

Winter 2021

NEWSLETTER

DIVERSITY MATTERS

EDITOR'S NOTE

100 Years of Celebrating Black History

Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the second African American to earn a Ph.D. at Harvard University, is considered the Father of Black History and is credited with being the founder of Negro History Week, which later became Black History Month. Although Woodson is the Father of Black History, he is not the founder of Negro History Week. That distinction belongs to my fraternity, The Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Early in my fraternity's history, a meeting was convened to discuss the Fraternity's "field of emphasis." At this meeting sat several Omega luminaries including the revered Colonel Charles Young, a West Point graduate, Garnet C. Wilkinson, Mr. Woodson, and John H. Burnell, who suggested a program that stressed Negro history. Mr. Burnell admitted that the idea came to him upon hearing a stirring address delivered by Mr. Woodson at the Fraternity's Ninth Annual Conclave held in 1920 at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. In his remarks Woodson "urged the college man to give less attention to social affairs and devote more time to the study of Negro life." He went on to say it "would produce an increase in the number of competent Negro leaders and would inspire race pride in the masses as a whole."



Kenneth Sharperson,
Chair of D&I Committee

One hundred years ago, in 1921, as a result of Mr. Burnell's recommendation, The Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. initiated a program called Negro History and Literature Week. The event was set to be held in April of every year. In 1925, with the fraternity's blessing, Mr. Woodson modified the name from Negro History and Literature Week to Negro History Week. He also switched the celebratory month from April to February to commemorate the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. Since then, what is now known as Black History Month is recognized the world over.

To think that it has been 100 years since this idea was first put into action is incredible. Now, more than ever, it is important to recognize Black history and to celebrate how what makes us unique is what brings us together. With this purpose in mind, Weber Gallagher is celebrating Black History Month by hosting a variety of programming for attorneys and staff that is both entertaining and educational. We look forward to you taking part in these events with us all month long.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANDREW L. INDECK, CHAIRMAN OF WEBER GALLAGHER SIMPSON STAPLETON FIRES & NEWBY LLP

By: John Zurzola

Andy Indeck has been the Chairman of Weber Gallagher for two years and a partner at the Firm since 2010. A Rutgers undergraduate and graduate of their law school, he has been an attorney since 1988 and is a fixture in Hunterdon County, New Jersey, where he has lived all his life. Recently, I had a chance to sit down with Andy (virtually) and we talked about topics ranging from: vegetable gardening and the “sauce vs. gravy” debate; the real and unintended effects that the COVID-19 crisis will have upon the legal workplace; and the importance of diversity and inclusion issues in business and in society as a whole.

Tell me about Andy Indeck and what kinds of things you like to do.

Well, I’m a father of two daughters - both college graduates. I’m married and my wife is a practicing dentist. I am, what I consider, an avid vegetable gardener. I enjoy competitive cycling in the nicer weather, and, in the winter, I ski.

What kind of vegetables do you grow?

It would be faster to tell you what vegetables I don’t have in my garden, but as far as “Jersey tomatoes,” I have a bunch of cherry and beefsteak growing now.

Why did you decide to pursue the law as a career?

Being a lawyer was not my intent when I went to college. I originally wanted to be an architect, but I quickly discovered that I wasn’t as good at math as I needed to be – I’m better at it now, I think! I think what led me to the law was that I was always interested in debate and logic. I am generally a competitive person as well. In the binary aspect of litigation there is, of course, a winner and a loser and I think that suits who I am.

MAKING HISTORY!



Jane Matilda Bolin was the first black woman to graduate from Yale Law School, the first to join the New York City Bar Association, the first to join the New York City Law Department, and the nation’s first Black judge.

Where did you start your career? Doing what precisely?

I started out at a smaller law firm in central New Jersey doing general litigation. When I was there I began doing coverage work and I know I enjoyed it and I think I excelled in it. I began to get to do more and more of it – the insurance analysis and coverage work. After that firm, I went to another general practice firm that had about fifty-plus attorneys or so and I did more coverage work and commercial litigation. I was made chief of that firm’s litigation practice. I was there for about ten years before coming to Weber Gallagher in 2010.

If not law, what do you think you would have done?

I think I still would have liked to have been an architect. In fact, I have more or less gotten to do a lot of that or at least been substantially involved in that work as I designed the layout for the Bedminster office and, most recently, the new 13th floor in Center City.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANDREW L. INDECK, CHAIRMAN OF WEBER GALLAGHER SIMPSON STAPLETON FIRES & NEWBY LLP *CONT.*

By: John Zurzola, Partner, Family Law

Who were the most influential people in your life?

No question that my parents were the most influential people in my life. I was raised in a Jewish family and my parents valued education and hard work. Hard work and pursuing your education was stressed. I was expected to go to college and that my education would help me to succeed. My brother would probably agree as he is a doctor – a surgeon.

What do you think is your most significant accomplishment or is there one particular accomplishment that shaped your career?

