on the lives and experiences of all employees in the workplace,” said Elizabeth Faber, Deloitte global chief people & purpose officer. “However, the survey also shows that organizations should do more to provide an environment in which LGBT+ employees feel able to be themselves at work.”

Workplace diversity and LGBT+ inclusion strongly influence career decisions, particularly for Gen Zs and millennials. Gen Z and millennial respondents are far more likely than their Gen X counterparts to place an emphasis on diversity and inclusion when seeking a new employer. Four in 10 Gen X respondents (43%) said they actively sought out information about an organization’s commitment to diversity and inclusion before applying to their current role, compared to nearly two-thirds of millennials (64%) and three-quarters of Gen Zs (72%). This generational difference can also be seen when it comes to how important they feel it is to be able to be out at work about their sexual



orientation or gender identity and how directly involved they want to be in diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Most LGBT+ employees want to be out at work, but many don't feel comfortable being so to all colleagues.

The majority of respondents attach a high level of importance to being able to freely express their LGBT+ identity at work. Six in 10 respondents believe it is important to be able to freely express their sexual orientation at work, while 75% said the same for gender identity.

However, less than half feel comfortable being out with all of their colleagues, and another third of respondents say they are only comfortable being out at work with select colleagues. Many are more comfortable being out with close colleagues compared to being

out with their direct managers and more senior leaders – just under 60% are open with their closest colleagues about their sexual orientation and 54% about their gender identity. This compares to only 37% who are comfortable being out about either their sexual orientation or gender identity with their direct managers.

For those who are not comfortable being out, the most common reason is a concern about being treated differently. Beyond this, the reasons vary by sexual orientation and gender identity. From a sexual orientation perspective, a preference not to discuss their private life at work is the next most cited reason, followed by concerns about facing discrimination or harassment and that they would not be treated with respect. Nearly two in 10 respondents



@Drs Producoes / iStock / Getty Images

cite concerns for personal safety. From a gender identity perspective, concerns about discrimination or harassment are the second most cited reason, followed by a worry that they would not be treated with respect. Just over a quarter cite concerns for their personal safety.

Comfort in being out at work increases with seniority and allyship.

Comfort in being out at work increases with seniority, particularly when it comes to sexual orientation – more than half (51%) of those in senior roles are comfortable being out at work, compared to more than a third (37%) of junior employees. This trend holds true for gender identity, but the difference is less significant – 54% of those in senior roles are comfortable being out about their gender identity at work, compared to 46% of junior respondents.

Regardless of seniority, having allies at work plays a part when it comes to comfort in being out. Six in 10 respondents say that allyship helps them be out at work about their sexual orientation, and almost seven in 10 say the same when it comes to gender identity. The survey findings also show that having LGBT+ role models at work strongly correlates with greater comfort in being out at work.

Non-inclusive behaviors are occurring at work, and many believe this is a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Four in 10 respondents (42%) have experienced non-inclusive behaviors in a work context, and just under half say they are certain they experienced them as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity with a further 37% saying they strongly suspect this to be the reason.

When it comes to escalating this behavior to their employer so that action can be taken, 43% of respondents did not report their experience to their employer. For these respondents, four in 10 didn't think their complaint would be taken seriously, closely followed by a concern that reporting would make the situation worse and around a third didn't have confidence that action would be taken. Less than a third didn't report because they were concerned about adverse career impact.

“The data from the survey shows how far there still is to go when it comes to embedding LGBT+ inclusion in the workplace,” says Emma Codd, Deloitte Global Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer. “Many respondents want to be out at work but feel unable to be so with all colleagues due to concerns about being treated differently, discrimination and

harassment and – for some – their personal safety. Concerns that are perhaps unsurprising, when many of those experiencing non-inclusive behaviors say they are certain – or strongly suspect – that this is a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Employers should take action to ensure that they provide an LGBT+ inclusive workplace – underpinned at all times by respect.”



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The TOP FIVE Challenges Facing DEI Leaders

To progress on DEI goals and outcomes, DEI leaders must strengthen their role's impact.

FIFTY-ONE PERCENT OF DIVERSITY, equity and inclusion (DEI) leaders say their top challenge is business leaders failing to take ownership of driving DEI outcomes, according to Gartner, Inc.

A survey of 181 DEI leaders conducted last year polled DEI leaders on their proficiency, effectiveness and experiences leading the DEI function. The other top challenges that respondents ranked included: limited power to effectively drive decisions that shape DEI outcomes, ineffective coordination of DEI efforts

across business units, limited DEI staff to drive progress and employee resistance to DEI change efforts.

"DEI leaders can no longer afford to take a reactive approach to DEI," said Chandra Robinson, director in the Gartner HR practice. "As both business and labor market disruption remain the norm, DEI leaders must be proactive in uprooting workplace inequities and purposefully advocate for their function."

Gartner recommends DEI leaders adopt the following capabilities to

maximize their role's impact within their organization:

Build a Sustainable DEI Strategy

The Gartner survey revealed that 70% of DEI leaders agree senior leaders are the most critical stakeholders in an organization's DEI strategy. Yet, many DEI leaders report having to continuously coach business leaders on why DEI matters to the organization, how it aligns with enterprise goals or why it is critical for both near- and long-term success.

To build a sustainable DEI strategy, DEI leaders must leverage key voices across the organization and gather evidence-based insights to better shape and implement their DEI strategy. This includes uncovering drivers of exclusion across diverse and underrepresented talent and anticipating unique scenarios across business functions.

Design a Scalable Governance Model

To succeed long-term, DEI efforts must be supported by a combination of policies, systems and structures – also known as a governance model – guided by key functions such as Executive Councils or Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). DEI leaders must then ensure that each governance model has a clearly defined mission and structure, including roles and responsibilities mapped to workflows and decision-makers to reduce bottlenecks in the progression of DEI efforts.

"DEI leaders are best positioned to determine opportunity areas for stakeholders that are critical for successful governance structures," said Robinson. "Being mindful of cohesion will ultimately educate and influence others to recognize that DEI cannot progress unless organizations change how they make decisions – big or small."

Create a Culture of Inclusion

Skilled DEI leaders aim to develop their organization's skills, create specialized roles and build requisite programs to ensure diverse talent segments are embraced and positioned to thrive with equal access to resources. Common examples involve inclusion champion programs, inclusive leadership training and accountability partners.

Gartner research shows organizations that measure DEI, create accountability and embed inclusion into talent decisions and processes report up to 20% more organizational inclusion compared to their peers without those approaches.

Establish DEI Accountability

Gartner research shows organizations that adopt consequential accountability will reach gender parity 13 years earlier and racial parity six years earlier in their leadership benches.

Specifically, consequential accountability meaningfully impacts behavior and outcomes for individual leaders. It integrates DEI measures into leaders' performance evaluation processes to ensure that there is mutual understanding of, and commitment to, DEI as a strategic priority.

"DEI and social impact initiatives remain integral to building diverse and inclusive workplaces where employees feel safe, valued and empowered," said Robinson. "With underrepresented talent leaving organizations at higher rates than other employee segments, organizations committed to DEI must strengthen and support their DEI leaders to set themselves apart from competitors."

Top 5 Challenges Facing DEI Leaders

51% of DEI leaders cite leaders fail to take ownership for driving DEI outcomes



31% of DEI leaders indicate ineffective coordination of DEI efforts across disparate operating units or functions



23% of DEI leaders must navigate and plan for employees resisting DEI change efforts



33% of DEI leaders mention limited power to effectively drive decisions that shape DEI outcomes



29% of DEI leaders have limited staff dedicated to DEI to drive meaningful progress



n = 181 DEI Leaders



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Leading With Culture and Diversity

Across the country, Easterseals is leading the way to full equity, inclusion and access through life-changing disability and community services.

For more than 100 years, Easterseals has worked tirelessly with our partners to enhance quality of life and expand local access to health-care, education and employment opportunities.

Easterseals Southern California (ESSC) is the largest provider of disability services in California and one of the largest in the country. ESSC's strength is in our diversity and inclusive culture. We are committed to making sure our leaders, staff, volunteers and partnerships are as diverse as the communities we serve.

Easterseals, in action and advocacy, prioritizes equity, respect and belonging. With a staff of 2,500 professionals, the organization provides services to more than 15,000 people and their families throughout Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Imperial, Kern and Ventura counties.

Through programs and services tailored to meet the needs of individuals, ESSC supports full participation and inclusion within the local community. From early childhood programs for the critical first five years, to autism services, daily and independent living services for adults, senior services, employment programs, veterans' services and more. Easterseals public education, policy and advocacy initiatives positively shape perceptions and address the urgent and evolving needs of the one-in-four Americans with disabilities today. Easterseals is empowering people with disabilities, families and communities to be full and equal participants in society.



ESSC's bold Vision and Impact Plan – which addresses the needs of the disability community, diverse in race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion and culture – defines how the organization supports people with disabilities now and in the future. The goal is to make Southern California the most inclusive place for people with disabilities to live, learn, work and play by 2030. In addition, ESSC has built a workplace and communities for everyone. As a result, ESSC has developed two initiatives to support those goals:

RISE (Respect, Inclusion, Self-awareness and Equity) focuses on building a diverse and inclusive workplace. Through this program, staff training opportunities support inclusion within the workplace and inclusion affecting the participants who

receive ESSC's services. Trainings have included "Disability in the Black Community," "Subtle Acts of Exclusion," "Understanding Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity" and "Awareness and Disability Training," to list a few. Staff also participated in Listening Circles, sharing and learning from each other's diverse experiences as individuals and as direct-care professionals. RISE extends to the organization's talent recruitment efforts with tailored outreach to hire staff representative of the populations the organization serves. In addition, RISE is launching employee resource groups, starting with an LGBTQIA+ group that supports staff to connect and share experiences.

IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access) ensures ESSC's services are inclusive for the

diverse populations the organization serves and advances health equity in our communities. In particular, IDEA addresses the disparity in access to early autism diagnosis in communities of color and underserved communities by reaching out and providing free diagnostic services and referrals to therapy providers, and by raising awareness in the community itself.

Long excluded and often overlooked, people with disabilities are supported by ESSC to thrive, be fully included and have equity and access. ESSC continues on the path toward supporting staff, participants and their families to be partners in building a more inclusive community.

Many Employees Remain Uncomfortable Sharing All Aspects of Their Identities

Earlier this year, Ernst & Young announced the results of the third iteration of the “Belonging Barometer,” revealing the perspectives of employed adults from various industries and organizations across the globe.

IN A POST-COVID-19 WORLD of evolving workplace flexibility styles and ongoing heightened economic uncertainty, adaptation to workforce shifts and continuing headwinds, a belonging disconnect is emerging in the workplace.

According to the EY Belonging Barometer 3.0, almost half (41%) of respondent workers at companies across the globe say that their workplace is where they feel the greatest sense of belonging, second to home, and yet 75% report having felt excluded at work. It also finds that despite a backdrop of overall positive feelings of belonging within workplaces, over half of global worker respondents (56%) feel that they can't share, or are reluctant to share, dimensions of their identity while at work for fear of it holding them back. This number is even higher for LGBTQ+ worker respondents with 77% feeling uncomfortable sharing dimensions of their identity at work.

To effectively combat workplace feelings of exclusion, checking in on how someone is doing, both at work and in their personal life, remains a top contributor to building a sense of belonging for 32% of respondent workers. This holds true for 39% of U.S. respondents, consistent with the previous 2018 (38%) and 2020 (37%) Belonging Barometers.

Karyn Twaronite, EY global vice chair, diversity, equity & inclusiveness, said, “While it's encouraging that workers continue to feel an increased sense of belonging at work, it's clear that a disconnect has emerged with many workers globally, of all diversity dimensions, feeling excluded, actively self-editing or hiding certain dimensions of who they are at work. For leaders looking to bridge this gap to maximize engagement, well-being and productivity, and better enable their employees to feel free to be themselves, one-on-one check-ins still matter most.”



@yavdat / Adobe Stock

Enabling flexibility increases workers' sense of belonging.

Although today's work environment has posed many challenges, it is clear that greater flexibility has contributed to workers' sense of belonging. In fact, of workers who have noted an impact on their sense of belonging from hybrid work, ongoing disruption or economic volatility, the top two responses show that they feel an increased sense of belonging because their organization has become more flexible and because they have been encouraged to be open about their opinions, needs, preferences and personality.

Furthermore, 45% of respondents shared that flexible working, including autonomy in choosing hours and location, was their top motivator for instilling DE&I within their own teams. This underscores the importance for those in leadership positions to continue to integrate and offer flexible practices in today's workplace.

Equitable pay may be the fastest route to addressing inequity; confidence in upward mobility may be wavering.

An overwhelming majority of respondents acknowledge some level of inequity within their workplace; merely 6% say they have felt none. Equitable pay is cited by 40% as the top contributor to a sense of equity at work, followed by equitable performance evaluation (34%) and equitable work assignments (30%).

Workers also do not feel fully confident that their companies afford opportunities for career progression. Sixty-six percent of workers feel that there are barriers to advancement within their company, with a lack of the right resources (24%) reported as the most common obstacle, followed by lack of fair wage/salary (23%) and unequal access to opportunities (21%).

The future talent pool depends on companies prioritizing DE&I.

DE&I initiatives continue to play a pivotal role in recruiting and attracting top talent. Sixty-three percent of worker respondents would choose a company that prioritizes

DE&I over one that does not, and 74% say their company's prioritization of DE&I factors into their choice of where to work.

This theme is most pronounced among Gen Z and millennials, of whom 73% and 68% respectively said they would choose a company that prioritizes DE&I over one that does not, versus 53% of Gen X and 46% of baby boomers.

Twaronite said, “Amidst today's political and economic backdrop, DE&I remains a key workplace expectation across all generations and a competitive advantage, and at the same time, DE&I remains imperative for companies like ours to consistently build into their long-term growth strategy.”



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**Acting on
Our beliefs**

**Building
a brighter
future for all**

For generations, our Tribe has answered to Yawa' — the call to act on one's beliefs. It's the reason we donated \$350 million over the last 20 years and why we continue to partner with communities across California. Because when we work together, we all prosper.



Companies Benefit from Transparency About Racial Diversity Efforts

Employers are viewed more positively, even when they disclose negative data, study finds.

COMPANIES THAT REVEAL THEIR struggles to increase racial diversity in their workforces are perceived as more trustworthy and committed to diversity than companies that remain silent, according to research published by the American Psychological Association.

“We suspect that many companies fear that revealing lagging diversity numbers will undermine their reputation and credibility, so they don’t disclose that information, but that strategy may be misplaced,” said lead researcher Evan Apfelbaum, Ph.D., an associate professor of management and organizations at the Questrom School of Business at Boston University. “Our research found that disclosing a lack of progress is a more effective way to signal that the company truly cares about diversity than suppressing this information.”

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement, many companies made public commitments to increase racial diversity within their workforces, but few of them have released diversity data about their employees.

As part of this study, published in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, the researchers used data from 30 major corporations that voluntarily disclosed their racial diversity data in annual reports to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The corporations included Apple, Facebook, eBay and Verizon.

Overall, the reports revealed low levels of racial and ethnic diversity in the companies’ workforces with only 3% of senior management positions filled by Black employees and 4% by Hispanic/Latino employees. The reports as a whole also showed little progress in improving racial diversity from the previous year.

In one experiment, 2,000 online participants were randomly assigned to consider one of the 30 companies after being told that the company had made public commitments to increase underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in their personnel over the coming year. Half of the participants then received the actual diversity reports from those companies, which disclosed their lagging diversity numbers. The other half were

told that the companies had reaffirmed their diversity goals but the diversity reports weren’t shared.

Participants who read the diversity reports viewed those companies as more transparent, trustworthy and genuinely committed to diversity than participants who didn’t see the reports. Even though the diversity data in the reports was predominantly negative, participants believed those companies had made significantly more progress in advancing diversity than when companies concealed that data.

Disclosing the diversity data didn’t impact how racially diverse participants thought a company was, but it influenced their opinions about the company. Companies were viewed as more genuinely committed to diversity, versus just paying lip service to the issue, when the companies disclosed negative diversity data than when they remained silent.

The race of the participants didn’t affect the findings except for some evidence that Black participants were less prone to view transparency as a sign of a company’s genuine commitment to racial diversity.

Three additional experiments had similar findings with no situation where it was more advantageous for a company to withhold unfavorable workforce diversity data than to disclose it.

Approximately 95% of the largest companies in the United States hadn’t disclosed the diversity of their workforces to the public, according to previous research in 2021.

“Companies’ concerns about their reputation are legitimate, but our findings suggest that their intuition that transparency will harm their reputation may be incorrect and that the opposite may be true,” Apfelbaum said.



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The Fight for a Level Playing Field Just Got Harder

Access to higher education will be key to fostering important principles of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.

In the recent six-to-three U.S. Supreme Court decision the court's conservative justices invalidated admissions programs at two institutions, effectively ending race-conscious admissions and making leveling the playing field considerably more difficult for diverse students.

According to Hon. Rupert Byrdsong, L.A. Superior Court judge and adjunct professor of law at the University of West Los Angeles (UWLA), "While the Supreme Court did not issue a hard rule abolishing all affirmative action programs, institutions will need to connect their diversity goals to how their students are selected," explained Judge Byrdsong. "Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) may see an uptick in applications as minority students seek environments that do not factor race into evaluating a student's potential, as the pool comprises primarily African Americans."

Why Affirmative Action Matters

Diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) continue to be a goal. Colleges and universities foster social change, and is where the next generation of leaders are cultivated. That is why access to higher education is crucial to fostering important principles of DEIA. By removing affirmative action, disadvantaged students face a steeper climb towards higher education.

Robert W. Brown, president of UWLA's School of Law and School of Business, points out that before the landmark civil rights case, *Brown v. The Board of Education*, the doctrine of separate but equal created a social construct of educational



Left to right: Dr. Anthony Culpepper (President, Los Angeles Southwest College), UWLA President Robert W. Brown and The Hon. Rupert Byrdsong (Los Angeles Superior Court Judge and Adjunct Professor of Law at UWLA)

racism. "The only purpose of separate but equal was to ensure preferential treatment for dominant members of our society at the expense of others," he stated. "The current court's reversal of affirmative action is, in my opinion, particularly hypocritical. Before *Brown v. Board of Education*, it was okay to keep people out, but now the court is saying it's no longer appropriate to level the playing field."

Dr. Anthony Culpepper, president of Los Angeles Southwest College and recent UWLA Juris Doctorate recipient, agreed. "One thing we know is that the hearts of man don't change quickly," he said. "That's why we must have structures that mitigate as much implicit bias as possible. Historically, persons of color have been excluded from elite institutions of higher learning because of their backgrounds and ethnicity – that is why we must ensure equity in access to education."

The Power of Diversity

DEIA principles are both the right thing to do and highly beneficial. "I believe the problem with the think-tank against affirmative action admissions policies is a fundamental misunderstanding of the value of diversity," Judge Byrdsong proffered. "It's much like cooking a stew. Which recipe

tastes better? The one that is only seasoned with salt or the one that has garlic, cumin, Italian seasoning, pepper and curry?"

"Diversity does not mean that you replace the traditional demographic of white males with people of color. Diversity means bringing others to the table so everyone can learn from each other. Inclusiveness means adding to the pool, not taking away from it. Everyone benefits from the diversity."

Dr. Culpepper is equally passionate about diversity, informed by his childhood growing up in L.A. during significant civil unrest. "My abiding belief in diversity, equity and inclusion stems from the values instilled in me by my parents and grandparents, who emphasized the importance of education and the responsibility to improve one's community," he said. "As President of Los Angeles Southwest College, I am staunchly committed to helping shape the community. I believe in the power of education, so I have positioned our institution to help underserved students better their lives."

President Brown is also dedicated to meeting the higher education needs of diverse student populations. He believes

education is a crucial equalizer and that by democratizing education, UWLA can make a real and meaningful difference. "My vision has been to open the educational doors to students who might not otherwise have the opportunity to pursue their academic dreams," added President Brown. "I'm especially proud of our track record as Los Angeles' premier Black-owned, for-profit university, where we have educated thousands of lawyers, business students and other professionals, often from disadvantaged backgrounds."

HBCUs and smaller for-profit colleges like UWLA, that focus on providing opportunities for underserved communities are vitally important. These institutions have a proven track record of bringing greater diversity and inclusion to higher education. Judge Byrdsong stated that "diverse views bring about a superior product, a well-informed and open-minded perspective necessary to solve the myriad of problems and issues we face today," he concluded. "Think about the feeling of experiencing something new and different. If you can appreciate how awesome it is to be exposed to new ideas and situations, diversity will be the default desired outcome."

DEI EFFORTS GROWING AMONG VC FIRMS

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) data from 315 venture capital (VC) firms, representing more than 5,700 U.S.-based, full-time employees and \$594.5 billion in assets under management, is now available as part of the “VC Human Capital Survey,” powered by Venture Forward, the National Venture Capital Association (NVCA) and Deloitte.

THIS SURVEY SERIES TAKES a unique approach to assessing DEI in the VC industry. It gathers data confidentially from VC firms of all types and sizes, examines various demographic groups across all positions and evaluates firm talent management strategies, including DEI practices and goals.

The fourth edition of the survey provides a first glimpse into outcomes from initiatives that many VC firms made following the summer of 2020 when social justice and racial equity were a heightened focus for the country.

Key Takeaways

- **More VC firms are incorporating DEI strategies.** Nearly one-half (46%) of surveyed firms have a diversity strategy (up from 44% in 2020, 35% in 2018 and 15% in 2016), and 44% have an inclusion strategy (up from 41% in 2020, 31% in 2018 and 17% in 2016). In 2022, 60% of firms said they either have a staff person or a team responsible for DEI (an increase from 55% in

2020, 34% in 2018 and 16% in 2016). Majority of firms have established or plan to establish specific DEI goals. This new question found that 40% of the firms surveyed in 2022 stated they now have specific DEI goals, while 23% plan to implement goals within the next six months.

- **More VC firms are seeing DEI interest from limited partners (LPs) and focusing on DEI at portfolio companies.** In 2022, 47% percent of firms said that LPs requested their DEI details within the last 12 months, an increase from 41% in 2020 and 36% in 2018. In 2022, 38% of firms said they requested DEI details from their portfolio companies, an increase from 30% in 2020 and 19% in 2018.

- **Women are far from parity, although their representation is steadily trending upward.** Female employees represent 26% of investment professionals in 2022, up from 23% in 2020, 21% in 2018 and 15% in 2016. The proportion of women in junior-level investment positions grew in 2022 to 35%, up from 33% in 2020, 28% in 2018 and 25% in 2016. Among investment partners, women represent 19%, up from 16% in 2020, 14% in 2018 and 11% in 2016. In 2022, 57% of firms reported they did not have any female investment partners (compared with 65% in 2020 and

68% in 2018). Only 15% of firms said they had more than one.

- **Racially and ethnically diverse women saw slim gains among investment partners.** Black women comprised 1% of investment partners in 2022 compared to 0.25% in 2020 and 1% in 2018. Among investment partners, 5% were Asian/Pacific Islander women in 2022, compared to 3% in 2020 and 5% in 2018. Hispanic women were 2% of investment partners in 2022, increasing from 1% in 2020 and 2018. White non-Hispanic women comprised 13% of investment partners in 2022, up from 12% in 2020 and 11% in 2018.
- **Female representation among investment professionals with senior decision-making responsibilities realized little or no gains.** Women

[Continued on page 22]



Employer Support for People with Disabilities is Needed

SourceAmerica, an AbilityOne authorized enterprise committed to increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities, recently announced results of a national survey that revealed 93% of respondents desire the private sector and government to take a more active role in supporting employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

THE POLL OF 1,000 employed Americans and 1,000 employed Americans with disabilities found that nine in 10 respondents said it was important for their employers to value diversity and inclusion, specifically including individuals with disabilities.

“The survey results strengthen our resolve to help create access to jobs for people with disabilities. Our goal is to create a level playing field where anyone with a disability who wants to work has the opportunity to do so,” said Richard Belden, president and CEO of SourceAmerica. “As we approach National Disability Employment Awareness Month, we want to encourage public and private sector employers to join us in connecting people with disabilities to competitive jobs with good wages and advancement potential to build careers.”

In recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) this past October, SourceAmerica commissioned this survey which was independently conducted by market research company OnePoll between July 14 and July 21, 2023. The findings highlight the crucial need for more public and private sector help in creating additional job opportunities for people with disabilities.

How Disabilities Impact Career Trajectory

The survey found that disabilities have had a significant impact on job interviews and careers. In an alarming finding, the majority (57%) of Americans with disabilities believe their disability has limited their career opportunities. Forty-three percent believe that people with disabilities are not given equal opportunities for employment and advancement in the workplace.

Survey data also revealed that more than half of Americans with disabilities (58%) experienced discrimination during job interviews, compared to only 26% of Americans without disabilities.

A majority (59%) of those with disabilities said they’ve left their job due to discriminatory acts, while only 26% of people without disabilities have made the same decision based on discrimination.

Two-thirds (68%) with disabilities said they’ve witnessed discrimination against someone with a disability in their workplace, twice as many (32%) as respondents without disabilities.

DEIA Initiatives in the Workplace

The survey revealed a national lack of awareness of DEIA initiatives with only four in 10 of the respondents knowing



©WavebreakMediaMicro / Adobe Stock

that the “A” stood for Accessibility in DEIA. Six in 10 respondents indicated that they had not heard of DEIA.

Of those familiar with DEIA initiatives, 58% believe that their employer is not doing enough to promote diversity and inclusivity. Seven in 10 believe more emphasis should be placed on people with disabilities in workplace DEIA initiatives.

Additionally, 67% viewed DEIA initiatives as essential for helping individuals facing barriers to employment, which includes people with disabilities.

The Role of Government and Private Sector in Creating Jobs for People with Disabilities

Respondents also voiced their opinions on the actions needed for immediate change.

More than one in three think that targets, quotas and goals for disability representation are important to encourage more employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

“The survey results highlight the need for better access to employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It indicates that most Americans think the government and private sector should do

more to employ individuals with disabilities,” said Richard Belden, president and CEO of SourceAmerica. “That is why we continue to voice our support and educate lawmakers on Congressional efforts to establish a 1% federal procurement contracting goal for the AbilityOne Program.”

The AbilityOne Program is among the nation’s largest sources of employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities. Only 0.55% of federal contracting is awarded to AbilityOne-authorized providers. By establishing a 1% goal, Congress can level the playing field among federal agency priorities where existing goals for other procurement programs range between 3% and 23%. SourceAmerica calculates that through the Department of Defense alone, this goal could create an additional 16,400 employment opportunities for people with disabilities, including veterans and wounded warriors.



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Despite Increase In DE&I Initiatives, Many Employees Are Still Left Behind

Survey shows U.S. employees with hearing loss are underrepresented in DE&I efforts.

While corporate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts may be on the rise, those with hearing loss are a population that continues to be left behind by companies when it comes to providing inclusive healthcare opportunities.

According to a recent survey by TruHearing, the market leader in hearing healthcare benefits, only a quarter of employees reported that their employer offers hearing benefits, despite the fact that 42% of the general population of employees surveyed report hearing loss. This is a missed opportunity for employers to build positive perceptions with all employees, given that 94% of employees – even those without hearing loss – agree that it is at least somewhat important for employers to offer hearing benefits as part of their overall employee benefits package, and more than half (53%) feel it is important or very important.

DE&I initiatives have become mandatory for those in the job market. A significant majority (83%) of the general population of employees reported that a company having DE&I initiatives is important to them when searching for a job. Additionally, 74% say that a company having DE&I initiatives plays a role in them continuing to work for the company.

“As DE&I initiatives continue to be prioritized during the job search, it is critical that companies provide offerings like hearing benefits that help cultivate an inclusive environment so that all employees feel prioritized and supported,” said Tommy Macdonald, CEO, TruHearing. This was validated in the TruHearing survey with 49% of employees with treated hearing loss reporting that they felt more

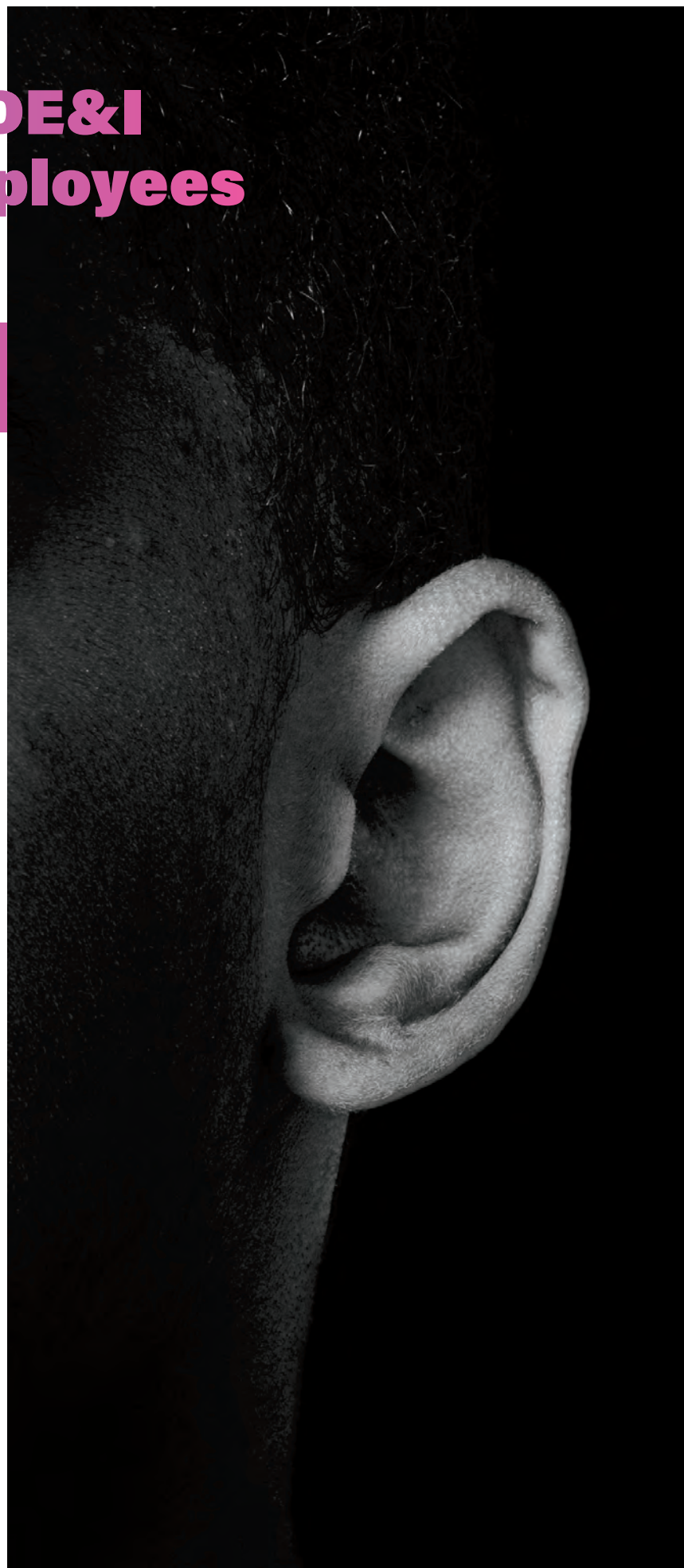
included at work after wearing hearing aids. “Adding hearing benefits is a nearly negligible cost and an easy way for companies to enhance their DE&I efforts, while significantly improving overall employee wellness when compared to other initiatives.”

Providing employees with hearing healthcare is one of the easiest and most impactful ways a company can support those with hearing loss, as cost is the number one barrier to seeking hearing treatment and access to hearing insurance is the top motivator for treating hearing loss. According to the TruHearing study, more than half (51%) of employees with hearing loss reported they would have waited longer to pursue getting hearing aids if their employer did not offer hearing benefits. This delay in proactively addressing hearing health needs is demonstrated by the 36% of employees who reported untreated hearing loss.

“Offering hearing benefits is not only a way to provide employees with necessary healthcare, but it also demonstrates that a company is taking real action to promote overall wellness and inclusion, which is now being prioritized by employees more than ever before. The addition of hearing benefits can both support a company’s reputation among staff and also show employees with hearing loss how much they are valued,” said Macdonald.



To view or share this content online, use this QR code.



How Flexible Working Policies Impact Diversity & Inclusion

In today's dynamic work landscape, where being offered some kind of flexible working option is now the norm, many companies continue to grapple with the best way to implement flexible working to effectively balance their business goals with employee expectations.

As we delve into the differing needs between demographics, the very definition of flexible working continues to expand. Beyond standard, hybrid or fully remote working, flexitime, compressed or staggered hours, job sharing and part-time roles are all increasingly being considered by companies to become more attractive to a broader pool of professionals in a world where it's becoming harder to find the right talent.

Balancing Inclusivity and Workplace Flexibility

Flexible working arrangements undoubtedly offer a multitude of benefits that support employees, but they become even more important when focusing on making workplaces more inclusive.

The right options reduce barriers for professionals that can otherwise prevent them from remaining in the workforce, such as people with childcare or caregiver responsibilities, or individuals who would be unable to commute to your location. People with disabilities can also be overlooked when considering flexible working arrangements — according to the World Health Organization, 16% of the world's population is disabled, and many face disadvantages and discrimination in all aspects of their life, including at work.

As well as removing these constraints, flexible working brings a multitude of extra benefits to all employees, such as improving work-life balance, overall wellbeing and increasing job satisfaction. Equally, businesses

can save money through better employee retention rates and lower office overhead costs.

However, we can't ignore the benefits of being together in the workplace. An office environment naturally makes communicating easier, leading to better collaboration for quicker problem-solving and decision making. Being in the office also makes it easier for teams to build stronger relationships and share knowledge, and creates a more structured environment that makes it easier to offer equal access to resources and facilities. Overall, working in the office builds a sense of belonging and community, which can contribute to increased job satisfaction and productivity just as much as working remotely.

Adapting Flexible Working Across Industries

While the varied benefits of remote, hybrid and office-based working for diverse workforces are universal, the industry your business operates in may also impact your flexible working policies. Some jobs require a physical presence due to the nature of the work, such as manufacturing or healthcare. In contrast, roles in technology or finance may be more adaptable to remote work.

As a leading global talent partner, **Phaidon International** regularly carries out industry surveys to keep organizations informed of the latest hiring trends and compensation benchmarks. Recent surveys carried out by our life sciences brand **EPM Scientific** and supply chain brand **DSJ Global** exemplify the real-world differences between industries.

Among our surveyed life sciences professionals in the U.S., 74% were offered flexible working hours and 79% had flexibility with remote working, with almost half (48%) working fully remotely. Ninety percent said that flexible working was important when considering a new career opportunity, and only 48% would consider a new role that required them to be in the office full-time.

In contrast, 69% of U.S. supply chain professionals had flexible working hours and 70% had remote working flexibility, with 28% working fully remotely. While 80% said that flexible working was important when considering a new career opportunity, 68% would consider a new fully office-based role.

Whichever flexible working option or combination you choose, it's vital to get the balance right for your unique business and stick to your decisions, as moving the goalposts can lead to uncertainty for your employees.

Attract Diverse Talent with Inclusive Practices

In addition to the benefits you offer, no matter which industry you operate in, there are actions you can take to make your organization more attractive to diverse talent and ensure the wellbeing of your teams.

It all starts before you even advertise your vacancy. Be aware that the language you use in your job descriptions might deter certain applicants from even applying in the first place, for example by using gendered language or terms like "competitive," "work hard, play hard" or "digital native." Equally, adding in extra

information on inclusive policies and benefits will help to attract a diverse range of candidates.

To mitigate bias further, blind resume screening or skills tests can help to evaluate candidates based solely on their skills, experience and qualifications, while structured interview questions and diverse interview panels reduce unconscious biases and help diverse candidates to better connect with your company.

Working with a specialist talent partner is another powerful method to attract and retain diverse talent, as you can leverage the reach, experience and insights of dedicated experts. According to an ED&I survey **Phaidon International** carried out across over 3,000 professionals and six different industries, only 38% of individuals strongly agreed that their current employer promoted a culture of inclusivity and respect for ED&I. Having external experts can help you better understand the needs of professionals within different demographics to develop more inclusive hiring and retention strategies.

Build Diverse, Top-Performing Teams with Phaidon International

If you would like to find out more about how **Phaidon International** can help you refine your hiring processes, flexible working policies and wider compensation packages to attract a diverse range of qualified professionals, please get in touch at phaidoninternational.com.

—Dylan Pany, Managing Director – Head of Los Angeles and West Coast Region at Phaidon International

Corporate Commitment to DEI: Where It Stands Today

The diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) pendulum has begun a swing downward from its high point of corporate adoption following the civil unrest in 2020, which saw consumers and employees demand organizations make public social commitments aimed at creating a more equitable workplace.

IN 2023, ROI, A leading internal communication and employee engagement consultancy firm, reports seeing a 55% reduction in requests for DEI-related communication support year over year. The ongoing DEI work that ROI supports its clients with has seen budget reductions upwards of 30%, almost double the reduction compared to the average of 15% for other employee-focused work, which is expected in a churning marketplace.

Companies in the U.S. are feeling the multi-prong effects of the SCOTUS rulings striking affirmative action in college admissions, a downward-trending tech market that has led to waves of layoffs, and increased political polarization that has given rise to extremely visible

consumer backlash, particularly in the LGBTQ+ space.

Hiring for the position of Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) has declined,

tenure rates for CDOs are a third of their C-suite counterparts, and DEI roles have a one in three chance of turnover which is 12% higher than non-DEI roles.

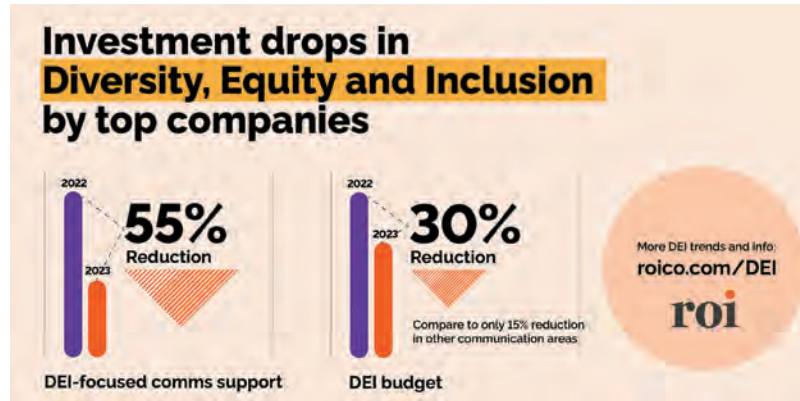
Despite the broad-stroke downturn, ROI has noted that DEI sentiment and support remain steadfast and consistent, particularly in companies with DEI foundations prior to 2020. Those organizations have the benefit of having weathered previous marketplace downturns while understanding DEI as a key component to innovation and marketplace edge, particularly in the technology and energy sectors.

ROI notes that it's critical to make visible progress at the leadership level as it remains an important factor in the perceived success of DEI initiatives. During a recent DEI survey for an ROI client, a common employee-vocalized theme was summed up, "It doesn't matter what you say. If we don't see the leadership stats becoming more diverse, it doesn't matter what the communications are."

ROI predictions for trends in the DEI space in 2024 include:

- CDOs will narrow their focus and lean into data and metrics to showcase progress against specific objectives.
- Reduced DEI roles will resurface as functions within departments such as HR, Product Development and Recruiting.
- Companies will undergo a regrouping and restructuring of publicly stated DEI goals.
- There will be a reduction of ERG and community engagement financial commitments.

ROI was founded in 2001 by its CEO Barbara Fagan to specialize in helping companies achieve their greatest success through authentic communication and engagement.



How the Economy Impacts DE&I Efforts in Businesses

A recent Korn Ferry survey of professionals points to who has the responsibility to advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts within an organization and how the economy is impacting those efforts.

NEARLY ONE-THIRD (30%) OF respondents say the weakening economy is slowing down DE&I efforts in their organization. While fewer than half (47.5%) of respondents say their organization has stated DE&I goals, the largest percentage (37.5%) say DE&I advancement is the responsibility of everyone in the organization.

"DE&I efforts should not be considered a 'one-off' training or event aimed at changing employee behaviors," said Alina Polonskaia, global leader of Korn Ferry's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion practice. "To be truly effective, DE&I needs to be woven into every aspect of an organization, from process and structure to business partnerships and community interactions."

More than half of respondents (55%) believe that their organizations follow through on stated DE&I goals, but only 23% say middle managers are judged on key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to DE&I efforts.

"If done properly, there is a direct correlation between DE&I advancements

and business success," said Andrés Tapia, Korn Ferry senior partner, Global ESG and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion strategist. "The first step is to analyze the key issues a company wants to solve – such as growth, innovation or optimizing talent performance – and then define what outcomes are needed to solve those issues."

The Korn Ferry survey of 204 professionals took place in early 2023.

Survey results:
What type of impact is the economic slowdown having on your organization's DE&I efforts?

It is slowing down efforts	30%
It is increasing efforts	15%
No impact	55%

Who is responsible for advancing DE&I efforts within your organization?

HR	25%
CEO	5%
Middle Managers	17.5%
Chief Diversity Officers	15%
DE&I advancement is the responsibility of everyone in the organization	37.5%

Does your organization have stated DE&I goals?

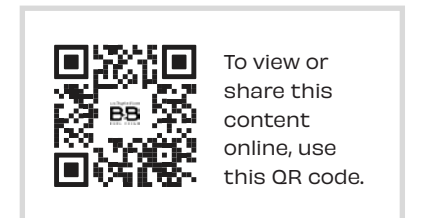
Yes	47.5%
No	37.5%
I don't know	15%

Does your organization follow through on steps to achieve stated DE&I goals?

Yes to a great extent	15%
Yes to some extent	40%
No	15%
We don't have stated DE&I goals	30%

Are middle managers judged on KPIs (key performance indicators) relating to DE&I efforts?

Yes	23%
No	77%





The Los Angeles Times B2B Publishing team is well aware that employees valued by leadership end up caring for each other — and their clients. Those who feel inspired by the companies where they work feel empowered and motivated. Additionally, they share and support the corporate vision. When factors such as diversity, equity, inclusion, communication and transparency from leadership and true growth opportunities are present at a workplace, great things are bound to happen.

For our first annual celebration of the region's 'Top Workplaces,' L.A. Times B2B Publishing partnered with DataJoe LLC, a leading national data collection and third party research firm, to develop a workplace survey. We received nominations suggesting private, public, nonprofit and government organizations of all sizes in the SoCal region. These organizations' HR teams were then invited to share the survey with their employee teams.

Employees were asked to answer a series of questions about their employers. The survey covered a variety of essential topics, including diversity, organizational health, engagement, leadership, work-life balance, training, pay, benefits and corporate social responsibility. Employees then rated their employers with scores ranging from 1 to 7, with a 1 representing "strongly disagree," a 4 representing "neutral" and

a 7 reflecting "strongly agree." Employees also were given the opportunity to write anonymous comments on such topics as motivation, referrals of potential employees, retention, leadership, values and ethics, direction and cooperation. To view all of the survey questions, visit latimes.com/diversity2023.

DataJoe then compiled and vetted the data received, creating a workplace satisfaction index used to rank the overall workplace health of participating companies. DataJoe also harnessed the data to build detailed reports for participating companies.

The results of this research program determined finalists in the Southern California area. Based on participation this year, a selection of 65 outstanding employers were honored as best workplaces.

The 65 organizations and employers selected as Best Workplaces in Southern California are honored and listed (in two groups – one for mid-sized and large companies and one for small companies) in this special publication as part of our DEIA Magazine because diversity, equity, inclusion and acceptance are distinct factors of excellence in great places to work, according to the employees surveyed for this data. The Best Workplaces program is designed to be an annual, free survey and workplace health analysis to identify companies that are creating strong, healthy workplace cultures.