My most significant accomplishment is becoming Chairman of Weber Gallagher. I have had many successes trying high profile cases, but when I think about them, they are all cumulative in terms of being made chairman of the Firm. I think it is because apart from a particular success in any one case, this position being able to be the chair, allows me to really be able to influence things and policies for the better and to truly impact people's lives. I like to improve things and this position allows me to do that.

How has the awareness of diversity issues changed since you started your career to the present?

It almost goes without saying that it has changed dramatically. When I first started my career and well into working at my second firm, I can say that, in terms of the "awareness" of diversity issues in the workplace that it was, sadly, not likely a consideration at that time for law firm managers. It's hard to accept but unfortunately, it is probably true. I would say that back then, finding a diverse candidate was probably not of major importance to a firm– like not their priority.

It's only in about the last five or six years that it has become evident that law firms need to be engaged. At a minimum, an awareness of the importance of diversity issues at all levels for the betterment of the firm and for the people who work there is a must. Having more diverse people creates a better working environment.

There are also business reasons why it is important to focus on issues of diversity. It creates an environment with many viewpoints that will allow us to better relate to our clients and provide a better service. This supports the firm's commitment to diversity and gives us a competitive edge, but, that said, the social and moral component cannot be denied and is paramount. Law firms may struggle with it, but awareness and, frankly, a focus on diversity issues is a must. Things must change.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#) >

Black History Month 2021

“ We are striving to forge a union with purpose, to compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man. And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us, but what stands before us. We close the divide because we know, to put our future first, we must first put our differences aside. ”

Amanda Gorman
National Youth Poet Laureate

Weber Gallagher

Weber Gallagher's D&I Small Group Discussions

THE BREAKROOM – Just Be There!

A casual piece by: John Zurzola, Partner, Family Law

So, you've worked at this company for six months—maybe a couple of years. You are on public transportation and some Fridays—most Fridays—are a pain getting home. One of your co-workers has been riding you forever about going right home and never coming out for some snacks and maybe a drink or two at the local restaurant. "You better be there!"

One Friday, you decide to go, and you are glad you did. Within 10 minutes you hear people start getting real—about the news, about the state of the world, about the job.

You go in on Monday and you see the people you hung with on that Friday night. The conversations may be different because you're "at work," but you don't forget the conversations you had, the funny stuff that came-up, or the person you got to know for the first time after working with them for the last three years.

The Weber Gallagher Diversity & Inclusion Small Group Discussions are sort of like that. It's not a happy hour, and there are no snacks, but it's not work either. It's an opportunity to learn about the people you work with. It's a social outlet during this isolating time. It's an opportunity to connect with your colleagues. It's about building real relationships, learning about our differences, and embracing them.

It's a completely unstructured, agenda-less meeting to discuss what's on people's minds and to find ways to be better allies and colleagues. No "Car-Bombs" or "Jager Shots," fortunately/unfortunately depending who you ask, but you get to discuss, hear, and listen to what is on each other's minds, which normally wouldn't come up in the workplace or during your virtual meeting to discuss an upcoming client deposition.

Some have said it is a cutting-edge program and that there are not many companies, much less law firms, that would touch something like this. However, in a year that seemed to deal us blow after blow, it has been refreshing to sort through some of these big issues with some of the people I see every day in a safe environment.

It is evolving too. People are becoming more comfortable expressing themselves. Breakthroughs might be made but, if not, who cares. It's not about any one thing. It's about YOU, the WG Family, and having an outlet and getting together, while staying apart.

"Listen, the people are cool. The vibe is inclusive. Just be there!"



On March 2, 1955, Claudette Colvin was arrested at the age of 15 in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give up her seat to a white woman on a crowded, segregated bus. This occurred nine months before the more widely known incident in which Rosa Parks, secretary of the local chapter of the NAACP, helped spark the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott.

Weber Gallagher's D&I Committee Members

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David Rosenberg

Leslie Ruff

Michael Scott

Laura Seider

Kenneth Sharperson

Tracy Walsh

Jennifer Williams

Scott Wilson

John Zurzola

UPCOMING EVENTS

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Presentation

February 24 at 4:00–5:00 p.m.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, recognized by U.S. Congressional resolution as a vital American “Cultural Ambassador to the World,” has performed for over 25 million people in 48 states and in 71 countries on six continents, celebrating the African-American cultural experience and the American modern dance tradition. Ailey’s permanent home is The Joan Weill Center for Dance, the largest building dedicated to dance in New York City, the dance capital of the world.

We invite you and your family to join us for an event that will provide you with the history of Alvin Ailey and his dance company, as well as its importance to Black history. The program will provide a history of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater followed by a dance lesson with a former company member who danced with Mr. Ailey himself. This unique blend makes for a memorable evening you don't want to miss!

RSVP HERE > 

SAVE THE DATE!

Thursday,

March 18

4:30 – 5:30 p.m.

**COOKING WITH
JOSE GARCES**

Right in your Kitchen!