Top Rated Workplaces in Southern California

Small company

Empress Investment Group

empressig.com

EMPRESS INVESTMENT GROUP is committed to financially educating, empowering and enriching the lives of women and their families. No one strategy fits everyone, which is why every Empress client gets specialized attention – from planning to execution to follow-up. Empress Investment Group takes a proactive approach and develops a strategy to address each client's financial goals using the most efficient methods possible.

OVERALL RANKING

#1

Top Executive

Meagan Phelps
Founder

Year Established
2003

Chef Michelle and Company

chefmichelleandcompany.com

CHEF MICHELLE AND Company aims to make peoples' days a little bit more delicious. Owner and founder Chef Michelle has brought together a dynamic group of people to make special occasions a reality. She and her team invite customers to let her and her team take care of special dinner parties with tantalizing food and exceptional service.

OVERALL RANKING

#2

Top Executive

Michelle Lainez
Owner

Year Established
2017

Macallans Public House

macallanspubbrea.com

BREA-BASED MACALLANS PUBLIC House, also known as Macallans Pub, offers the largest selection of scotch and whiskey in Orange County, complemented by elevated pub cuisine. A contemporary pub, Macallans Public House is the only Michelin Star restaurant located in Downtown Brea. Executive Chef Joseph Quezada curates a varied menu from his signature fish & chips to a classic shepherd's pie.

OVERALL RANKING

#3

Top Executive

Aaron Ong
Owner

Year Established
2014

Team Friday

teamfriday.la

TEAM FRIDAY IS a creative agency focused on building purpose, furthering causes and creating impact through collaboration and innovative communication solutions. The team leverages several decades of experience in brand strategy, experiential marketing, digital communications and strategic partnerships to create dynamic campaigns for people, brands, organizations, communities and civic entities.

OVERALL RANKING

#4

Top Executive

Michelle O'Grady-Caballero
Founder and CEO

Year Established
2012

Schon Tepler Partners, LLC

schontepler.com

SCHON TEPLER PARTNERS, Inc. (STP) is a fully integrated real estate development and investment company based in Los Angeles. The focus is on creating and preserving value for equity investors through the use of specialized knowledge of the multi-family real estate business, providing a vertically integrated real estate company specializing in the ground-up development of multi-family real estate, property management and construction.

OVERALL RANKING

#5

Top Executive

Paul Schon
Co-Founder,
Managing Partner

Year Established
2009

Jinji HR

jinjihr.com

JINJI HR WAS formed to help businesses that don't have the capacity to have full-time HR support or don't have the level of HR support needed. Based on a strong foundation of service and core values, the team works to make their clients' lives easier, ensure their companies are in compliance and help them bring more harmony to their teams.

OVERALL RANKING

#6

Top Executive

Susan Levi
CEO & Senior HR
Consultant

Year Established
2021

Pod People Inc.

podpeople.com

POD PEOPLE IS a one-stop shop for audio needs – from producing a best-in-class podcast to crafting audio content strategy to staffing up a growing audio department. The team has spent years curating a network of the world's best audio producers, writers, editors, engineers, sound designers and more to develop shows from concept to launch, level up an existing podcast or build an audio strategy roadmap.

OVERALL RANKING

#7

Top Executive

Rachael King
CEO & Founder

Year Established
2017

Innovate Marketing Group

innovatemkg.com

INNOVATE MARKETING GROUP is a boutique, full-service event management and experiential marketing agency specializing in creating experiences that connect brands with people. The team at Innovate Marketing Group is driven by a passion for its collective craft. The agency helps fuel brands that change lives for the better. The agency is made up of a team of diverse professionals with a love of events.

OVERALL RANKING

#8

Top Executive

Amanda Ma
Founder & CEO

Year Established
2014

Kitty Bungalow Charm School for Wayward Cats

kittybungalow.org

KITTY BUNGALOW IS a community cat organization and kitten socialization facility. The team focuses its attention on providing services for the most vulnerable of felines. Kitty Bungalow provides the community with access to free TNR services, which allows for thousands of community cats to be fixed, receive vaccines and flea treatment and get returned to the people who care for them.

OVERALL RANKING

#9

Top Executive

Alma Vera
Executive Director

Year Established
2015

Mansour Travel Company

mansourtravel.com

MANSOUR TRAVEL COMPANY has assembled an eclectic staff of professionals for discerning clientele. The seasoned team is drawn from varied backgrounds and collectively has many years of experience. In keeping with the upscale creativity of the brand, the Mansour Travel Company staff is a well-traveled, dynamic group of people, knowledgeable and up-to-date in the leisure, corporate and entertainment industry travel markets.

OVERALL RANKING

#10

Top Executive

Kay Mansour
President & CEO

Year Established
1981

Top Rated Workplaces in Southern California

Small company

Rank	Name	Top Executive, Title	Year Established	Website
11	Ascend Agency	Jonathan Jadali, Founder & CEO	2020	ascendagency.com
12	Irvine Technology Corporation	Nicole McMackin, Chief Executive Officer	2000	irvinetechcorp.com
13	Lyon Stahl Investment Real Estate	Brett Lyon & Woody Stahl, Co-Founders	2014	lyonstahl.com
14	The Chori-Man LLC	Humberto Raygoza, Founder	2013	thechoriman.com
15	Gabi James	Sara Gabriele, Owner	2018	gabijamesla.com
16	Echo-Factory	Mike Schaffer, CEO & Founder	2007	echo-factory.com
17	Bob Gold & Associates	Bob Gold, Principal	1997	bobgoldpr.com
18	Law Office of Parag L. Amin, PC	Parag L. Amin, Founder	2012	lawpla.com
19	NewFilmmakers Los Angeles (NFMLA)	Larry Laboe, Executive Director	2007	newfilmmakersla.com
20	Exverus Media	Bill Durrant, President, Founder	2014	exverus.com
21	DTO Law	William Delgado, Megan O'Neill & Mark Tarango, Founders	2019	dtolaw.com
22	ResWell	Francisco Navarro, MD, Founder & CEO, Clinical Director	2010	reswellhealth.com
23	The Phillips Group	Laura Phillips, E.A., Co-Founder & CEO	2021	phillipsgrouptax.com
24	The Smart Agency	Jenn Quader, President & CEO	2021	thesmartagency.com
25	Montage Insurance Solutions	Danone Simpson, CEO	2006	montageinsurance.com
26	Keystone CPA	Amanda Han & Matthew MacFarland, Managing Directors	2008	keystonecpa.com
27	South County Outreach	LaVal Brewer, President & CEO	1989	sco-oc.org
28	Parkview Financial	Paul Rahimian, Founder & CEO	2009	parkviewfinancial.com
29	HelpGood	Michael Bellavia, CEO	2016	helpgood.com
30	Pine Animal Hospital	Steve Manyak, DVM, President & Lead Veterinarian	2013	pineanimalhospital.com
31	The Corniche Group Inc.	Anastasia Mann, Founder, Chairman & CEO	1987	corniche.com

Congratulations to Our Parkview Financial Team

Top Rated Workplace in Southern California

parkviewfinancial.com

PARKVIEW
FINANCIAL

Top Rated Workplaces in Southern California

Midsize-Large company

Bisner Chase Personal Injury Attorneys, LLPbestattorney.com

BISNER CHASE REPRESENTS people in California who have been seriously injured or lost a family member due to an accident or a defective product. The firm also represents people who have been denied employment rights. Bisner Chase brings those who have been negligent to justice while helping to make sure victims are made whole. Their team has the resources to take on the toughest cases.

OVERALL RANKING

#1

Top Executive

Brian Chase
Managing Partner & Senior Lawyer

Year Established
1978

Nourmand & Associatesnourmand.com

SINCE 1976, NOURMAND & Associates has been a standard-bearer for Los Angeles residential real estate. As one of the city's last remaining family-owned brokerages, we pride ourselves on our established and respected brand. Family forms the heart of the firm's success, and Nourmand & Associates treats clients just like family. This client-centric approach has made the firm a trusted advisor to L.A.'s top business managers and attorneys.

OVERALL RANKING

#2

Top Executive

Michael Nourmand
President

Year Established
1976

Vacovaco.com

AT VACO, THE team in Los Angeles is working to humanize corporate matchmaking. The team helps the best and brightest talent thrive in work environments that match their skills, needs and culture. As a 'Best Place to Work in LA' for 12 straight years, the company knows a thing or two about job satisfaction (their all-team yacht cruises don't hurt).

OVERALL RANKING

#3

Top Executive

Joslyn Osborn & Stephen P. Smith
Co-Managing Partners, Los Angeles Office

Year Established
2002

Gibbs Giden Locher Turner Senet & Wittbrodt LLPgibbsgiden.com

THE ATTORNEYS AT Gibbs Giden have earned the confidence of clients and respect of colleagues for their ability to adeptly handle the most complex and consequential matters. With a powerful combination of insights gained and skills honed over decades of practice, the firm's lawyers are an indispensable resource for clients in a wide range of industries facing complicated business and legal challenges.

OVERALL RANKING

#4

Top Executive

Christopher Ng
Managing Partner

Year Established
1978

Morris, Inc.morris-usa.com

THE MORRIS COMPANY is a group of construction professionals committed to making each project a success. The company's commitment starts with the initial programming phase and continues through property due diligence, entitlements, design, permitting, construction and post-construction follow through. Morris supports and invests in its employees to increase their efficiencies, experience and morale so they can reach common goals for success.

OVERALL RANKING

#5

Top Executive

Chris Morris
President

Year Established
2016

Shegerian & Associatesshegerianlaw.com

SHEGERIAN & ASSOCIATES was founded in 2001 by Carney R. Shegerian, considered one of the country's top trial attorneys. The firm is nationally recognized for achieving some of the largest verdicts and settlements in history and is a recipient of numerous awards. The firm successfully defends its clients' rights against large corporations with expertise in labor and employment laws and litigation.

OVERALL RANKING

#6

Top Executive

Carney Shegerian
Owner & Founder

Year Established
2001

BPM LLPbpm.com

BPM'S EXPERTISE IS in providing solutions, but its greatest strength is the ability to see beyond the challenges to the people behind them. BPM's global team of over 1,000 professionals collaborates across industries, service lines and time zones to deliver exceptional experiences and results. Its mission is to help people be successful in work and life by fostering an inclusive and empowering environment.

OVERALL RANKING

#7

Top Executive

Jim Wallace
Chief Executive Officer

Year Established
1986

McDermott Will & Emerymwe.com

MCDERMOTT WILL & Emery's dedicated lawyers combine their passion for business with a deep understanding of the law to help their clients knock down barriers to success. The team works together every day across geographies, practices and industries to deliver the insights and results that matter to their clients' business and the people they serve.

OVERALL RANKING

#8

Top Executive

Ira Coleman
Chairman

Year Established
1934

Jubilee Mediajubileemedia.com

IN 2010, JUBILEE started with a single video of founder Jason Lee busking at a New York subway stop to raise money for charity. Eleven years later, the firm is creating weekly videos for its beautiful six-million-plus community all around the world. It all started with a single idea: "Create a movement of empathy for human good."

OVERALL RANKING

#9

Top Executive

Jason Y. Lee
Founder & CEO

Year Established
2017

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OVERALL RANKING

#10

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Jim Kruse
Regional President, Los Angeles

Year Established
1969

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Top Rated Workplaces in Southern California

Midsize-Large company

Rank	Name	Top Executive, Title	Year Established	Website
11	Palm Tree LLC	Pardis Nasser, CEO & President	2010	palmtreeellc.com
12	BDI	Michael J. Tomlinson, CEO & President	2004	bdiagency.com
13	Hankey Investment Company, LP	Don Hankey, Chairman	1982	hiclp.com
14	TravelStore	Osvaldo Ramos, President & CEO	1975	travelstore.com
15	Northwestern Mutual West Los Angeles	Juan Baron CFP®, CLU®, ChFC®, Managing Partner	1857	northwesternmutual.com
16	Phonexa	Lilit Davtyan, CEO & CFO	2016	phonexa.com
17	Glendale Area Schools Credit Union	Wesley Walton, Chief Executive Officer	1937	gascu.org
18	Working Wardrobes	Bonni Pomush, Chief Executive Officer	1990	workingwardrobes.org
19	Pinner Construction Co., Inc.	Dirk Griffin, Chief Executive Officer	1919	pinnerconstruction.com
20	Bastion Agency USA	Dax Cornelius, USA Chief Executive Officer	2009	us.bastionagency.com
21	Nowcom, LLC	Jay Kamdar, President	1996	nowcom.com
22	Omega Accounting Solutions	Jay Woods, Founder & President	2007	omega-accounting.com
23	Phaidon International	Harry Youtan, CEO & Founder	2004	phaidoninternational.com
24	Midway Car Rental	Gary Kolodziej, President, Midway Auto Group	1972	midwaycarrental.com
25	Miracle Mile Advisors	Brock Moseley, Founder & Managing Partner	2007	miraclemileadvisors.com
26	Sanders Roberts LLP	Justin H. Sanders & Reginal Roberts, Jr., Founding Partners	2008	sandersroberts.com
27	Thomas St. John, Inc.	Thomas St. John, Chief Executive Officer	2007	thomasstjohn.com
28	North Hollywood Toyota	Aj Salahieh, Vice President, General Manager	1987	northhollywoodtoyota.com
29	FormLA Landscaping, Inc.	Cassy Aoyagi, President	1997	formlainc.com
30	Community Animal Medicine Project (CAMP)	Zoey Knittel, Executive Director	2007	campla.org
31	Knight Management Insurance Services LLC	Amit Shah, President	1999	knightinsurancegroup.com
32	Allied Global Marketing	Clint Kendall, Chief Executive Officer	1986	alliedglobalmarketing.com
33	NRG Heating & Air Conditioning	Eva Tamir, Chief Executive Officer	1987	nrgair.com
34	Westlake Services	Bret Hankey, Vice Chairman of Westlake Financial	1978	westlakefinancial.com

[Continued from page 12]

constitute a distinct minority of investment professionals with senior decision-making responsibilities such as originating deals (25% versus 24% in 2020), representing the firm on the boards of portfolio companies (20% versus 21% in 2020), serving as a member of the firm's investment committee (20% versus 21% in 2020), and serving as an owner of the management company (17% versus 18% in 2020).

- **Representation for Black professionals remains limited.** Black employees comprised 5% of investment professionals in 2022, an increase from 4% in 2020 and 3% in 2018. Black professionals also comprise 4% of senior-level positions (4% in 2020, 3% in 2018), and 7% of junior-level investment professional positions (7% in 2020, 5% in 2018). Eighty-nine percent of firms report they do not have any Black investment partners (93% in 2020 and 2018).
- **Some improvement in Hispanic representation.** Hispanic employees comprised 6% of investment positions

in 2022 (4% in 2020, 5% in 2018) and 5% of investment partner positions (4% in 2020, 3% in 2018). Hispanic representation among junior-level investment professionals also increased from 4% in 2020 and 2018 to 5% in 2022.

- **Younger and smaller firms have more diversity among investment partners.** VC firms founded within the last 10 years reported that a larger percentage of their investment partners were Black (8%), Hispanic (8%) and female (22%) as compared to older firms where Black (1%), Hispanic (2%) and female (17%) investment partners were not as prevalent. A more significant percentage of investment partners at small firms were Black (11%), Hispanic (11%) and female (25%) than at mid-size firms (Black 3%, Hispanic 5%, female 18%) and large firms (Black 1%, Hispanic 1%, female 16%).

Why This Matters

The VC industry plays a critical role in identifying and funding innovative startups that create jobs and economic value

– and in the process, improve people's personal and professional lives. A startup ecosystem with investors and innovators that better reflects the demographics of the country has the potential to unlock opportunities for even greater success, wealth distribution and economic value.

In addition to benchmarking data on gender diversity, racial diversity, ethnic diversity, age diversity, talent management and DEI practices – this year's report provides strategies and insights to help VC firms improve and promote DEI to continue moving the needle.

"Top management must recognize a moral and business imperative to act on broader social responsibilities," said Heather Gates, Audit & Assurance national private growth leader and managing director, Deloitte & Touche LLP. "While gains have occurred, they have been uneven and negligible in some cases, highlighting the need for strong leadership with intentionality towards making change. There is optimism for the future. The increasing diversity among junior-level positions indicates the potential for greater representation among

senior positions as talent matures and rises through the ranks."

"In addition to creating the systems and processes that advance equitable outcomes, it's imperative for organizations to create a culture of inclusion and belonging where all individuals are empowered to thrive," said Kavitha Prabhakar, chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer, Deloitte LLP.

"VC firms are recognizing that not prioritizing DEI is a barrier to funding innovation and achieving higher returns," Bobby Franklin, president & CEO of NVCA. "At a high level, the data showed improvements across most categories. However, if the industry truly wants to make meaningful progress and reach its fullest potential, it needs to build upon this positive momentum and commitment around DEI efforts."



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HR Executives Focus on Racial Justice Initiatives and Impact of COVID-19 on Future of Work

HR Policy Association, representing chief human resource officers (CHROs) of more than 390 of the largest employers in the United States and globally, recently released its top findings from its annual spring survey, devoted to the major issues currently facing CHROs – racial justice and inclusion, pay equity and the impact of COVID-19 on the future of work.

COLLECTIVELY, HR POLICY ASSOCIATION represents employers of more than 11 million Americans, or nearly nine percent of the U.S. workforce. CHROs are responsible for finding, hiring and developing the talent needed for their organizations to thrive in the global marketplace.

President and CEO of HR Policy Association Timothy J. Bartl said, “Our survey data show that HR Policy Association members continue to focus on the overall wellbeing of their employees and stakeholders. Whether it is working toward a culture of more inclusion and belonging, creating a more flexible work environment or promoting better health, large employers are continuing to innovate and lead.”

With over one-third of all HR Policy Association members responding, the top questions and responses of the spring survey are:

Top CHRO Concerns

Most respondents agree that diversity and inclusion (82%) and cultural transformation in anticipation of the post-COVID work environment (71%) are top issues of concern at their companies. About half agree that executive development (50%) and talent management (49%) are issues of concern. A smaller but still significant number of respondents (32%) report

that both digitization of the workplace and employee engagement are issues of concern.

COVID-19/Return to Office: What approaches are you considering to encourage your employees to get vaccinated against COVID-19?

A majority of respondents are using two main approaches to encourage their employees to get vaccinated: paid time off (53%) and manager encouragement (50%). Some are not encouraging their employees to get vaccinated at all (13%), while few are mandating that certain populations be vaccinated (7%). Other methods of encouragement include education campaigns; communication plans; global marketing campaigns; on-site vaccination events; health care premium/wellness credits; and encouragement from local experts, scientists and doctors.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: Since the death of George Floyd, what changes have you made to your company's approach to diversity, inclusion and belonging/equity?

Two changes made by most respondents (85%) include the expansion of inclusiveness activities and increased C-suite involvement. Additional changes include starting/expanding unconscious bias training (70%), evaluation of disaggregated workforce demographic data (57%) and a focus on hiring from educational

institutions with strong minority talent (51%). Examples of other approaches taken include listening sessions and sharing experiences; removal of names from resumes; community partnerships to help source/prepare diverse talent; creating DE&I positions; piloting separate initiatives with a commitment to advancing racial equity; and adding/strengthening incentive metrics on diversity.

HR Policy Association is the lead organization representing chief human resource officers of major employers. The Association consists of more than 390 of the largest corporations doing business in the United States and globally, and these employers are represented in the organization by their most senior human resource executive. Collectively, their companies employ more than 11 million employees in the United States, over nine percent of the private sector workforce and 20 million employees worldwide. They have a combined market capitalization of more than \$8 trillion.

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DEIA Forum

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY



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The 2023 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Forum was held at the SLS Hotel in Beverly Hills on October 19. The day's program included a number of informative panel discussions, featuring diversity leaders from various industries in Southern California. The event was a great opportunity to meet and network with other professionals in the field.

1 Robert Brown, President of UWLA, greets Dr. Anthony Culpepper, President of LA Southwest College. 2 James Lee, Christina Sassanian and Olivia Isa are representing sponsor Phaidon International. 3 Beverly Mendez is the COO of Easterseals Southern California. 4 Moderator Scharrell Jackson enjoys a moment with Anthony Penn, Carol Ross-Burnett and Taylor Maddox. 5 Crystal Leonard and Chelsea Freeman are representing sponsor Easterseals Southern California. 6 Thomas Chang and Ava Archibald of Thrive Scholars meet with Christine Wei-I Lee from UCLA Samueli School of Engineering. 7 Nasser Slets and Ricardo Sebastian of Outloud are in attendance. 8 Bridgett D. Lee of Insmel has a chat with Perika Sampson of Sampson Dearborn Consulting. 9 More Easterseals Southern California representatives include Nancy Weintraub, Jenna Greene and Mark Whitley. 10 The proud team members of CommonSpirit Health gather at their booth.



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Alina Moran

Hospital President & CEO,
Dignity Health
California Hospital Medical
Center



Rosalyn Carpenter

SVP, Chief Diversity,
Equity, Inclusion and
Community Impact Officer,
CommonSpirit Health



Carolyn Caldwell

Hospital President & CEO,
Dignity Health
St. Mary Medical Center



Shared Insights From the Forum

Breaking Barriers

When discussing modern initiatives built to increase equity, it's also very important to understand those who have done work to create this conversation. These individuals have boldly knocked down walls, smashed glass ceilings and innovatively and disruptively shifted the way people think about diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. Here are some thoughts and insights from three unique barrier breakers.

On the continued importance of DEI awareness and the fight for inclusion

Robert W. Brown: I hear this a lot at these events – we're preaching to the choir. Look around you, everybody here, they all believe in [DEIA]. It's what's outside of this room that we really need to be concerned about. Because when you go outside of this room, you have to deal with an environment of exclusion. When you start trying to put these labels of inclusion and diversity on that, fighting that war out there, how willing are you to really take on that fight? It's especially true in a big corporate environment, where there's a constant grappling for power.

Scharrell Jackson: In order to ignite change, we have to be willing to have tough conversations. I do believe that corporate America has a responsibility to ignite change, but it starts individually with you. How hard is it to have a conversation with your child, your husband, your wife or your friend about something that is difficult and that you disagree with? Yet there's an expectation of others to change, and make these major shifts.

On the tangible benefits of breaking barriers

Carlos Salas: The way that we built our business is to look at the edge spaces and find value in them. In our case,

we have created a very successful business around the premise that minority and low-income borrowers are attractive customers. For me, it's basically being a critical thinker, because if you think about the ills that we were trying to mitigate – racism, sexism or other forms of discrimination, fundamentally what they all share is that they are stupid. People who embrace those worldviews are no match for you.

On being true to one's authentic self while still activating change

Brown: If we're holding ourselves to being the best that we can be and we're projecting that out,

[Continued on page 30]



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[Continued from page 28]

you're going to find people that resonate with that. You can start those conversations by walking into the room, as a corporate lawyer, the world I started out in, I was always the only person of color in every room. One thing I led with was my competency. I wanted that to come out. I knew I was accepted when we would have this conversation at the break: "Oh, what school did you go to?" I was accepted into the club at this point. I wanted to be the best lawyer in the room, but I tried not to project that out in a competitive way. Rather, I let them know that I was willing to engage and talk frankly.

Salas: With respect to one's own individual success, each person is their own accountant, and you have to decide what balance is appropriate for you. If there's something that is so essential to your identity – you should do that. There may be adverse consequences, but that is the individual strategy. I think it's very different when you talk about the same point of view from an institutional perspective. I think an institution, whether it's a business or a club, has a different set of requirements. The easiest way to state them is to make sure there's a sharp separation between what you require of people that are job- and performance-oriented and all the other factors that aren't essential – an institution has a requirement to have broad latitude.

On keeping DEI in perspective for all kinds of people

Jackson: People fundamentally are afraid. They're not just afraid because you're an African American woman in a male environment, they're not afraid because you're a white gay, or because they have a disability or because they were treated poorly as a child and don't have any self-esteem. People are struggling with mental health issues. We need to approach individuals with a level of empathy and understanding, but we also have to understand that we've got to let our guard down and become approachable. And collectively, we can start having collaborative conversations and moving the needle forward, instead of fighting or taking a stand on something that is not going to create change.



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Moderator
Scharrell
Jackson

International Keynote Speaker and High-Performance Leadership Coach

Ambitious, high-performing leaders looking for clarity, confidence and courage elevate to the highest level of success with Scharrell Jackson. She is a top-tier operational and financial executive with over 25 years of corporate experience who is authentic, intimate and powerful. As a highly sought-after international keynote speaker, leadership coach and DEI specialist, her transparent approach captivates her audience. She transforms leaders, shifting them to clarity, confidence and courage, unleashing personal greatness and high-level success.



Panelist
Robert W.
Brown

President, University of West Los Angeles

Robert Brown is the president of the University of West Los Angeles and its school of business and school of law. UWLA offers access to opportunities in higher education for those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. During Brown's tenure at UWLA, he oversaw an overhaul of the university's mode of providing quality legal and business education – effectively democratizing education.



Panelist
Carlos
Salas

President, The Change Company

Carlos Salas serves as president of The Change Company CDFI, a financial services company focused on serving underbanked borrowers and communities across the U.S.; as CEO of Change Lending, LLC, its mortgage lending subsidiary; and as director of The Change Company, certain of its subsidiaries since August 2018. Previously, Salas served as chief executive officer and president of COR Clearing LLC (n/k/a Axos Clearing LLC, a subsidiary of Axos Financial Inc.). Salas received a Juris Doctor from the University of Chicago and a Bachelor of Arts from New York University.



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Shared Insights From the Forum

Harnessing the Power of Diversity

With so much discussion about what diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility is, sometimes lost is its practical application in the workplace. What are the true advantages of DEIA when companies choose to implement strong DEIA initiatives? What are the tangible (and intangible) benefits? And most importantly, what benefits will companies have now and in the future by forging ahead with these important measures?

On ensuring that DEI initiatives create meaningful changes

Sterling De Sutter Summerville: I think organizations can make DEI a reality and make it real to its consequences by baking strategy into their process. We need to treat DEI as if it is just as important as design, just as important as operations. You want to be able to take DEI and put it into every different facet of the work. DEI is critically important to the way that we should build everything. DEI can become more than just a talking point when you bake it into a part of the strategy that touches your consumers.

Perika Sampson: One of the things I say often is “diversity is a management

challenge.” Bringing the right people in, ensuring that you’re creating diversity, including it in the total process, and preaching that it is everyone’s opportunity – every single person who carries a business card in your organization has that opportunity to ensure that diversity continues to persist.

On the true definition of DEI

Summerville: Diversity is who you have in the room; inclusion is how people are situated with power. I feel like that’s one of the main subjects that is far too often under-talked about. Then, equity is ensuring that people have what they need to succeed.

On the challenges surrounding DEI

Sampson: One challenge is making sure that everyone understands why

this matters, why it’s important to the work that they do, how diversity and ultimately inclusion, connectedly, can improve conversation and contribution. If I’m sitting at a table and I’m contributing fully, and I feel every day when I walk the halls of an organization that I belong here – I’m going to contribute at a high level and in a way that’s authentic, based on where I am and what my experience is. If that doesn’t exist, you could lose an important opportunity. The person who walks out the door because they don’t feel like they belong there could be the person who could have created a solution – you let that brain trust walk out because they didn’t feel safe making mistakes or they didn’t feel safe taking risks.

Summerville: [A challenge is] making people understand that DEIA isn’t just “extra.” It’s not something that we should do – it’s something that we have to do. It’s a similar concept to saying: How much sooner would we have gotten here if we had treated people from different gender identity groups with the same opportunities that we gave to others. How much sooner would we have solved some of our complex problems had we given more people the opportunity to participate?

On making DEIA work and grow over time

Sampson: Your DEIA strategy is a living thing. I tend to like three-to-five-year goals versus five years on, because it’s living – life changes every day. We just had some legal rulings that are now

**Moderator****Dr. Shawn Andrews***Founder & CEO, Andrews Research International*

Dr. Shawn Andrews is a renowned keynote speaker, organizational consultant, and best-selling author. Her two-plus decades of corporate experience includes prestigious organizations like the United Nations, Johnson & Johnson and GSK. As a professor at UC Irvine and Pepperdine, she imparts wisdom on women and leadership, organizational behavior, diversity, and leadership ethics. Her expertise encompasses organizational leadership, talent management, D&I, and unconscious bias. Dr. Andrews holds an Ed.D. in organizational leadership, an MBA from Pepperdine and a B.A. in psychology from UC Irvine.

Panelist**Perika Sampson***Global DEI Strategist, Sampson Dearborn Consulting*

Perika Sampson is a highly regarded thought leader, DEI advocate, and strategist. Her most recent corporate experience includes Global Head of Inclusion and Diversity at Gilead Sciences, where she was charged with leading a team of subject matter experts who provide advice, counsel, and leadership on inclusion and diversity strategies, programs, training, and practices. Prior to joining Gilead, Perika was the Senior Regional Diversity Officer for Morgan Stanley Wealth Management. She is an alumnus of the University of California, Los Angeles, a member of the American Heart Association and the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Chorus board of directors. In addition, she is currently chair of the Black Wealth Summit Advisory Board. Sampson resides in Los Angeles, California.

Panelist**Sterling De Sutter Summerville, M.Ed.***DEI Lead, Snap Inc.*

DEI expert Sterling De Sutter Summerville uses his interpersonal skill and empathy to aid Snap Inc. (the parent company of Snapchat) in creating equal opportunities and cross-cultural respect. A Fullbright Scholar, world traveler and former Division 1 football star, Summerville empowers others to reach their true potential and affect change. A skilled writer and orator, Summerville has spent much of his young life exploring other cultures and ways of thinking while having important conversations with a wide range of people. Prior to Snap Inc., Summerville held positions at Google and the Fullbright Fund.

impacting the way we approach DEI. There are things going on in the world, transitions in the world, especially since we're looking at global impact, that we have shaping DEI. Just remember that it's a strategy that's a living thing. We should revise regularly to ensure that we're contributing things that matter to our employees and to our businesses.



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Shared Insights From the Forum

Accessibility and the Bottom Line

Almost 35 years after the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, “accessibility” has taken on broad and varied meanings. More than just physical access for the most apparent of disabilities, modern thoughts on accessibility have expanded to aid those dealing with all manner of differences, from physical to emotional and temporary to permanent. Overall, accessibility is a hugely important part of DEIA, as it helps center empathy on differences beyond what people can see and creates equity for issues that, as everyone ages, they may well face in some way.

On redefining and understanding disability and its prevalence

Lawrence Carter-Long: When talking about disability in the DEI space, there is a thing we should keep in mind: The number of disabled people in terms of percentages, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – it’s 27% of the U.S. population.

Alyssa Kavner: People can be afraid [of disability]. They’re fearful. And there’s language and stereotypes that exist that perpetuate disability as negative. Disability is not negative. It’s different – a different group with diverse thoughts and different styles of organization.

Hannah Said: Gender, race, sexual orientation – these tend to be the “heavy hitters” and disability is the last to be talked about, if at all. But I remember I attended a conference, and someone said, “Every single one of us, if we live long enough, is going to acquire a disability.”

On going beyond compliance and making disabled employees feel welcomed and valued in the workplace

Kavner: Think about who your job descriptions are going to when you’re trying to recruit your talent. Do your job descriptions inadvertently tell people “I can’t work there?” You might have something that says you need to stand for six hours – do you really need to stand for six hours, or

do you need to remain in your workspace for six hours with some breaks? So look at the language that is in your job descriptions to see if you’re effectively excluding people with disabilities from even thinking that they can work there.

Carter-Long: It’s very important that we include access. Without access, we have to ask ourselves certain questions: Who gets the interview? Who gets the job? Who’s making the decisions? Who’s in leadership, who writes the budget? So how can companies, individuals, organizations make their workplaces more accessible for folks with disabilities – there are resources available for companies looking to increase accessibility.

On practical ways to increase awareness of the “A” in DEIA

Kavner: Easterseals Southern California is happy to partner with you all and help decide what you can do within your organization. We can’t tell you that there is a single package available to make you fully accessible. I do highly encourage, however, to talk to people. Say the “D word.” Say disability. Have a place where it doesn’t feel scary to self-disclose.

On cost-effective and simple measures to make spaces more accessible

Said: At my company, Woven, our graphic designer and our web designer work to make websites accessible. Even just simple things like contrasting colors. You



Moderator
Lawrence Carter-Long

Co-Director, DisArt

Multi-hyphenate Lawrence Carter-Long has been a modern dancer, radio show host and producer and was the curator/co-host of the groundbreaking festival “The Projected Image: A History of Disability on Film.” But most importantly, Carter-Long has been a lifelong activist for accessibility. He served as the public affairs specialist for the National Council on Disability, the independent federal agency that brought us the ADA, and joined the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund as communications director in 2017. At DisArt, Carter-Long aids the organization in their goals toward raising the participation of disabled people in curated contemporary art exhibitions.



Panelist
Alyssa Kavner

Vice President – Clinical Training and Quality, Easterseals Southern California

Alyssa Kavner’s journey to vice president of clinical training and quality at Easterseals Southern California took several turns, but all were grounded in the practice of accelerating opportunities for those with different abilities. As a case supervisor for The Center for Autism and Related Disorders, Kavner leaned on her empathy to create better outcomes for those dealing with the often misunderstood disorder. At Easterseals Southern California, her role in several leadership positions has allowed her to grow this practice of empathy, helping more and more individuals in Southern California.



Panelist
Hannah Said

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Practitioner, Woven Inclusion

Hannah Said is a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) facilitator, researcher and community organizer. She recently worked at Walt Disney Company as a Diversity and Inclusion Activation Manager and currently works as a Diversity and Inclusion Business Partner at Lyft. Said also has a DEI consulting company called Woven (*woveninclusion.com*) and a Queer and Middle Eastern coffee pop-up called Saffron Cowboy (*@saffroncowboy*). She loves building diverse, inclusive and equitable communities inside and outside of the office.

can't put a yellow on a pink, you've got to use a black and white, because people who use screen readers – and not just those people who use screen readers – I think that's annoying. I can't see what the screen says. And that's pretty affordable, and if you already had a team, that would be free for you. There are these little tweaks, and I think people just don't know that these things don't feel good to certain people because we operate in a space that is, honestly, anti-disabled.



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Shared Insights From the Forum

Belonging: The New Secret to Retention in an Evolving Remote Workplace

On belonging in a remote or hybrid work model

Jamison Escobar: One thing that the Lakers organization is trying to do is to be as accommodating as possible. You treat individuals as adults and give them the opportunity to show up to the office at different times or even not show up for certain weeks. We instead empower our employees to do their job and I think that has really helped us foster inclusivity throughout the organization.

Caroline Caldwell, FACHE: For those of you to know anything about healthcare: we like being together. And so COVID was very challenging. What we found out is that because we had to create a remote working environment, we were able to add flexibility – someone needs to take care of a family member but not have to take an entire week off – we were able to accommodate our employees.

Gary Bushrod: I would say we're being more flexible with relations that we were having. If I'm working with someone in, say, India – they're working late hours or early so that they can meet up with us on the West Coast, but I have to be accommodating as well. So I take 7:30 a.m. calls or 9:30 p.m. calls to make sure that they understand they're valued.

On measuring employee engagement

Dylan Pany: I look at little things. Whether you're in the office or out of the office, I try and create and cultivate an environment where everyone wants to work together to get to where we want to be, and I genuinely think that if you are engaged, you are going to quickly put your hand up and say, "Hey, I want the same thing."

Escobar: This is new to everybody, and so how we track these things – we're

going to have to change. You can't use legacy tracking, programming or the same things we used to do in the past. This is different and hard. It's a very ongoing and dynamic situation from a normalization standpoint. My biggest takeaway is to be flexible and be okay with reframing what your expectations are.

On being a better remote manager

Caldwell: During COVID, those of us on our leadership team still came to the hospital to make sure our employees were okay and ask if they needed anything. It's a requirement that all of our leaders go on rounds with the employees – we also do night rounds. As part of our employee engagement surveys, we asked the question about belonging, and we were so excited when what we did showed significant improvement in our employee engagement.

Bushrod: I would say in this new remote environment, we've adjusted, gotten a lot more creative and a lot more technologically savvy. How are you making it so that people who are not physically in the office with you feel like they're being heard? I think one small trick that we've done is that we'll have a physical office where some people are in a conference room, and if there's someone who's attending virtually, we'll be hyper-conscious of that person. And then we gather feedback about engagement, and with that feedback we're able to address employee needs.

Pany: I've been working on myself and on understanding that good work is good work, whether it happens in some apartment, or house or in the office. That took a lot of time, to be honest with you. There was some failure and trial and error,



and having hard conversations. For me, I just try to focus on my job as a manager and that's what helped. Getting a good performance out of my team is my business, and I have to make sure everyone feels included and that they are a part of that mission.



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Moderator:
Angel Jennings

Assistant Managing Editor for Culture & Talent, Los Angeles Times

As assistant managing editor for culture and talent, Angel Jennings oversees the L.A. Times' Metro and internship programs, as well as working closely with HR and department heads to help manage tracking, recruiting, interviewing and selecting diverse candidates for job opportunities. She also advances the company's efforts to promote diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. Jennings was previously a Metro reporter for the Times and worked with many departments in the newsroom, including Metro, National, Calendar, Business and podcasts.



Panelist:
Gary Bushrod

Global Head of DEI, Amazon Music

After graduating from Hampton University with a degree in business management, Gary Bushrod took jobs in finance, learning and development. Utilizing those varied skills, he transitioned into global head of DEI for Amazon Music. His mission is to help Amazon Music grow a diverse and inclusive workforce through cutting-edge programs, philanthropic and strategic partnerships and creating a work environment that all can celebrate being part of.



Panelist:
Carolyn Caldwell, FACHE

Hospital President and CEO, Dignity Health - St. Mary Medical Center

Carolyn P. Caldwell, FACHE, is president and CEO at Dignity Health - St. Mary Medical Center in Long Beach. With a long history in medical leadership, Caldwell has received many accolades for her service to organizations and patients. She holds a master's in healthcare administration from Texas Women's University, Dallas, and worked as a medical technologist prior to her leadership roles.



Panelist:
Jamison Escobar

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Program Manager, Los Angeles Lakers

Jamison Escobar is a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) practitioner with experience in both the sports industry and the military. As a diversity manager for the U.S. Coast Guard, Escobar formed connections through shared experiences and in unique situations. Within the Lakers organization, he is involved in program development, group facilitation, organizational culture change and initiative implementation.



Panelist:
Dylan Pany

Managing Director, Phaidon International

Dylan Pany has held several leadership positions at Phaidon International and is now their managing director, overseeing six distinct brands that bring business-critical talent to industries worldwide. Phaidon specializes in getting talented individuals to where they are needed most with a specific focus on DEI. Pany arrived at Phaidon International's Los Angeles office in 2020 after several years in New York City, and he holds a BSBA from West Virginia University.

DEIA VISIONARIES

Increasingly, corporations are recognizing the importance and need for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) initiatives in the workplace. As it's not an exact science, it requires incredibly talented individuals to provide the vision and leadership needed to navigate the numerous challenges that arise in this new and evolving arena.

Listed alphabetically below are some of the area's most influential and innovative thought leaders who are driving change, holding companies accountable and helping employees feel more valued. We hope you enjoy reading about their career backgrounds and recent achievements in establishing groundbreaking DEIA strategies at companies throughout Southern California.

Josefina Aguayo

*Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
eBay, Inc.*

Josefina Aguayo, eBay, Inc.'s director of diversity, equity and



inclusion, is a distinguished leader. Holding a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Illinois at Chicago, she boasts executive education certifications from Yale School of Management, Stanford University, and the London School of Economics and Political Science. With a robust career, Aguayo's roles at Rodan & Fields and Macy's Inc. demonstrate her expertise. She initiated the Dev/Color Guild, promoting diverse talent in technology and commenced her DE&I journey at the National Urban League, launching the Chicago Innovation Awards.

Aguayo's commitment extends to board memberships, including St. Augustine High School's Development Board. As a Level founding member, she addresses the racial wealth gap through angel investing. Her Delta Sigma Theta sorority membership in Los Angeles underscores her dedication to societal change.

Alejandra Alanis

*Risk Consulting Manager
RSM US LLP*

A

lejandra Alanis is a seasoned risk consulting manager at RSM US LLP with over nine years of experience in both internal and external audit roles. She kickstarted her career at Deloitte Seattle before joining RSM US LLP in November 2018. Specializing in internal audit Sarbanes-Oxley readiness projects within the life sciences and technology sectors, Alanis has been instrumental in guiding numerous clients through successful IPOs. Her dedication to diversity and equity is evident through her leadership roles within her firm. In 2021, she also became part of the National Steering Committee for HOLA, RSM US LLP's Latino Employee Network Group, showcasing her commitment to promoting diversity and equity within her organization.

Alanis is currently participating in the CEO Action for Racial Equity Fellowship Program, collaborating with peers to promote scalable public policies and corporate engagement strategies aimed at advancing racial equity in society, particularly for the African American community.



Clifton W. Albright

*President & Founding Partner
Albright, Yee & Schmit, APC*

C

lifton W. Albright is the president and founding partner of Albright, Yee & Schmit, APC. His leadership extends beyond law, focusing on fostering diversity and inclusion. He ensures minority recruitment, mentoring programs, and tech training. Personally, he supports employees with childcare and education. Albright also advocates for minorities in golf, highlighting its business value.

Outside his firm, he educates clubs on discrimination, bias, and racism. He addresses systemic racism's impact at schools by mentoring students. Philanthropically, Albright aids minorities and underserved communities through charitable events and support. His philanthropic efforts extend to charitable events benefitting minorities and underserved communities, sponsoring vacations for disadvantaged families and providing financial, emotional, and mentoring support to improve their lives. Albright cares for the homeless, offering donations and outreach. In politics, she backs minority candidates and advises elected officials on promoting inclusion.

Visionaries



Roberto C. Arnold

Founder
Multicultural Business Alliance

Roberto C. Arnold, a seasoned veteran with over 16 years of service in the U.S. Army, boasts an impressive list of honors, including the Bronze Star with Valor, Purple Heart and Combat Infantry Badge. As the founder of the Multicultural Business Alliance (MBA), he is dedicated to supporting minority small businesses, with a particular focus on women and veterans. Currently pursuing a master's degree at the University of Southern California, Arnold's educational pursuits complement his extensive military background. He holds a BAS in business management from Westwood College and has completed programs with the University of John F. Kennedy and USC's Bridges program.

In addition to his work with MBA, Arnold serves as the commander of American Legion Post 30 and co-chair of the Anti-Poverty and Economic Mobility Initiative for the Los Angeles Business Federation. He has continued not only to support local chambers of commerce but also to help small businesses.

Rosie Arroyo

Senior Program Officer, Immigration and Early Education
California Community Foundation



Rosie Arroyo, as a senior program officer overseeing the Immigrant Integration portfolio at the California Community Foundation (CCF), has played a pivotal role in advancing immigrant rights and early childhood education in the Greater Los Angeles area. At CCF, she has managed the Los Angeles Justice Fund (LAJF), a substantial public-private partnership aimed at expanding legal representation for immigrants facing removal proceedings. Under her guidance, LAJF has granted millions to organizations working on behalf of diverse immigrant communities, including LGBTQ+ and faith-based organizations.

In addition to her immigration work, Arroyo has been instrumental in developing the Early Childhood Alliance, a regional coalition dedicated to improving early care and education in Los Angeles County. Her dedication to diversity, equity and inclusion in the immigration space has garnered recognition from the California Senate, California Assembly and Board of Equalization, solidifying her status as a national authority on DEI in the workplace.

Kamala Avila-Salmon

Head of Inclusive Content, Motion Picture Group
Lionsgate

Kamala Avila-Salmon, as the head of



inclusive content for the Lionsgate Motion Picture Group (MPG), is at the forefront of promoting diversity, equity and inclusion within the film industry. Her voice has resonated in MPG's creative processes, including content development, production, casting, marketing and greenlight.

Avila-Salmon's achievements are impressive, from launching a first-time director's study with UCLA to collaborating across the industry to infuse inclusive thinking into every aspect of MPG's creative content, including content development, production, casting, marketing and greenlight decisions. She and her team at Lionsgate have taken the lead in facilitating conversations and orchestrating events to advance DEI efforts in Hollywood. Avila-Salmon's journey to Lionsgate began with launching the marketing inclusion discipline at Facebook, where she inspired marketers to create diverse and inclusive campaigns. Her impressive academic background includes cum laude graduation from Harvard University and an MBA from Harvard Business School.



Dr. LaSharnda Beckwith, founder and CEO of Lutheran Social Services of Southern California (LSSSC), is a visionary leader dedicated to fostering diversity and inclusion within her organization and the communities it serves. LSSSC's commitment to cultural diversity and equitable services reflects her transformative leadership. As the first African American Chief Executive Officer of LSSSC, Dr. Beckwith has intentionally built a diverse executive leadership team with over 80% of its members identifying as BIPOC. Her strategic goals include increasing underrepresented talent in executive leadership and managerial positions, enhancing board diversity and hiring individuals from the community with lived experience.

Dr. Beckwith serves as a leader in MB United, a group focused on community activism. She is also an advocate for diverse and inclusive education, supporting candidates like Tina Shivpuri, whose platform centers on diversity, inclusion and social justice. Under her leadership, LSSSC maintains an inclusive work environment.

Dr. LaSharnda Beckwith

Founder & CEO
Lutheran Social Services of Southern California



Julia L. Birkel

Partner
Hill, Farrer & Burrill LLP

Julia L. Birkel, a partner at Hill, Farrer & Burrill LLP, brings over 35 years of litigation experience to her role. Her expertise is primarily focused on trust and estate litigation, including elder financial abuse, undue influence, will and trust disputes, and conservatorships. Birkel also serves as chair of the firm's Diversity and Inclusion Committee, demonstrating her dedication to fostering diversity within her profession. She served as a trustee, a member of the President's Advisory Committee on Women in Legal Profession, and as part of the Special Programs Committee.

Birkel is a passionate advocate for diversity and inclusion in the Trusts and Estates Section of LACBA. She actively supports initiatives to increase underrepresented talent in leadership and managerial positions. Her involvement in the LACBA Trusts & Estates Section's Membership Development and Diversity and Inclusion Committees reflects her dedication to advancing diversity within the legal field.

Sahar Andrade

DEI Consultant
Sahar Consulting, LLC

Sahar Andrade is a prominent DEI consultant and the founder of Sahar Consulting, LLC.

With a remarkable career spanning government agencies and nonprofit organizations, she earned recognition and accolades for her expertise. Andrade is an executive coach on inclusive leadership and is renowned for creating the "H.E.A.R.T. of Leadership" program, which encompasses inclusive leadership, compassionate leadership, psychological safety, DEI and unconscious bias.

Her work has garnered acknowledgment from the California State Senate and Assembly, and Board of Equalization. Andrade's status as a Forbes Coach Council member and her role as an instructor at the University of California, Irvine, where she educates on unconscious bias and DEI, demonstrate her thought leadership in the field. Her impact extends far beyond her consultancy. She's a driving force in promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in various sectors, making her a recognized national authority on DEI in the workplace.



Visionaries



Shannon Bradley
*Chief Diversity and
Inclusion Officer*
Keck Medicine of USC

As the chief diversity and inclusion officer at Keck Medicine of USC, Shannon Bradley, MBA, has orchestrated a profound transformation in the institution's approach to diversity, equity and inclusion. Under her leadership, Keck Medicine's DEI initiative has been revamped, introducing four essential pillars: health equity to ensure culturally responsive patient care; employees to cultivate an inclusive workplace culture; supplier diversity to expand partnerships with diverse suppliers; and community to strengthen communities through allyship, education and philanthropy.

Bradley has bolstered the Diversity & Inclusion Executive Steering Committee with additional expertise, paving the way for comprehensive support. Her efforts in consolidating employee resource groups (ERGs) have not only fostered a sense of belonging and personal growth but have also resulted in a remarkable 40% increase in ERG participation. Looking ahead her vision includes establishing a dedicated DEI office and implementing systemwide training on unconscious bias and cultural intelligence.

Darrell Ray Brown

Founder & CEO
The Rewirement Project

Darrell Ray Brown, founder and CEO of The Rewirement Project, leverages his illustrious 47-year career as a senior banking executive and DEIA advocate. At US Bank, he played a pivotal role in driving diversity and inclusion through innovative strategies and unconscious bias training. Beyond corporate endeavors, Brown championed DEIA in the arts sector and promoted equitable business opportunities via employee resource groups (ERGs) and supplier diversity initiatives, earning him the prestigious President's Lifetime Volunteer Service Award.



Dr. Giovanna Brasfield

*Ph.D. Chief
Executive Officer*
Brasfield & Associates LLC

Dr. Giovanna Brasfield, commonly known as "Dr. G," is a seasoned leader with over 19 years of experience in leadership consulting and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) program development. As the CEO of Brasfield & Associates LLC, she hails from Los Angeles and has dedicated her career to the construction industry and related trades.

Dr. Brasfield is renowned for her transformative approach, advising organizations and senior executives on DEIB strategy, overseeing inclusivity in complex construction projects, and designing and executing inclusionary programs. Her expertise encompasses the development of both external and internal DEI strategies, forging strong partnerships and delivering innovative initiatives. Notably, she led inclusive outreach efforts for a substantial \$4.9 billion project at Los Angeles World Airport. Dr. Brasfield stands as a stalwart advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion in the construction sector, making her a valuable asset to any organization.



Sandra Bryant

Executive Director
All Peoples
Community Center

Sandra Bryant boasts a remarkable 40-year career dedi-

icated to community and industry associations, cementing her legacy as the executive director of All Peoples Community Center since 1983. She is instrumental in the nonprofit's success, having established its first grant with the United Way of Greater Los Angeles in 1984.

Bryant's unwavering commitment to the Vernon Central community of South Los Angeles has earned her recognition, including the Black History Month Award from Congresswoman Lucille Elsa Roybal-Allard in 2017. Under her leadership, the center has garnered sponsorship from Angel City Football Club since 2019. Furthermore, Bryant's mentorship extends to nurturing the careers of center employees who started their journeys at a young age. Armed with a bachelor's degree in social work from California State Polytechnic University-Pomona and a Master's of Social Work (MSW) from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, her lifelong dedication to All Peoples Community Center leaves an indelible mark.



Robert W. Brown, J.D.

President
University of West Los Angeles

Robert W. Brown, president of the University of West Los Angeles (UWLA), champions diversity, equity and accessibility in education. His personal journey and experiences drive his mission to counter racism and ensure equal opportunity. He has transformed UWLA into an institution that offers access to education, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Brown has emphasized diversity at all levels of the university and is committed to democratizing education. In response to the pandemic, he led UWLA to offer online classes.

Brown appointed Perry Martin as dean of transformation, diversity, equity and inclusion, and ensured diverse representation on the board of managers. During his tenure as president, UWLA has grown into one of the largest state bar-accredited law schools in the United States. Brown is making an impact through his unwavering commitment to equalizing education and his outreach efforts through articles and podcasts.



Patricia Brum
Partner
Snell & Wilmer

Patricia Brum is a distinguished business litigation partner at Snell & Wilmer, a prominent business law firm. Proudly identifying as part of the LGBTQ+ community, she is a dedicated advocate for inclusion in the legal profession. She serves as the co-lead of SNELLGQT+, the firm's LGBTQ+ affinity group, fostering a supportive environment for LGBTQ+ attorneys and staff.

Brum's impact transcends the legal realm as she engages in community building and nonprofit work, advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and arts education for underserved children. Her commitment to diversity extends to empowering women attorneys, earning her Snell & Wilmer's Mentor Award. She previously sat on the board of the USC Lambda LGBT Alumni Association where they raised over \$500,000 for scholarships to LGBTQ+ students. Brum was recognized as a nominee for the Los Angeles Business Journal's 2023 Women's Leadership Awards.



CONGRATULATES

ANTHONY LEE

SVP, INVESTMENTS

FOR BEING RECOGNIZED AS A
DEIA VISIONARY BY THE
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Visionaries



Patrick Buelna

Partner & Trial Attorney

Pointer & Buelna LLP—Lawyers
for the People LLP

Patrick Buelna, a distinguished trial attorney, has forged an exceptional career advocating for justice. His passion and tenacity have delivered numerous victories, securing multi-million-dollar verdicts and settlements in civil jury trials. His impact transcends the courtroom as exemplified by his influential case, *Jane Doe v. The City and County of San Francisco*, which led to the passage of SB 1228, safeguarding sex crime victims' DNA from criminal databases. He has challenged police abuse in various jurisdictions, winning justice for victims.

Beyond his legal prowess, Buelna's commitment to the community shines. He dedicates his time to youth empowerment, offering "Know Your Rights" workshops, mentorship and philanthropic efforts, epitomizing his role as a champion for the underserved. Buelna also donates to the Young Scholars Program in the Bay Area where he gives college prep talks to young adults, offering legal advice for becoming adults.

Valeisha Butterfield Jones

Vice President

Diversity Partnerships and Engagements, Google

Valeisha Butterfield Jones is a globally recognized leader at the intersection of tech, entertainment and politics. In her role as vice president of partnerships and engagement at Google, she has transformed the DEI landscape. Butterfield Jones has invested in over 15 external organizations to accelerate DEI outcomes, led 17 Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) at Google, pioneered Google's global DEI presence at Cannes Lions, and delivered programming to 40,000-plus employees during PRIDE, Black History Month and Women's History Month.

Her leadership extends to co-founding the Black Music Collective, implementing inclusion riders in music, leading historic disability-inclusion and accessibility efforts for award shows and advocating for underrepresented media outlets. As National Youth Vote Director for a presidential campaign, Butterfield Jones led the strategy and team with one of the highest youth voter turnouts in American history.



Hon. Rupert A. Byrdsong

Judge

Superior Court,
County of
Los Angeles

Judge Rupert Byrdsong is a tireless advocate for DEIA within the judicial

system. Prior to his appointment as a Los Angeles Superior Court judge, he was a distinguished employment discrimination litigation attorney representing both employers and employees in high-stakes cases. Judge Byrdsong's former law firm is the largest African American-owned practice in Los Angeles, providing legal services to the community since 1943.

Throughout his career, he championed diversity in numerous capacities, serving on the boards of prominent legal associations and promoting equality in the legal profession. Judge Byrdsong's dedication to mentorship, education and outreach extends to students and underserved communities, where he strives to make a lasting impact. As president of the California Judges Association and an adjunct professor of law, Judge Byrdsong's commitment to fostering diversity and equity remains unwavering, transcending the courtroom to effect change on a broader scale.



Cyndie M. Chang

*Managing Partner,
Los Angeles Office*

Duane Morris LLP

Cyndie Chang

holds a

robust record in

advancing diver-

sity and women's initiatives in the legal field.

With a wealth of leadership roles in organizations

like Loyola Law School and the Committee of IOO,

she is a dedicated advocate for equality. She

has served as president of the National Asian

Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) and

the Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association

(SCCLA), as well as served on the board of

directors for the Asian Pacific Community Fund,

a nonprofit organization that supports Asian

Pacific Islander communities in need.

As a trailblazer, Chang has received numerous

awards, including recognition from the Minority

Corporate Counsel Association and Best Lawyers

Magazine. Her extensive speaking engagements

and involvement in nonprofit organizations reflect

her commitment to community service and

diversity in the legal profession. Her advocacy is

rooted in her family's immigrant experience and

her tireless efforts for Asian American rights.



Daryl J. Carter serves as the founder, chairman and CEO of Avanath Capital Management. With an unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA), he has established Avanath as a pioneering force in the real estate industry, focusing on affordable and workforce housing across the U.S.

Under Carter's stewardship, Avanath has embarked on a mission to address the national housing crisis, making affordable housing accessible in urban areas. Beyond the physical real estate, he emphasizes social impact, offering a wide range of community services and programs, from after-school activities to financial literacy courses, enriching the lives of residents. As a Black-founded and owned company, Carter champions DEIA throughout Avanath, fostering a workplace that mirrors the diversity of the communities it serves. Avanath received a Certified Organization for Resident Engagement & Services (CORES) certification recognizing exceptional coordination and services that encourage residents to utilize their agency and self-determination for achieving their desired lifestyles.

Daryl J. Carter

Founder, Chairman & CEO

Avanath Capital Management



Carl Chang

Founder & CEO

Kairos Investment
Management Company



Carl Chang, founder and CEO of Kairos Investment Management Company, LLC, is a trailblazing force in the commercial real estate industry championing diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) as a fundamental pillar of Kairos' culture and operations. He has built Kairos as an employee- and minority-owned business, emphasizing the importance of diverse perspectives. With a steadfast commitment to DEIA, he has cultivated a workforce that is 51% female and includes a significant representation of ethnic diversity.

Chang's leadership is guided by the belief that diverse backgrounds and experiences are crucial to success, especially in neighborhoods and communities where Kairos operates. He ensures that Kairos not only manages properties but also understands and embraces the cultures and languages of these diverse neighborhoods. Under his guidance, Kairos actively participates in diversity and engagement programs, supporting various community organizations and fostering a culture of inclusion and celebration of diverse backgrounds.

Visionaries



Sarah Chavarria
President
Delta Dental of California
and Affiliates

Sarah Chavarria, president of Delta Dental of California and Affiliates, is a trailblazer in fostering diversity, equity and inclusion in the healthcare industry. Her career ascension from chief people officer to president signifies her commitment to excellence. With a master's degree in business administration, she has propelled Delta Dental to new heights. Chavarria's leadership champions quality patient care through Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, driving an 82% employee engagement rate and elevating women's voices in the workforce, where they hold key leadership roles. The company implemented a "Seen & Heard" speaker series and focus groups to serve as the voice of the employee and encourage dialogue on diversity, inclusion and belonging.

Chavarria has innovatively introduced cloud-based solutions, fostered innovation through developmental programs and supported employee well-being. Her philanthropic endeavors and advocacy for health equity impact communities and promote Delta Dental as a leader in the healthcare industry.

Dr. Anthony Culpepper

President

Los Angeles Southwest College



Dr. Anthony Culpepper, president of Los Angeles Southwest College, is a key advocate for diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) in higher education. Growing up in LA during the late '60s and early '70s, marked by civil unrest, he has a deep personal commitment to DEIA. He was once a student at the college, which was established in response to the Watts Rebellion's educational needs in the African American community.

Dr. Culpepper's educational journey started with a master's from Pepperdine University and a doctorate in teaching. His career spans roles as a professor, dean of business and technology at Trident University, and leadership positions at universities like Ashford University and Glendale College. He's dedicated to making higher education more inclusive and accessible, especially in an era where affirmative action is under challenge. His mission is to bridge educational gaps and break down historical barriers to shape the community through education.

Derrick Coleman

Principal & Search
and Staffing
Practice Leader



Derrick Coleman, a seasoned leader,

heads GHJ Search and Staffing, demonstrating excellence in recruiting and talent acquisition. With expertise in diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA), his influence extends beyond recruitment. As a DEIA leader, Coleman is the principal sponsor of GHJ's BIPOC Cohort, an employee resource group focused on advancing the careers of professionals who are Black, indigenous and other people of color in the accounting profession.

He has numerous nonprofit board positions, including catalyst for GHJ Foundation's board of directors, treasurer of the board for the Downtown Women's Center, and chief strategy officer and board member for Godiss Love. Coleman is an active member of the nonprofit community. He has shared his experience as a Black board member and how nonprofits can build more inclusive boards with Training Magazine, Diversity Professional and the Nonprofit Lowdown podcast.

Lilit Davtyan

Chief Executive Officer
Phonexa



Lilit Davtyan, CEO of Phonexa, is a trailblazer advocating gender equality and women's empowerment in the tech industry.

A majority of Phonexa's executive team comprises women and ethnic minorities, reflecting her commitment. Davtyan fosters a supportive work environment, offering mentorship, professional development and networking opportunities for female employees. Her efforts have resulted in remarkable growth and recognition for women at Phonexa. She is also an advisory board member of Opal Solutions, which is an organizer of global conferences across multiple verticals, including technology, finance and business.

Under Davtyan's leadership, CFO Mara Garcia and corporate counsel Tina Ansari pour gained accolades, while CIO Liana Tonoyan received honors from the U.S. Department of Defense. These achievements inspire aspiring female professionals. Davtyan's engagement with Forbes Business Council, Women of Martech, Women of Email and CHIEF demonstrates her commitment to DEI and sharing her insights within the community.

Jamila Daniel

Chief Diversity Officer, Lionsgate & SVP of Human Resources, STARZ
Lionsgate and STARZ



Jamila Daniel, a dynamic leader at Lionsgate and STARZ, is at the forefront of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts in the entertainment industry. Joining as SVP of human resources, her role quickly expanded to chief diversity officer, reflecting her visionary approach. Under her leadership, Lionsgate established an Executive Diversity Council, driving DEI initiatives with a focus on inclusive hiring. In just a year, Daniel increased female representation in leadership to 75%. She also significantly boosted diverse supplier spending, supporting 69 women-owned businesses, including 26 owned by women of color.

Daniel's impact extends to Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), doubling participation to over 600 employees. Her initiatives include the McKinsey Leadership Academy and the "Conversations that Matter" series, fostering open dialogue on social justice. Recognized by The Human Rights Campaign, Lionsgate is celebrated as a top workplace for LGBTQ+ employees, thanks to Daniel's dedication to DEI.



William Delgado

Founding Partner
DTO Law

William Delgado, a founding partner at DTO Law, has been a dedicated advocate for diversifying the legal profession. As vice chair of the National Association of Minority and Women Owned Law Firms (NAMWOLF) Board, he's played a pivotal role in advancing diversity. DTO Law, a certified minority-owned firm, embodies diversity with nearly 80% of its attorneys identifying as Persons of Color and/or female. This commitment extends to LGBTQ+ inclusion, with 25% of partners identifying as LGBTQ+.

Delgado's firm has received numerous awards for its DEI efforts, including recognition as the "Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Company of the Year" by the Los Angeles Business Journal and "Outstanding Firm for Diversity and Inclusion-North America (USA)" at the 2021 Chambers Diversity & Inclusion Awards: North America. His leadership extends to organizations like HNBA, MCCA and CABA, where he shares insights on improving DEI in the legal profession.

Visionaries



Hayley Dickson

*CEO, Wealth Management Advisor
Northwestern Mutual*

Hayley Dickson, a dedicated CEO and wealth management advisor, is a passionate advocate for financial inclusivity. She challenges traditional norms to empower women, LGBTQIA+ and People of Color in financial planning. Dickson led the creation of a family planning policy at Northwestern Mutual, providing flexibility and benefits for advisor moms. She earned her bachelor's degree in human and organization development, international business and Spanish from Vanderbilt University. Her financial planning practice is one where knowledgeable clients collaborate with expert financial professionals and discerning individuals to relinquish shame, fear and paralysis over their economic reality.

Dickson's impressive career transitioned from the entertainment industry to Northwestern Mutual where she set records, ranking No. 1 in the Western Region among advisors with less than five years of company tenure. Founder of the HER Series, she celebrates influential Los Angeles women, including those who are transgender and women of color.

Dr. Apollo Emeka

Founder & Principal

Apollo Strategy Group Inc.

Dr. Apollo Emeka, founder and principal of Apollo Strategy Group Inc. is a visionary executive, leadership coach and strategic consultant. With a fervent commitment to fostering diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA), he envisions a world where everyone can realize their full potential for good. Apollo Strategy Group, his Pasadena-based startup, has been instrumental in providing high-impact leadership coaching and enterprise consulting services since 2016, focusing on authenticity, intention, courage and inclusion.

Dr. Emeka, once a 4th-grade dropout, triumphed as an FBI analyst, Army Special Forces member and entrepreneur, ultimately achieving a teaching doctorate from Pepperdine University. Passionately advocating that "diversity is not an extracurricular activity," Apollo Strategy Group exemplifies the integration of diversity into its core philosophy. In addition to his transformative work with clients, Dr. Emeka is actively involved in initiatives like the Black Ambition competition, mentoring scholars and serving as a judge for various programs.



Rodney Diggs, a named partner at Ivie McNeill Wyatt

Purcell & Diggs, is a powerhouse attorney known for his commitment to advocacy, philanthropy and civic engagement. He has represented clients in high-profile excessive force, wrongful death and employment cases, gaining national recognition. With over \$200 million in verdicts and settlements, his legal career is marked by significant achievements, including a \$25M verdict in an employment retaliation lawsuit.

Diggs has received numerous accolades, including recognition from Best Lawyers in America, Super Lawyers and Daily Journal's Top 100 Lawyers in California. He is also actively involved in volunteer activities, serving on the boards of various organizations, including the Watt's Labor Community Action Committee and the American Board of Trial Advocates Sidebar. A graduate of Howard University School of Law, Diggs' dedication to justice and diverse communities drives his exceptional legal career.



Rodney Diggs

Director

**Ivie McNeill Wyatt
Purcell & Diggs**

Terrence Mark Franklin

Partner

**Sacks, Glazier,
Franklin & Lodise LLP**

Terrence Mark Franklin, an accomplished trusts and es-

tates litigator, has made a profound impact on diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) throughout his career. Recognized with Chambers and Partners' "Lifetime Achievement Award," he has tirelessly worked to advance DEIA in the legal industry.

Franklin's mission to "Help Bend the Arc of History Towards Justice" is reflected in his presentations, media interviews and articles that explore his family's journey escaping from slavery. He actively supports the establishment of DEIA fellowships, committees and programs within professional organizations like ACTEC and UCLA School of Law. His leadership has expanded opportunities for minority law students and increased visibility for minority trusts and estates lawyers. Franklin has ongoing projects like incorporating his family's emancipation story into law school curricula and a collaboration with the Oakland Symphony Chorus to inspire and educate through music and storytelling.



Terrance J. Evans, a partner at Duane Morris LLP, co-leads the Banking and Financial Services Practice and chairs the San Francisco Diversity and Inclusion Committee. His distinguished career includes representing clients in federal and state court, even arguing before the United States Supreme Court. Evans plays a role in promoting racial justice, diversity and inclusion.

As the immediate past president of the Charles Houston Bar Association, co-chair of the CLA Racial Justice Committee, and chair of the Litigation Section of the California Lawyers Association, he has been instrumental in advancing diversity and inclusion within the legal profession. Evans' passion for DEIA extends to numerous speaking engagements where he has delivered over 180 presentations on these critical topics. Honored as one of the top African American Attorneys Under 40 by the National Bar Association, his dedication to scholarships, mentorship and advocacy for underprivileged students has been recognized widely.



Terrance J. Evans

Partner, Los Angeles Office

Duane Morris LLP



Elizabeth Gilbert Kaetzel

Founder

Narratur Studio

Elizabeth Gilbert Kaetzel is the founder of Narratur Studio, a pioneering force in diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) within the financial sector. With a master's in anthropology/folklore and a certificate for teaching and learning in higher education, she brings a unique perspective to her work. Gilbert Kaetzel has harnessed the power of storytelling to promote DEIA, authoring impactful pieces like "Race in Finance – Making Black Lives Matter in Financial Services."

After two years as chief of staff at Adasina Social Capital, she founded Narratur Studio, helping numerous organizations integrate DEIA into their communications. Her efforts have secured over \$500,000 in funding for minority-owned small businesses. Gilbert Kaetzel's influence extends beyond her consultancy work with a financial activism podcast, blog series and membership in DEIA networks. Certified as an Enneagram coach, she leverages her people management skills for team and individual coaching.

Visionaries



Marcos Gonzales

Founder & Managing Partner
VamosVentures

Marcos Gonzales is the founder & managing partner of VamosVentures, a venture capital fund dedicated to supporting Latinx and diverse founders in tech-enabled startups. With deep roots in the Latinx community, he saw the untapped potential in investing in diverse teams. VamosVentures focuses on sectors like health and wellness, financial technology, future of work and sustainability, addressing critical issues affecting these communities.

Over two fund rounds, VamosVentures has been part of Apple's Racial Equity and Justice Initiative (REJI), a long-term global effort to advance equity and expand opportunities for Black, Hispanic/Latinx and indigenous communities. Gonzales' commitment to diversity is evident in their portfolio, which is 100% diverse-led, 85% Latinx-led and 92% immigrant or first-generation-led. Through initiatives like the VamosVentures Scout and Summer Associate programs, he is promoting diversity among check writers in venture capital.

Keith M. Gregory

Partner
Snell & Wilmer

Keith M. Gregory, partner at Snell & Wilmer, is a dedicated leader in fostering diversity and inclusion. As co-chair of the firm's First-Gen Forward program, he empowers first-generation attorneys by providing resources and support for their professional growth. Gregory's commitment to mentoring and inclusivity has earned him recognition in Snell & Wilmer's Hall of Fame.

He has organized educational events that focus on financial planning and the annual evaluation process with action plans and feedback for newer attorneys. He serves on the DEI Committee and the firm's LGBTQ+ group, SNELLGQTQ+. Gregory is also an active member of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), contributing to research projects for the LGBTQ+ community. He has served on the national board of directors for The Wellness Community and locally served on the board of directors for The Wellness Community Valley/Ventura.



Stacey Gordon

Inclusive Workplace
Consultant
Rework Work

Stacey

Gordon is an inclusive workplace consultant and CEO of Rework Work, a leading voice in gender equity, and an acclaimed author. Her book, "UNBIAS: Addressing Unconscious Bias at Work," soared to the top of Amazon's Business Ethics category. Her impact extends to LinkedIn, where her unconscious bias course is the platform's No. 1 most viewed course. Gordon's LinkedIn offers courses ranging from diversity and inclusion to career success and have been viewed by more than 1 million learners.

She has educated Fortune 100 companies and collaborated with organizations like SHRM, Forbes and The Obama Foundation. Holding an MBA from Pepperdine University Business School and SHRM-SOP certification, Gordon leads at the intersection of diversity, inclusion and workplace culture. She disrupts traditional DEI norms, urging disruption and innovation for a more inclusive workspace.



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At BPM, we help people be successful in work and life by fostering an inclusive and empowering environment.

BPM congratulates Karla Luna for being recognized as a DEIA Visionary by L.A. Times B2B Publishing.



Karla Luna, Partner, Tax

Visionaries



Reena Hajat Carroll

Executive Director

California Conference for
Equality and Justice

Reena Hajat Carroll, as the executive director of the California Conference for Equality and Justice (CCEJ), boasts over two decades of nonprofit leadership in the diversity, inclusion and equity field. Armed with a master's degree in social work from Washington University's Brown School of Social Work and an undergraduate degree in sociology from Occidental College, her commitment to fostering inclusive environments is unwavering.

Hajat Carroll took the reins of CCEJ in March 2020, facing the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the nationwide demand for racial equity and justice. Under her leadership, CCEJ emerged stronger, with increased visibility and a renewed commitment to strategic goals promoting equity and inclusion. Hajat Carroll's expertise includes anti-bias curriculum development, facilitation, fundraising and community leadership. She is a catalyst for positive change empowering individuals and organizations to embrace DEIA principles.

Shaun Harper

*Founder &
Executive Director*

USC Race and
Equity Center

Shaun Harper, a provost professor at the University of



Southern California, is one of the nation's foremost racial equity experts. Holding the Clifford and Betty Allen Chair in Urban Leadership, he is also the founder and executive director of the USC Race and Equity Center. Harper's distinguished career includes 12 published books, over 100 academic papers and more than \$36 million in grants and contracts for DEI work. He has worked with more than 400 businesses, government and nonprofit agencies and educational institutions.

In addition to his prolific research, Harper has been quoted in leading publications and interviewed by prominent news outlets. He has testified before the United States House of Representatives and served on a former president's "My Brother's Keeper" Advisory Council. Harper's unwavering commitment to equity earned him numerous awards and recognition as one of the nation's most influential professors.

Lisa Harris

Partner

Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP

Lisa Harris, a partner at Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP, is an exemplary leader in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). She co-chairs the firm's Diversity & Inclusion Attorney Network, actively promoting the recruitment, retention and advancement of attorneys of color. Harris' commitment to mentorship extends to diverse associates, and she contributes to external mentorship programs, including the University of Southern California Street Law Program.

Harris is an active member of Sheppard Mullin's Black Lawyers Network, a firmwide sub-group of Sheppard's Diversity & Inclusion Attorney Network. She serves as a fellow on the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD), actively participating in various programs and initiatives. Her expertise in labor and employment matters, coupled with her dedication to DEI, makes her a trusted advisor. Beyond her legal career, Harris chairs the board of INTAR Theatre, supporting Latin playwrights and artists.



Arash Homampour

*Partner & Founder-
Trial Attorney*

The Homampour
Law Firm

Renowned trial attorney with an exceptional record of

securing substantial verdicts against major corporations and public entities, Arash Homampour is the founder of The Homampour Law Firm. His innovative use of technology like animation and graphics sets him apart as a disruptor in the legal field. Homampour's commitment to diversity and inclusion is evident in his own firm, where he champions diversity not only among rank-and-file workers but also in management and at all levels of the organization.

He actively promotes diversity through his columns in Entrepreneur and The Daily Journal, emphasizing its moral and financial significance for companies. Homampour's philanthropic endeavors, such as starting There Is A Light Foundation and his involvement with OneKid OneWorld, reflect his dedication to making a positive impact in the world and promoting access to education.



Tiaunia Nyeba Henry

Partner

Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP

Tiaunia N. Henry, a partner at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP, stands as an accomplished litigator with a diverse practice in complex business litigation, including antitrust and transnational cases. She earned her Juris Doctor degree and a Master of Laws in comparative and international law from Duke University School of Law. Beyond her legal expertise, Henry's unwavering commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) shines through her extensive involvement.

She has been a dedicated co-chair of Gibson's LA Area Diversity Committee since 2012 and actively engages in various affinity groups such as the LA Black Affinity and LA Women of Color Affinity Groups. Henry's impact on DEI extends beyond the LA office, as she plays a vital role in the firm's global diversity efforts. Her commitment to mentorship, allyship and fostering an inclusive culture underscores her role as a DEI champion.



Joella Margarita Hopkins

Director, Brand Partnerships
The 360 Agency

Joella Hopkins, CSEP, CMP, MBA, serves as the director of brand partnerships at The 360 Agency, where her work combines business development with a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. She plays an active role in organizational culture and is involved in launching a nonprofit focused on empowering women in the marketing industry.

Hopkins joined Branding Los Angeles and served as the DTLA director and strategic media for LA City Council District 14. Her civic engagement is exemplified by her position on the Los Angeles Police Commission Police Permit Review Panel, where she contributes to objective and inclusive decision-making. Throughout her career, she has advocated for diversity, engaged diverse perspectives and championed an inclusive ethos. Hopkins' coursework at Cornell University formalized her DEI training, and she consistently lives out DEI principles in her daily life.

Visionaries



Monica Marie Jaramillo
Co-Founder
LABEL The Agency

Monica Marie Jaramillo, co-founder of LABEL The Agency, leads a woman of color-led entertainment marketing agency, specializing in event marketing, red carpet events, PR, celebrity brand campaigns and celebrity deals with a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion. Her agency's clients include prominent names, and she actively promotes diversity by ensuring that all consultants are either women of color or LGBTQIA+.

Jaramillo's journey reflects her passion for increasing diversity in the entertainment industry. She extends her dedication to DEI through various projects and her work with organizations like the National Association of Latino Independent Producers. Her involvement with Friendly House, a substance abuse recovery program for women, showcases her commitment to making a positive impact in the community. The organization provides culturally responsive, evidence-based, attainable treatment to women of all gender experiences with or without resources.

Baraa Kahf
Partner
Knobbe Martens



Baraa Kahf, a partner at Knobbe Martens, is a dedicated advocate for diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in the legal community. Under his guidance as chair of Knobbe Martens' Diversity Committee, the firm expanded its Diversity Scholarship Program to support diverse first- and second-year law students. Kahf played a role in creating the position of chief diversity and talent development officer in 2023 and initiated the formation of affinity groups at the firm.

He serves on the Orange County Bar Association's DEI Committee, and holds leadership roles in organizations like the National Association of Muslim Lawyers and the Constitutional Rights Foundation. Kahf's dedication to advancing diversity is reflected in awards like the "Top 10 Champion of DEI in the Law of OC" and recognition as a "Southern California Rising Star" by Super Lawyers.

Dr. Royel Montel Johnson

Associate Professor & Director
USC Race and Equity Center



Dr. Royel Montel Johnson,

a tenured professor at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education, is a distinguished scholar and leader in higher education. He has authored over 50 publications, edited influential books and secured over \$5 million in external funding. Dr. Johnson consults with policymakers and institutions for real-world impact, including consulting Pennsylvania legislators on a bill banning criminal record screenings in college admissions.

At USC, he chairs the PhD program, the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates and co-heads the Research Institute for Scholars of Equity (RISE). At RISE, Dr. Johnson provides research training to underrepresented undergrads. He serves on committees and editorial boards, actively advancing equity, inclusion and social justice. His honors include the Distinguished Young Alumni Award and Early Career Awards from AERA and ACPA.

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Inclusion and equity begins with valuing
Curiosity
Relationships
Interdependence

CCEJ works with over 60 companies, nonprofits and schools each year to develop and strengthen organizational culture and inclusion practices.

To schedule a consultation with our team, email info@cacej.org or call 562-435-8184.

More information about our training & coaching services at www.cacej.org

Visionaries



Alyssa Kavner

Vice President of Clinical Training and Quality
Easterseals Southern California

Alyssa Kavner, MA, BCBA, serves as the vice president of clinical training and quality at Easterseals Southern California. She oversees the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) department, working diligently to reduce disparities in consumer access, diversity within the autism services workforce and barriers to service access. Kavner is an active member of RISE's internal "Rise, Inclusion, Self-Aware and Equity" workgroup that helps ensure the prioritization of DEIA by fostering an inclusive workplace culture and business practices. The team recently helped develop an Autism Therapy Services Advisory Board, designed to help ensure current autism therapy services practices are consistent with the needs of the communities served.

Kavner promotes diversity through Spanish-language training, accommodating diverse learning styles and ensuring affirming language on intake forms. Her dedication extends to launching mentorship programs for LGBTQIA+ individuals and BIPOC professionals.

Jason J. Kim

Counsel

Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP



Jason J. Kim, counsel at Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP, is a dedicated champion of diversity and inclusion within the legal profession.

As the office diversity & inclusion initiative leader co-chair for the firm's Los Angeles office, he promotes educational programs on diversity and inclusion, fostering awareness and understanding of social justice and equality issues. Kim is committed to mentoring associates, especially those from diverse backgrounds, providing guidance and support.

He ensures diverse representation on client teams, contributing to the firm's Mansfield Rule certifications. Kim's work includes high-profile cybersecurity and privacy cases for global brands like Meta Platforms, Walmart and Samsung. His contributions to the Retail Industry Blog and speaking engagements on cybersecurity and privacy demonstrate his commitment to keeping clients and colleagues informed about industry trends. Kim's exemplary work has earned him recognition as a "Leader of Influence: Minority Attorneys" and a top litigator in California.

Tracey Kennedy

Partner

Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton



As a partner at Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton, Tracey Kennedy is a trailblazer in labor and employment law and a dedicated advocate for diversity and inclusion in the legal profession.

Her impressive list of accolades includes recognition as a "Top Woman Lawyer," "Leading U.S. Corporate Employment Lawyer" and "Lawyer of the Year – Employment." Her commitment to diversity is demonstrated through her mentorship of young lawyers and her advocacy for policies promoting diversity within the firm.

Kennedy utilized the Sheppard Mullin compensation committee and executive committee to drive diversity initiatives. She also played a pivotal role in initiatives like the Women Attorneys Success Initiative Committee and the Attorneys of Color and LGBTQ+ Attorneys Success Initiative Committee. Her leadership in the Black Lawyers Network and many business presentations highlight her dedication to fostering diversity and inclusion. Her planning highlight her dedication to fostering diversity and inclusion.

Wesley King

Partner

Frاندzel Robins Bloom & Csato, L.C.



Wesley King is the first openly gay partner at Frاندzel Robins Bloom & Csato, L.C., a milestone in the firm's 40+ year history.

As the co-chair of Frاندzel's revived summer associate program, he is actively engaged in diversifying the firm's recruitment efforts. King's extensive involvement in the LGBTQ+ community includes his prior leadership as co-president and long-time board member of the LGBTQ+ Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, continuing to mentor local law students.

In his role as a transactional attorney, he specializes in complex financial matters, representing banks, lenders and financial institutions in a range of transactions, including real estate, commercial loans and asset-based credit lines. King adeptly handles restructurings and business disputes, prioritizing client success and minimizing litigation costs. His comprehensive background, including public finance and real estate, brings valuable insight into his clients' needs.

Vivian Kim

Chief People Officer & General Counsel

Hanmi Bank



Vivian Kim is a dynamic leader with a robust background as chief people officer and general counsel at Hanmi Bank. Since joining the bank in 2015, she has been a driving force behind the bank's DE&I initiatives, revolutionizing recruitment strategies and introducing innovative programs to support employees' professional growth. Under Kim's leadership, Hanmi Bank has diversified its talent pool, transcending the Korean American community. Her visionary approach resulted in the launch of the Management Leadership and Credit Trainee Programs, empowering emerging leaders and future bankers.

Notably, Kim orchestrated a groundbreaking partnership with HoneyBee to provide Choice Checking accounts, addressing the needs of unbanked and underbanked communities.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, she is an engaged community member, serving on the boards of organizations like the Korean Youth and Community Center and the Korean American Bar Association of Southern California, as well as secretary for the International Association of Korean Lawyers.



Lee Ann Kline

President & Founder
STEM Advantage

Lee Ann Kline, as the president and founder of STEM Advantage, has dedicated herself to transforming the landscape of STEM education and career opportunities. Beginning her career as a programmer at IBM, she recognized the stark lack of gender and racial diversity in the field and decided to create change. Kline brought together business, technology and talent leaders in Southern California to create STEM Advantage, providing paid internships, scholarships, mentoring and professional development to underrepresented students, empowering them to earn STEM degrees. Her efforts are vital in addressing the gender and racial wealth gaps and creating a more inclusive and equitable STEM workforce.

Under Kline's leadership, STEM Advantage, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, has been instrumental in bridging the gender and racial gaps in STEM. Her honors include recognition as the EY Better Begins With You Global Winner and Los Angeles Business Journal's Nonprofit Executive of the Year.

Visionaries



Mary Kohav

Vice President, Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion and Community Engagement
The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles

Mary Kohav is a highly experienced professional with over 25 years of expertise in strategic communications, community relations, DEI and social impact. Currently, as the vice president of Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (JEDI) and community engagement at The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, she plays a pivotal role in fostering positive change across various sectors.

Kohav integrated JEDI principles into all aspects of the Federation's programs, policies and procedures. She has led initiatives to educate the Jewish community about racial diversity and combat antisemitism. Kohav has initiated programs like the Federation's Civic Partnerships Program which seeks to partner with nonprofit organizations that have demonstrated success in addressing and repairing racial and systemic inequities. She also leads the Interfaith Freedom Passover Seder, the United Leaders Project and the Civic Partnerships Program, promoting unity, bridge-building and community impact in Los Angeles.

Adrian Ledda

Head of Inclusive Game Design
Activision Blizzard



Adrian Ledda is the head of inclusive game design at Activision Blizzard, pioneering inclusivity into iconic gaming franchises like Call of Duty, Diablo and Candy Crush. Joining Activision Blizzard in 2009, his experience in inclusive game design led to the role's creation. Ledda's has also worked with AbleGamers to train and certify over 100 employees in accessibility, reinforcing the company's dedication to fostering inclusivity.

As a leader of the LGBT+ and Allies employee network, he's instrumental in educating leadership on pronoun policies and inclusivity. Ledda's work has contributed to the company's perfect scores in the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index. His influence extends to the broader gaming community, transforming not only how games are designed but also Activision Blizzard's culture of inclusivity.

Sergio Alfredo Lechuga

Director of Interior Design
HMC Architects



Sergio Alfredo Lechuga, as the inaugural DEI committee chair at HMC Architects, is

dedicated to fostering a culture of diversity and equity, pioneering a comprehensive DEI framework that has reshaped the firm's culture and promoted inclusivity and minority leadership. As the director of interior design, Lechuga leads the development of a JEDI design process, prioritizing equity in all projects and engaging communities and stakeholders for each endeavor, aiming for inclusive and impactful outcomes. Beyond HMC Architects, Sergio is a proactive advocate for diversity in the interior design industry, contributing to discussions on the importance of diverse workforces and equitable design. His involvement during Pride Month and in mentoring emerging professionals further demonstrates his commitment to fostering a more diverse and inclusive AEC profession. Lechuga's ongoing efforts are driving positive change, promising an inclusive future within HMC Architects and across the industry.



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Visionaries



Anthony Duvall Lee

Senior Vice President, Investments
Wedbush Securities

Anthony D. Lee, CRPS, is a senior vice president of investments at Wedbush Securities with over 27 years of industry experience. His mission is to help clients achieve their financial goals through customized investment strategies. Holding the Chartered Retirement Plans Specialist designation, Lee specializes in company-sponsored retirement plans, guiding clients through the process of implementing effective retirement solutions.

His commitment to DEIA is evident through his role as the chair of Wedbush United, an employee and resource inclusion network dedicated to promoting diversity and open dialogue. Under Lee's leadership, Wedbush United has nurtured a culture where every colleague is valued and empowered. He's aided in creating a platform for meaningful DEIA discussions within the organization, promoting dialogue, empathy and awareness. Lee's involvement in training and education showcases his dedication to enhancing employee understanding of inclusion issues.

Madison Y. Li

Senior Marketing Manager, Cricket Wireless
AT&T



Madison Y. Li is a dynamic senior marketing manager at Cricket Wireless, which is part of the AT&T family. With two-plus years of dedicated service, she leads the brand's marketing efforts in Southern California, a region with a substantial population of 23.7 million. Her unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility is evident in her work. Li is a self-starter known for her exceptional motivation and creativity.

Her dedication extends to corporate social responsibility, including the Boys & Girls Clubs of America partnership and collaborations with nonprofits like Homeboy Industries, Magic Johnson Foundation and Group Effort Initiative. Li's efforts go beyond marketing, creating meaningful impact in underserved communities. With her leadership, Cricket Wireless fosters multicultural engagement, connecting deeply with diverse customer bases. She champions workforce development and social-emotional learning, exemplified by collaborations with WWE and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro LA.

Karla Luna

Tax Partner
BPM



Karla Luna is a distinguished tax partner at BPM with

over 23 years of experience, recognized as a top CPA in the Los Angeles region. Her journey at BPM began in July 2022 when the firm merged with Gumbiner Savett, where she already stood out as a leader. Luna's dedication extends to her role as BPM's executive sponsor for the Hispanic & Latinx Community Resource Group (CRG), fostering a thriving community of over 50 members.

Under her guidance, the CRG has become a safe haven for open dialogues and collaboration, empowering BPM's Hispanic, Latino and Latinx employees to excel and contribute to the community. Luna's community involvement is equally impactful, with her active participation in church volunteer work and fundraising activities. Her annual efforts include organizing a food bank initiative, delivering supplies to underprivileged communities in Tijuana, and supporting an elementary school with backpacks and school supplies. Luna's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is a testament to her leadership both professionally and within her community.

Adrienne Luce
Vice President – Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Impact; Executive Director of HMC Foundation
HMC Architects



Adrienne Luce, a dedicated professional with a 20-year career, is the vice president of diversity, inclusion and social impact at HMC Architects. She also serves as the executive director of the HMC Designing Futures Foundation. In 2020, Luce established HMC's diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) committee and was later promoted to her current role. She conducted a comprehensive listening tour across HMC's offices, gathering 500 suggestions to enhance JEDI efforts. Under her guidance, HMC Architects is a JEDI leader, achieving pay equity based on race and gender and excelling in 80% of the AIA's LFRT JEDI Advocacy Guide actions.

Luce's equitable business practices research project promotes diversity in project teams and support for small and diverse businesses. She fosters thought leadership on DEI issues, conducts diversity and pay equity reporting and drives JEDI education programs.



D. Jason Lyon

Partner/Pasadena City
Councilmember
Hahn & Hahn LLP



Jason Lyon, a partner at Hahn & Hahn LLP and a Pasadena city councilmember, is a trailblazer who has dedicated his career to advancing LGBTQ+ rights and diversity. As an attorney he has achieved significant victories, including winning asylum for transgender individuals fleeing persecution. Lyon's journey from a documentary film producer to a legal professional is nothing short of inspiring.

His early advocacy for marriage equality in the late '90s and grassroots efforts in the early 2000s laid the foundation for positive change. Lyon played a pivotal role in supporting LGBTQ+ rights, making marriage equality a reality in California before it became a national law. Within Hahn & Hahn LLP, he drives diversity initiatives, leads recruiting efforts and modernizes office practices. His contributions extend beyond law as he represents District 7 on the Pasadena City Council, championing diversity and inclusivity.

Wil Lewis

Global Chief
Diversity, Equity,
Inclusion and Talent
Acquisition Officer

Experian



As the first-ever global chief diversity, equity, inclusion and talent acquisition officer for Experian, Wil Lewis plays a pivotal role in shaping the company's commitment to diversity and inclusivity. Lewis actively supports the development of products and programs for businesses and consumers, which sets a standard of equity and financial inclusion in communities globally. His team oversees specialized programs that cater to employees' unique needs and manages Experian's Employee Resource Groups, which provide a sense of community and belonging to employees of different generations and backgrounds.

Under his leadership, Experian has fostered a culture of dialogue and understanding around DEIA matters, encouraging meaningful conversations and mutual respect. Lewis' focus on training and education ensures all employees share a commitment to DEIA and champion inclusivity. He extends his commitment beyond the workplace, serving on the boards of nonprofit organizations like Disability: IN and HomeFree-USA.



Visionaries



Henry Manoucheri
Founder & CEO
 Universe Holdings

Henry Manoucheri, founder and CEO of Universe Holdings, is a visionary leader dedicated to fostering diversity and inclusion within his organization. Over the past five years, Universe Holdings has doubled its workforce and prioritized diversity. With 72 people of color, including 15 in senior management, and 40 women of which 28 are women of color, Universe Holdings embraces diversity at every level. Manoucheri believes that a diverse staff brings a competitive advantage and innovative solutions, backed by studies showing the positive impact of diversity on financial success and innovation.

His leadership creates a high-trust workplace where employees feel valued and supported. Manoucheri promotes open communication, even hosting weekly staff meetings where personal and professional matters are discussed. Universe Holdings embodies diversity and inclusion, benefiting both the company and its employees, creating a sense of belonging and family among its workforces.

Jennifer Martinez

Chief Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Officer
 Hanson Bridgett LLP



Jennifer Martinez is a trailblazer in the legal industry serving as Hanson Bridgett's inaugural Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer (CDEIO) since January 1, 2021. A Latina with a deep commitment to diversity, she chairs the firm's Recruiting Committee and mentors law students and young attorneys. She also highlights the pressing need for law firms to address issues faced by diverse attorneys.

Martinez believes in more diverse hiring and retention practices, anti-racism education, eliminating workplace microaggressions, reshaping how credit is distributed and evaluated, and pro bono efforts on racial and social justice. Leading the Real Action Calling for Equality (RACE) Task Force since June 2020, she strives to eliminate unconscious bias, increase diverse leadership and support minority-owned businesses.

Mark Masliah

Financial Advisor
 Northwestern Mutual



Mark Masliah is a distinguished financial advisor at North-

western Mutual known for his dedication to the LGBTQ+ community and financial planning. A member of the LGBTQ+ community, he played a pivotal role in establishing the district-level LGBTQ+ and Ally Council at Northwestern Mutual. Under Masliah's leadership, the council has experienced substantial growth since its 2019 inception, with 65+ members spanning five local offices. This pioneering council advances cultural awareness, education and support for organization's 15,000+ employees, and collaborates closely with headquarters, providing valuable insights and feedback.

Masliah's commitment extends to financial planning, where he specializes in helping clients secure their financial futures. Armed with a bachelor's degree from San Diego State University, he provides invaluable financial planning strategies, ensuring secure finances for his diverse clientele. He resides in West Hollywood with his husband Nicholas.

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Visionaries



Byron McLain
Partner
Foley & Lardner LLP

Byron McLain is a partner at Foley & Lardner LLP, recognized for his legal expertise and commitment to justice. He recently led the Foley team to a landmark victory in the historic Bruce's Beach case, representing the County of Los Angeles in defense against a lawsuit aimed at preventing the property's transfer and return to the Bruce family. McLain successfully argued that the transfer was not a violation of the California Constitution, emphasizing its role in addressing past government racial discrimination. His advocacy and coordination led to a crucial ruling by Judge Beckloff, granting the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors the authority to right this historic wrong.

McLain's dedication to rectifying past injustices and promoting governmental accountability is evident in his work. His role in returning Bruce's Beach to its rightful owners serves as a significant milestone in dismantling the legacy of racial oppression.

Frank Anthony Montes

Chairman
Hispanic Coalition of Small Businesses

Franks Anthony Montes is a dedicated advocate and successful small business owner with over 40 years of entrepreneurial experience. As the founder of Inland Body and Paint Center in Fontana, he has demonstrated unwavering leadership marked by honesty, transparency and commitment. Montes' commitment to the betterment of small and diverse businesses led him to establish the Hispanic Coalition of Small Businesses (HCSB) in 2022, where he serves as chairman.

Under his leadership, HCSB has united 16 multicultural organizations representing over 4,000 diverse small businesses in Southern California. Montes' vision extends to fostering diversity and inclusion through the creation of HCSB's Diversity & Inclusion Committee, emphasizing respect, humility and empathy. In April 2023, he orchestrated the Diversity & Inclusion Summit in the Greater Inland Empire, highlighting the strength in embracing diversity among small businesses.



Damaris L. Medina

Shareholder and Chief
Diversity Officer
Buchalter



Damaris Medina, a shareholder at Buchalter, holds a prominent position in the legal and healthcare sectors. As chief diversity officer, board member, and co-chair of the Health Care & Life Sciences practice, she embodies leadership and commitment. Medina skillfully represents healthcare clients in high stakes litigation, including reimbursement cases against major health plans, recovering millions for providers.

Her legal prowess extends to advising hospital systems on managed care contracting, compliance and risk strategies. Medina diligently defends clients in audits and False Claims Act cases, earning accolades such as the California Lawyer of the Year (CLAY) Award and recognition as one of the "Most Influential Women Attorneys" by the Los Angeles Business Journal. She is a trusted advocate for a diverse array of healthcare clients, including hospitals, physicians, pharmacies and more, and her dedication to diversity and inclusion is evident through her leadership in the firm's DEIA committee.

Brian Moskal

Partner & Co-Chair
of Diversity &
Inclusion Committee
Greenberg Glusker LLP



Brian Moskal is a partner at Greenberg Glusker LLP and

serves as the co-chair of the firm's diversity and inclusion committee. He is a distinguished environmental attorney with a deep commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion within the legal profession and his organization. This scholarship provides financial assistance for books and supplies, coupled with networking opportunities through receptions for recipients and their guests. Moskal's dedication to diversity extends beyond scholarships. He facilitated the firm's participation in the Association of Corporate Counsel – Southern California (ACC SoCal) Diversity Internship Program for two consecutive years, providing mentorship to law students interning at ACC SoCal member companies.

Recognizing the importance of cultural heritage months, Moskal ensured that the firm celebrated various occasions, including Black History Month, Women's History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month and more, with engaging activities and resources.

Vice President, Head of Workforce & Workplace Diversity & Inclusion
PNC Bank



Tony Moraga is a prominent leader as the vice president and head of workforce and workplace diversity and inclusion at PNC Bank. With responsibility extending across PNC's nationwide presence, he oversees the development of talent and nurturing of an inclusive corporate culture. Moraga's team actively engages PNC's 60,000 employees, adapting to an increasingly diverse customer base.

His strategic approach leverages PNC's Corporate Diversity Council, supports 19 line-of-business D&I councils and guides 12 employee business resource groups with 35,000 members. Moraga champions peer-to-peer engagement, learning and PNC's internal D&I mentoring program, fostering growth and leadership development. Data-driven leadership led to a 25% increase in EBRG membership and the creation of an in-house EBRG membership management system. His strategic vision and dedication have made a profound impact on PNC's diversity and inclusion efforts.



Steve O'Connell
President & CEO
California Credit Union

Steve O'Connell is the dedicated president and CEO of California Credit Union, with a remarkable career spanning over two decades devoted to strengthening communities and enhancing the lives of members through financial education, social responsibility and DEIA practices. He has made DEIA a core strategic initiative for California Credit Union, recognizing its pivotal role in serving their team, members and communities. He has implemented comprehensive DEIA programs and initiatives, fostering diversity within the organization's leadership and workforce.

O'Connell's commitment extends beyond internal initiatives, as he actively promotes DEIA within local communities. He has forged partnerships with various charitable organizations focusing on diverse needs, including mental health, LGBTQ+ youth, homelessness and more.

Under O'Connell's leadership, California Credit Union has obtained certification as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), emphasizing its dedication to serving historically underserved communities.

Visionaries



Rick R. Olivarez
Founding Partner
 Olivarez Madruga Law
 Organization LLP

Rick R. Olivarez, founding partner of OMLO, is a prominent legal practitioner renowned for his service to municipal, education and public agency clients. After establishing OMLO in the wake of the 2008 recession, his innovative leadership transformed it into Southern California's premier minority-owned law firm. Recognized in the Los Angeles Business Journal's "Leaders of Influence: Minority Attorneys" and "Top 100 Lawyers" in California, Olivarez's influence extends beyond law. He actively supports the TELACU Education Foundation, NALEO, Homeboy Industries, HONOR PAC and more.

His commitment to equity and diversity is evident with over 50% minority employees and a culture that embraces cultural holidays and observances. Olivarez's efforts to encourage underrepresented individuals in the legal profession shine through OMLO's intern program. A certified minority-owned firm, OMLO is dedicated to recruiting diverse talent and supporting organizations promoting equality.

Paulette Pantoja
Founder & CEO
 Blu Digital Group



Paulette Pantoja, founder and CEO of Blu Digital Group, is a visionary leader passionate about diversity and inclusion. She believes that diversity enriches culture and fosters a healthy work environment. Under her leadership, Blu Digital Group has expanded globally, with offices in eight countries, reflecting her commitment to recognizing and celebrating diversity. Blu's transformative digital supply chain services and software benefit the media and entertainment industry. The addition of a localization division in 2022 further expanded their capabilities.

Pantoja's dedication to diversity extends to her workforce with 55% male, 44% female and 2% non-binary employees. She prioritizes company culture, fostering an inclusive environment where diverse voices are heard and celebrated. Her passion for people, content, technology and inclusion drives Blu Digital Group's success on a global scale.

Christopher Pelham

Head of Litigation and Disputes, Los Angeles
 Norton Rose Fulbright



Christopher Pelham, head of litigation and disputes in Los Angeles for Norton Rose Fulbright, has been immersed in the world of law from a young age, captivated by courtroom dramas from his high school days. As a board member of the Langston Bar Association of Los Angeles, he actively empowers leadership, fosters professional development and promotes justice administration within the Black community and beyond.

Pelham's dedication extends to education, particularly for students in need. He has been a steadfast volunteer for School on Wheels, offering tutoring and mentorship to students facing the risk of dropping out due to homelessness. He serves on the board of Just the Beginning, a pipeline organization aimed at bolstering underrepresented communities in law schools. His unwavering passion for the legal profession has driven him from his time as an assistant U.S. attorney in Los Angeles to his international work based in mainland China, where he investigated and prosecuted cases involving organized crime, fraud and more.



Meena Patel, the diversity, equity and inclusion director at NextGen Healthcare, is a driving force in creating a more inclusive workplace. In her first year, she established a robust DEI culture, fully integrating DEI principles into the company's ethos. Patel's unique challenge is fostering a DEI-centric culture in a 100% remote workplace, spanning 2000-plus employees in the U.S. and 700-plus in India. She implemented a three-pillar approach: Mindset/Awareness, enhancing understanding through internal and external training; Visibility/Engagement, growing Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and promoting intersectionality; and Metrics Tracking, monitoring pay equity and demographic diversity.

Patel's impact extends beyond NextGen. She actively volunteers, chairs a nonprofit board and pioneered a microloan program supporting minority entrepreneurs. Patel is dedicated to making financial resources available to all, regardless of background, exemplifying her commitment to community empowerment and DEI.

Diana Ordaz-Cherrington

Vice President
 Multicultural Business Alliance



As the vice president of the Multicultural Business Alliance

(MBA), Diana Ordaz-Cherrington is a driven leader with a background in healthcare and entrepreneurship. With extensive experience in senior healthcare, she founded Alpha Prime Health Solutions, focusing on elder healthcare solutions for major companies, nonprofits and hospitals. Ordaz-Cherrington is pursuing a business administration degree at the University of California, Riverside and as an advocate for minority, women and veteran-owned small businesses, her selfless service is pivotal to MBA's mission.

MBA forges equitable business opportunities, supporting marginalized communities. Ordaz-Cherrington's innovative spirit, network and dedication have elevated MBA's role in enhancing social economic development. Her leadership also nurtures "Alpha Femme," highlighting and networking with women-owned businesses. Ordaz-Cherrington's commitment to community growth and expansion through small businesses is evident in her work.

Meena Patel

Diversity Equity & Inclusion Director
 NextGen Healthcare



With over three decades of banking experience, Nora Perez joined Enterprise Bank & Trust in 2022, rapidly becoming an asset to the community development team. Her mission is to enhance financial soundness in low- to moderate-income areas while forging lasting community relationships. As vice president, she champions equal access to financial resources. She initiated a microloan program supporting minority and underserved entrepreneurs. Perez also dedicates her time to nonprofits like Haven Neighborhood Services, providing financial education and services to empower communities.

Because of this strong commitment to and passion for her community, she spearheaded and continues to enhance a microloan program at Enterprise alongside organization partners Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment (PACE) and Entrepreneur Educational Center Inc. Perez's commitment to financial inclusion transcends her role. As a board member, volunteer and advocate for building thriving, equitable communities, her passion for inclusivity is a driving force in her career.



Nora Perez
Vice President
 Community Development
 Enterprise Bank & Trust

Visionaries



Philip I. Person
Shareholder
Greenberg Traurig, LLP

Philip Person, a shareholder at Greenberg Traurig, LLP, is a fervent advocate for junior lawyers and diversity. He is committed to working with underrepresented and first-generation attorneys and future attorneys through the lens of someone who has navigated the specific hurdles encountered by these communities. Leading in labor and employment law, he co-leads key firm initiatives, including the California Wage & Hour Taskforce and the Greenberg Traurig African American Inclusion Network (GAIN) affinity group.

Person's impact extends beyond his firm. He co-hosts "The Performance Review" podcast, amplifying diverse voices in law. He's a trusted thought leader on labor and employment issues and advocates for equity in California legislation like the CROWN Act. Through organizations like CMCP, CLEO and JIOP, Person mentors, interviews and empowers underrepresented law students. His dedication earned him recognition as a 2022 LCLD Fellow, creating a more inclusive legal profession.

Gary L. Polk
Chief Executive Officer
Polk Institute Foundation



Gary L. Polk, Sr. is a seasoned Black businessman, CEO, business consultant and esteemed university professor with a strong background in banking and entrepreneurship. Holding a bachelor's degree and leveraging his 10-year career as a banker, his expertise in finance became the cornerstone of his teaching career. Throughout his teaching journey, Polk's innovative approach stood out as he connected his students with real-world professionals, simulating loan application processes and business presentations.

As a three-time author, Polk's books, such as "Entrepreneurs Fail (to Win)," have become valuable resources in college entrepreneurship programs. In 2020, amidst the global challenges of COVID-19, he founded the Polk Institute Foundation (Pi), a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to fostering ethical, knowledgeable and fundable CEOs. Pi aims to empower entrepreneurs, especially from underserved communities, with the skills and mindset necessary for success in the business world.

Derek Van Powell
Director
Altman Solon



Derek Powell is a dynamic director and leader at Altman

Solon, a prominent strategy consulting firm specializing in the Telecom, Media and Technology (TMT) industries. Within Altman Solon, he actively champions diversity and inclusion as a member of the firm's Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee. He heads The Diaspora, a global employee resource group dedicated to supporting Black employees within the organization. Powell's commitment extends to promoting and celebrating Black history within Altman Solon, fostering an inclusive workplace culture.

Recognizing the need for greater diversity in the media and entertainment industry, Powell educates clients about sourcing, hiring, training and retaining diverse talent "behind the camera." His annual Altman Solon study sheds light on these issues and empowers media companies to address diversity concerns strategically. Powell is also the treasurer for the Debbie Allen Dance Academy (DADA), which enriches the lives of disadvantaged Black and Latino communities through dance and performance.

Dr. Paula Pompa-Craven is a highly respected licensed clinical psychologist specializing in autism and developmental disabilities assessment. With a career spanning over two decades at Easterseals Southern California (ESSC), she currently serves as vice president and chief clinical officer of ESSC's Autism Therapy Services. Her extensive experience includes overseeing a dedicated team of 1,400 professionals providing essential therapy services to over 11,000 individuals with autism and their families annually.

Dr. Pompa-Craven is a firm believer in the significance of early diagnosis and intervention for individuals with autism, striving to enhance learning opportunities and developmental milestones. Her commitment extends beyond clinical work as she shares her expertise through conference presentations, research publications and social media outreach. As an advocate for diversity, equity, inclusion and access (DEIA) in autism services, she also founded Easterseals Southern California's Inclusion Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) team.



Angela Reddock-Wright
*Employment Mediator,
Arbitrator, Investigator*
Reddock Law/Signature Resolution

Angela Reddock-Wright, an accomplished employment mediator, arbitrator and investigator, is recognized as a distinguished leader in labor and employment law. A graduate of UCLA School of Law and Amherst College, she has practiced for nearly 30 years. Reddock-Wright transitioned to full-time neutral work after founding the Reddock Law Group in 2011. She is renowned for her mediation and arbitration expertise and a valued member of Signature Resolution's panel of neutrals.

Reddock-Wright is a published author, radio show host and legal commentator, dedicated to improving workplaces. Her recent book, "The Workplace Transformed: 7 Crucial Lessons from the Global Pandemic," reflects her commitment to fostering healthy work environments. Angela's numerous accolades include induction into the College of Labor & Employment Lawyers, recognition as a Top 50 Woman Attorney by the Daily Journal and selection in The Best Lawyers in America®.

Adanté Pointer

*Partner &
Trial Attorney*

Pointer & Buelna LLP



Adanté Pointer is a relentless and passionate champion

for justice, representing both individuals and communities against powerful entities. He has fought for justice in high-profile cases, such as the Richmond Chevron Refinery Fire and the Oscar Grant case. Pointer's work has led to legislative change, as seen in the passing of SB 1228, protecting sex crime victims' DNA rights. He secured millions for victims of police shootings and their families, ensuring accountability.

Outside the courtroom, Pointer dedicates his time to educating underserved communities, offering "Know Your Rights" workshops, mentoring and community outreach. He serves on non-profit boards, promoting diversity and education. Pointer is president of the board for the East Oakland Youth Development Center, which raises money to offer scholarships for students in East Oakland who have few public-school resources.

Paula Pompa-Craven

Chief Clinical Officer

Easterseals Southern California



Visionaries



Julia Romano
Partner
King & Spalding

Julia Romano, a partner at King & Spalding, is a standout lawyer dedicated to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Her pro bono work has secured asylum for transgender women, making a remarkable impact. Romano's commitment to DEI extends within her firm, where she co-chairs the Women's Affinity Group and contributes to the Women's Alliance. She mentors young talent and actively promotes gender equality, exemplified by her role as a speaker at the CAA Diversity and Inclusion Summit.

Apart from her DEI efforts, Romano excels in high-profile product liability litigation. She's been recognized with numerous awards, including Daily Journal's Top 40 Under 40 and Women of Influence by the Los Angeles Business Journal. Her passion for advocacy and her commitment to inclusivity make her a leading force in the legal profession. Recently she was appointed to the board of directors of the Los Angeles Urban League.

David Ruiz
Partner
Manning Kass



David R. Ruiz is a partner at Manning Kass, where he leads the appellate law (strategy, writs and appeals) team and serves as the firm's general counsel. With substantial experience in civil litigation, he has been involved in numerous multi-million-dollar personal injury cases, demonstrating exceptional writing and research skills. His practice encompasses various areas, including personal injury, insurance fraud, employment law, consumer class actions and real property.

Mr. Ruiz is also dedicated to combating insurance fraud as part of the Special Investigations Unit / Insurance Fraud Litigation Team. His efforts extend to mentoring graduates of Glendale University College of Law, where he serves as an adjunct associate dean and teaches courses in legal writing, research, appellate advocacy and torts. Ruiz earned his Licentiate degree in law from the Universitat de Barcelona and his Juris Doctor from Glendale University College of Law. He was admitted to the State Bar of California in 2006, reflecting his commitment to the legal profession and DEIA initiatives.

Jerry Ruiz
Partner
Frost Brown Todd
AlvaradoSmith



Jerry Ruiz is a partner at Frost Brown Todd AlvaradoSmith with

over 40 years of legal experience in real estate and commercial transactions. His expertise includes managing real estate needs, negotiating commercial lease agreements and overseeing property management arrangements. Ruiz has led numerous transactions for financial institutions, real estate clients and corporations.

His notable accomplishments include assisting a public higher education institution in acquiring a historic building in Downtown Los Angeles and negotiating a \$10 million, 10-year lease renewal for a global leader in connected car technology. In addition to his legal practice, Ruiz is actively involved in community and economic development initiatives in Southern California. He co-founded the Academy of Special Dreams Foundation, dedicated to promoting the creative talents of people with disabilities. His philanthropic spirit and commitment to mentoring underrepresented students reflect his lifelong dedication to service.

Michele Ruiz is the CEO and co-founder of BiasSync, a science-based technology company focused on addressing unconscious bias in the workplace. With a data-driven approach, her company helps organizations measure and manage unconscious bias, fostering diversity and inclusion. As the CEO and founder of Ruiz Strategies, she specializes in communication strategies, DEI strategy development, change management and reputation management for global companies.

Ruiz is also the creator of Possibility Architect, an online mentoring program for women entrepreneurs, supporting them in scaling their businesses. As a keynote speaker and author, she shares insights on various topics, including entrepreneurship, leadership and empowerment. Ruiz's work has earned her multiple Emmy Awards, Golden Mike Awards and recognition as Business Woman of the Year. She actively contributes to DEIA efforts and serves on various boards and committees.



Daniel Sasse
Partner
Crowell & Moring LLP

Dan Sasse is a dynamic leader and partner at Crowell & Moring LLP, consistently dedicated to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in the legal community. As a former managing partner of the Orange County office, he orchestrated a remarkable transformation, achieving a majority diverse team at all levels. Sasse's commitment extends to fostering diverse legal talent through the Crowell & Moring Diversity Scholarship at UC Irvine. He spearheads Crowell's Racial Equity Task Force, driving change and implementing the Crowell Rule to prioritize diverse talent in hiring.

Sasse's community involvement includes serving on boards and supporting initiatives like Project Youth Group, offering opportunities to underserved youth. His pro bono work and achievements in antitrust cartel litigation make him a distinguished leader in law.

Donna Ross-Jones
Founder & CEO
Transition Music
Corporation



Donna Ross-Jones, founder and president of Transition Music Corporation (TMC), is a trailblazing advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the music industry. Her leadership in DEI is further demonstrated by her collaboration with Creative Artists Agency (CAA), where she actively advocates for increased representation and equal opportunities for women in the entertainment industry. By co-founding the Special Needs Network (SNN), she has worked tirelessly to support underserved communities impacted by autism, producing influential videos and documentaries that raise awareness.

Accolades such as Essence Magazine's "Entrepreneur of Excellence" and the "Inspiration of the Year" Award from NAWBO underscore Ross-Jones' impact. She has also been recognized as the Minority Media Firm of the Year by the City of Los Angeles and the U.S. Department of Commerce, with commendations from the U.S. House of Representatives and the LA. City Council for her community service.

Michele Ruiz
CEO & Co-Founder
BiasSync



Visionaries



Ricardo Sebastián

Executive Director
Outloud JILA

Ricardo Sebastián, a pioneering leader in the LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC communities, is the executive director of OUTLOUD at JILA, a groundbreaking entertainment and events agency. As a first-generation Mexican American, non-binary and pansexual individual, their commitment to inclusivity and diversity is at the forefront of their career. Sebastián has consistently empowered LGBTQIA+ communities through production, talent management and community programming. They utilize OUTLOUD to champion BIPOC, queer and trans representation in entertainment, addressing anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation by giving these communities a platform.

Sebastián successfully contracted 150 LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC creatives and produced engaging digital content that reached millions. Their collaboration with the City of West Hollywood generated significant visibility, emphasizing OUTLOUD as a safe space for everyone. Ricardo co-founded arrayagency, focusing on uplifting Black, Brown, queer and trans talent. They remain dedicated to creating thriving spaces for marginalized communities.



Lori Shao embodies the American Dream as an immigrant success story. After years in corporate America, she founded Finli Inc. to democratize access to financial resources for blue-collar entrepreneurs. Her journey from an entry-level job to entrepreneurship reflects her unwavering determination.

Shao is breaking down barriers for those like her parents, creating opportunities for blue-collar entrepreneurs and challenging societal norms. She is reshaping perceptions, helping underrecognized groups succeed and fostering community pride in blue-collar entrepreneurs.

Lori Shao

CEO & Founder
Finli Inc.



Sonia Smith Kang

Founder

Mixed Up Clothing



Sonia Smith Kang, the founder of Mixed Up Clothing, is a

fashion pioneer and advocate for multicultural representation. Her mission-driven childrenswear brand draws from her AfroLatina heritage and commitment to diversity. Recognized as a certified Women Minority Business Enterprise (WMBE), Smith Kang's work has challenged the lack of cultural representation in the fashion industry. She empowers underrepresented communities through fashion, with her designs gaining popularity and celebrity recognition. Smith Kang also actively engages in philanthropy, especially during the pandemic, by producing fabric face masks and supporting various non-profit agencies.

As president of Multiracial Americans of Southern California and an advocate for multicultural representation, she continues to uplift and inspire the next generation, making her a trailblazer in DEIA initiatives. Smith Kang was recognized at Dodger Stadium by LA Mayor Eric Garcetti for organizing the first-ever Mixed Heritage Day at Dodger Stadium.



Greg Skalaski is a visionary leader dedicated to driving diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the construction industry. As an executive sponsor, he accelerates careers and champions underrepresented groups within Shawmut. Skalaski supports multiple DEI organizations and initiatives, including The Posse Foundation and STEM Advantage, creating opportunities for the next generation.

He leads Shawmut's West Regional Diversity Leadership Council, promoting DEI within the firm. Skalaski's commitment extends to fostering diverse partnerships and memberships with DEI organizations. His MARC training underscores his dedication to advocating for DEI and cultural change in the workplace. He is also on the board for Allen Robinson's Within Reach Foundation, which aims to provide opportunities and resources to low-income and underserved Los Angeles-area students. The goal that Skalaski is supporting is the creation of hands-on learning and technology spaces for financial literacy and STEM-based learning in schools.

Greg Skalaski

Executive Vice President, West Region
Shawmut Design and Construction



Chahira Solh

Chair of Crowell & Moring Executive Committee; Partner
Crowell & Moring LLP



Chahira Solh is an accomplished partner at Crowell & Moring LLP, where she holds the prestigious position of chair of the executive committee. As the youngest and first diverse female partner to serve in this capacity, she stands as an exemplary leader and advocate for diversity within the legal profession.

Solh's influence extends to various leadership roles within the firm, including the Management Board and the Antitrust and Competition Group Steering Committee. She plays a pivotal role in Crowell's Racial Equity Task Force, contributing to the advancement of racial equity within the firm's structures and practices. Solh's dedication to diversity is further evident in her involvement with organizations like the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD), California Minority Counsel Program and the Women's Leadership Initiative at her firm. She is a trusted advisor on antitrust issues, representing prominent companies across industries such as automotive, aviation, healthcare and defense.

Dr. Tana M. Session

CEO & Founder

TanaMSession.com



Dr. Tana M. Session, CEO & founder of TanaM-Session.com, a certified Women Minority Business Enterprise (WMBE), boasts over 30 years of human resources expertise. Her impact extends to hi-tech startups, fast-growth companies and major brands like McDonald's, Xerox, Creed Perfumery and more. Dr. Session's an advocate for diversity, equity & inclusion, embedding these principles into every project. Her pioneering work in diversity, equity, inclusion & accessibility extends to clinical trials, aligning with California Proposition 14. Collaborating with biotechnology leaders, she champions DEIA and health equity in clinical research.

Recognitions as a "Top Company Culture Consultant" by Fond.co, "Top Employer Branding Expert" by Eightfold.ai and Forbes' "Next 1000" underline her influence. She's also a celebrated author and media contributor, making her a vital figure in DEIA and HR. With an MBA in organizational psychology & development and an honorary doctorate (PhD) degree in philosophy, she's committed to empowering others in academia.



Visionaries

**Brian Sun**

Partner
Norton Rose Fulbright

Brian Sun is a highly accomplished trial lawyer and partner at Norton Rose Fulbright. He has actively promoted diversity, equity and inclusion within the legal profession. At Norton Rose Fulbright, Sun serves as a supportive voice for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) personnel, fostering connections and mentoring young AAPI colleagues across the country. He is committed to expanding the firm's AAPI partner representation through his extensive network in the legal community.

Sun's significant contributions to the legal field have been recognized by leading legal guides, including Chambers USA, where he is ranked in the top tier for California: White Collar Crime and Government Investigations. Notably, he received the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association's (NAPABA) Trailblazer Award, the National Diversity Council's Multicultural Leadership Award and the Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Gary Teo

EVP-Chief Human Resources Officer
East West Bank

Gary Teo is the EVP-chief human resources officer at East West Bank, known for his strategic leadership and dedication to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). He is a trusted C-suite advisor with a results-driven mindset, guiding the bank through complex business transformations while prioritizing DEI initiatives. Under Teo's leadership, East West Bank has ingrained diversity and inclusion into its DNA. He champions DEI by ensuring fair practices in hiring, promotion, and employee engagement. The bank boasts a diverse workforce, with women comprising 62% of employees and holding 58% of managerial roles. Gender equality in advancement is a priority, with close to 60% of promotions in 2022 going to women.

Teo's recruiting philosophy aligns with the bank's commitment to diversity, which contributed to East West being recognized with the "Best Board of Directors" distinction in Bank Director's 2022 Ranking Banking study. Teo also established a Diversity Council and Employee Resource Groups (ERG), engaging over 40% of active employees in ERG-sponsored events.

**Melody Tecson**

Vice President of Product Management
Belkin International



Melody Tecson is the vice president of product management at Belkin International, with over two decades of dedicated service to fostering diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB).

She began her journey as a customer service representative and with determination and passion advanced to lead Belkin's global product portfolio with a team of 28 professionals. In her role, Tecson champions DEIB, ensuring all voices are heard and her team reflects the diverse communities they serve. She encourages innovative thinking and empowers her team to excel.

Tecson is a vocal advocate for DEIB, actively participating in panels and events, especially for minority women in tech. She partners with organizations to provide technology to underprivileged students, promoting access and equality. Her leadership embodies Belkin's core values, fostering an inclusive culture that encourages innovation and empowers employees. Tecson believes great ideas can come from anyone, advocating for equal empowerment in pursuit of innovation.

**Katrina "KT" Thornton**

Chief Equity, Inclusion & Belonging Officer

Taco Bell



Katrina Thornton, known as "KT," is Taco Bell's chief equity, inclusion and belonging officer.

Since joining in 2021, she partnered with all levels of the organization to build out, crystalized and transformed Taco Bell's DE&I strategy. A large part of her role has been ensuring that EI&B is woven into their business practices and brand strategy with the belief that inclusion is more than just a human resources function. She initiated an EI&B immersion event, fostered innovative programs like the Internal Incubator, and introduced Ambition Accelerator to fight inequality.

Thornton leads Business Employee Resource Groups, supporting diverse communities, and secured additional funding for community engagement. Her action-oriented approach resulted in increased female and minority representation by October 2022. KT's holistic EI&B strategy aligns with Taco Bell's ambition for gender parity and supplier diversity by 2025.

**Michael Darrell Thomas**

Principal

Jackson Lewis PC.



Michael Thomas, principal at Jackson Lewis PC, in Orange County, leads the Corporate Diversity Counseling Practices Group. His expertise lies in assisting clients to develop and execute diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, aligning with their values and legal standards. Thomas offers comprehensive support for workplace DEI-related matters, from conducting diagnostics and climate surveys to unconscious bias training, fostering inclusive cultures, enhancing employee engagement and executing DEI initiatives.

His approach encompasses best practices, neuroscience, adult learning, experiential learning, dialogue, body awareness and mindfulness. Thomas is a sought-after speaker on DEI topics and recently addressed the impact of the Supreme Court's affirmative action decision in a webinar and two articles for publication.

**Julia Trankiem**

Partner
Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP

Julia Trankiem, a partner at Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP in Los Angeles, serves as a trusted advisor to Fortune 100 companies. Specializing in labor and employment law, she is renowned for her prowess in navigating the complex landscape of California regulations and federal employment issues, making her a sought-after expert in her field.

Trankiem is actively involved in numerous local and national organizations such as LEAP (Legal Education Access Pipeline), where she mentors junior attorneys to diversify the legal profession. Within Hunton Andrews Kurth, she serves as co-chair of the Women Lawyers Subcommittee of the firm's Diversity & Inclusion Committee. Trankiem's commitment extends to pro bono work, where she co-chairs Hunton's pro bono committee in Los Angeles. Her contributions reflect Hunton Andrews Kurth's dedication to pro bono service and commitment to making a difference.

Visionaries



John Vaughan

Lead Product Counsel, Interim Chief Privacy Officer, and General Counsel & Corporate Secretary at Granular Verily Life Sciences LLC

John Vaughan, a dedicated leader at Verily Life Sciences LLC, serves in multiple roles including lead product counsel, interim chief privacy officer, and general counsel & corporate secretary at Granular, a Verily subsidiary. With extensive experience in healthcare and health sciences, he previously held positions at notable firms like Genentech, Johnson & Johnson, and Bristol-Myers Squibb. At Verily, he champions diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as the executive sponsor for "LGBTv," the Employee Resource Group for LGBTQIA+ employees and allies. He played a vital role in establishing a diversity accelerator program, partnering with law firms to provide internships for rising 2Ls, and endowed a scholarship at Rutgers Law School in 2022. Vaughan's commitment to DEI is evident in his mentoring and contributions to various causes. He has also been featured in industry discussions and conferences, solidifying his impact and influence.

Michelle Wahler

*CEO & Co-Founder
Beyond Yoga*



Michelle Wahler, the visionary CEO and co-founder of Beyond Yoga, has driven the brand with an unwavering commitment to inclusivity and empowerment since its inception in 2005. Her dedication to honoring real women's bodies is evident in the brand's principles, which have remained integral throughout its journey. Under Wahler's leadership, Beyond Yoga launched the BIPOC Yoga Teacher Training Scholarship Program in 2020, addressing the underrepresentation of racial diversity in the yoga and wellness industry and fostering inclusivity.

Her commitment to equality extends to her team, encouraging activism and volunteerism as meaningful ways to make a positive impact in local and global communities. As part of Levi Strauss & Co, the brand continues its commitment to advancing equality through hiring, retention and promotion practices, striving to create a workforce that truly represents its consumers and fosters a sense of belonging for all.

Corey White

*Founder & CEO
Cyvatar*



Corey White, founder and CEO of Cyvatar, is a dedicated advocate for diver-

sity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA). At Cyvatar, he has partnered with Aleria to assess DEIA in the workplace, regularly involving Cyvatar employees in Aleria's Inclusion Assessment. Under White's leadership, the Executive Leadership Team promptly addresses identified DEIA issues.

DEIA training is a fundamental part of Cyvatar's culture, mandatory for all staff members.

White actively seeks feedback from employees regarding their DEIA experiences, ensuring constant improvement. Recognizing the importance of diverse leadership, he has shaped Cyvatar's Executive Leadership Team, predominantly composed of women and individuals from diverse backgrounds. He actively promotes women in leadership positions and ensures diverse candidate interviews. Cyvatar boasts a workforce with a higher proportion of women employees and diversity, a testament to White's commitment to diversity and inclusion. His leadership sets an example for creating a more equitable and inclusive world.

Kiana Webb, founder of Glorious Arisings and CEO of Webb Family Enterprises, stands as a beacon of empowerment and leadership. With a remarkable career rooted in uplifting the Black community, her legacy shines brightly. She pioneered a groundbreaking diversity and inclusion program, increasing women's employment across eight of her 16 restaurant locations.

The Webb Family sold several McDonald's franchises to invest in creating a community cooperative hub in the Inland Empire, fostering wealth and opportunities for families of color for decades. Her journey has transformed her into a revered keynote public speaker, advocating for the betterment of women, children and people of color. As a board member of the LA County Fair, Webb champions representation of diverse, small local businesses. Her life's mission revolves around achieving economic parity for Black communities through access to knowledge, wealth and resources.



Shawn Ray White

*General Counsel
Let Us*

Shawn Ray White, nominated for the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Champion Award, is a distinguished leader known for her unwavering commitment to fostering diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) within the legal profession. Her influence extends far beyond the boardroom, leaving a profound impact. White's dedication to DEI is palpable. She ensures diverse teams by actively promoting inclusivity and holding vendors and partners accountable for advancing DEI. Her actions result in deal teams comprised of approximately 50% women and 40% people of color, a testament to her commitment.

She also uses her experience as a hearing-impaired individual to educate others about accessibility issues. White is not only a promoter of DEI but a promoter of others, continually highlighting the achievements of people of color and organizations. Her dedication to DEI is exemplified by her numerous accolades, making her the epitome of a DEI champion.

Alicia Vaz

*Partner & Chief
DEI Officer
Cox, Castle &
Nicholson*



Alicia Vaz, serving as chief diversity, equity & inclusion (DEI)

officer and chair of the DEI Committee at Cox, Castle & Nicholson, is a driving force behind the firm's efforts to enhance diversity in both its ranks and the broader legal community. Under her leadership, Cox Castle has heightened awareness of DEI issues, fostering a work environment that values diverse voices. Initiatives like the DEI Speaker Series and DEI Challenges have equipped individuals with tools to contribute to a more inclusive workplace.

Vaz played a pivotal role in Cox Castle's participation in Diversity Lab's Midsize Mansfield Rule Certification process, which aims to increase diversity in law firms and leadership. Cox Castle's attainment of Midsize Mansfield Certification Plus status reflects her commitment to recruit, develop and promote diverse lawyers. As co-chair of Cox Castle's litigation team, Vaz is celebrated for her effective and creative dispute resolution approaches.

Kiana Webb

*Founder
Glorious Arisings*



Visionaries



Valerie Williams
Managing Partner & Founder
Converge Firm

Valerie Williams, the force behind Converge, played a pivotal role during the summer of 2020 when racial awareness surged. Over 200 companies sought her expertise in anti-racism training and long-term DEI strategies. She scaled her consultancy to answer this call, assisting dozens of organizations in activating DEI efforts. Previously, Williams held a high-ranking position in the tech industry, where she contributed to scaling DEI efforts at prominent organizations. For example, at Stripe, a fintech unicorn, she served as global head of inclusion and diversity.

Williams' focus is on startups and early-stage organizations, coaching them on building inclusive cultures. Through Converge, she provides educational tools to support and unblock stalled DEI efforts. Her mission is to design equitable people practices that endure as organizations grow.

Williams' profound impact on DEI is evident in her dedication to making workplaces more inclusive and equitable.

Peter Woo

Riverside Office Litigation Manager and Principal
Jackson Lewis PC.



Peter Woo is a principal at Jackson Lewis PC, with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). He co-founded the Asian American Insurance Network (AAIN) and currently serves as its board chairperson and president. AAIN's mission is to advance the growth and professional development of Asian-Pacific Islander professionals in the insurance and business industries. Woo has expanded AAIN nationally and internationally, fostering DEI conversations in the insurance field. He's a sought-after speaker on inclusivity and serves as a DEI leader at Jackson Lewis.

Woo's commitment extends to community involvement, sitting on the board of the Orange County Korean American Bar Association and collaborating with various DEI organizations. His dedication makes him an ideal candidate for DEI recognition, contributing significantly to a more inclusive professional landscape. Woo's tireless advocacy for diversity, equity and inclusion reflects his unwavering commitment to creating a fairer and more accessible professional world.

Debora King Wondercheck

Founder & CEO
Arts & Learning Conservatory



As the CEO and founder of the Arts & Learning Conservatory (ALC) and producer of the annual Juneteenth Gospel Voices of OC Concert, Debora King Wondercheck, M.S., Ed, is a passionate advocate for social justice and equality who has dedicated her life to making the arts accessible to all.

Wondercheck's extensive experience in education, including serving as a professor of music, equips her to champion ALC's mission. She has nurtured ALC from 21 students to an organization entertaining over 10,000 annually.

In 2022, Wondercheck created and produced Gospel Voices of OC, a Juneteenth celebration that pays tribute to faith, unity, celebration and inclusion. Her contributions have garnered recognition, including becoming a Board of Trustees member at Vanguard University and receiving the Woman of Distinction and Alumni of the Year honors. Under Wondercheck's visionary guidance, Arts & Learning Conservatory's accolades highlight its commitment to excellence and community impact.

Yusuf Zakir

Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer
Davis Wright Tremaine



Yusuf Zakir is the chief diversity, equity & inclusion officer

at Davis Wright Tremaine. With over eight years of experience at major law firms, he has dedicated his career to fostering diverse, equitable and inclusive environments. He collaborates with stakeholders to develop and implement strategies, programs and initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion.

Zakir's work in DEI extends to thought leadership, where he has been published and quoted in prominent publications, including The American Lawyer, Law360 and Diversity Professional. Before focusing on DEI, he practiced law for five years at major firms and clerked in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

At Davis Wright Tremaine, Zakir was hired as the firm's first chief DEI officer in 2020. He fosters a sense of belonging through affinity groups, supports diverse talent pipeline development, facilitates comprehensive DEI education and collaborates with external stakeholders to further shared values of diversity and inclusion.

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nita Wu is a managing director at GHJ, specializing in profit participation services. With over 25 years of auditing experience in the entertainment industry, she oversees audits at major studios like Walt Disney Pictures and Television and MGM. Beyond her professional achievements, Wu is a champion of DEIA initiatives, particularly for women and underrepresented groups. She leads GHJ's Women's Empowerment Initiative, creating a supportive environment for discussions on gender equity and inclusive leadership. Anita is a dedicated mentor, paying forward the support she received.

Wu has shared her DEIA expertise through articles and panel discussions and has been recognized as a Most Influential Minority CPA and Most Influential Woman in Accounting. Her advocacy for DEIA, combined with her industry expertise, positions her as a DEI trailblazer and mentor within GHJ, embodying the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion daily.

Anita Wu

Managing Director
GHJ



Raffi Zerounian

Los Angeles Market Leader & Partner
Hanson Bridgett

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affi Zerounian is a partner and the Los Angeles market leader at Hanson Bridgett LLP. With nine years of dedicated service, he has played a crucial role in establishing and expanding the firm's Los Angeles office, which now comprises around 50 professionals. Zerounian's commitment to diversity and inclusion is evident through his efforts in building a diverse team of attorneys and administrative staff. In Los Angeles, 70% of associates and counsel are female, 63% are attorneys of color and 11% are LGBTQ+. Notably, all partners in the Los Angeles office are either women or attorneys of color.

Zerounian is an active member of organizations like the California Minority Counsel Program (CMCP) and the Leadership Counsel of Legal Diversity (LCLD), where he serves as a fellow. He is also engaged in various associations and serves as an official and unofficial mentor to law students and attorneys.



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