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SUMMER 2025

# DIVERSITY MATTERS NEWSLETTER



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# DIVERSITY MATTERS NEWSLETTER

## EDITORS' NOTE – CELEBRATING PRIDE, HONORING JUNETEENTH, AND ADVANCING INCLUSION THROUGH MENTORSHIP

By: Ruby Delarosa and Felicia Romain



**Ruby Delarosa**

**"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."**  
— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Welcome to Weber Gallagher's June 2025 DEI newsletter! As we continue our commitment to fostering a more inclusive and equitable workplace, this month's edition highlights key topics that not only shape the legal field but also resonate deeply within our broader community.

In this issue, we discuss a variety of topics, including how DEI is a strategic advantage for lawyers, PRIDE, language barriers, Juneteenth, and personal perspectives lived by diverse individuals in our field.

This June, we recognize Pride Month, a meaningful time to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community, reflect on the ongoing pursuit of equality, and remind us of the power of visibility, acceptance, and the importance of standing in solidarity with one another, both in and outside the workplace.

Juneteenth is another occasion for reflection. As we honor the end of slavery in the U.S., it is a powerful reminder of the work still left to do when it comes to racial justice and equity. As legal professionals, we play a role in creating meaningful change, and it is important we never lose sight of that.

We also learn about how DEI makes us better all around, including in our law practice. In another piece, an attorney reflects on the importance of being bilingual in a diverse community. Finally, an article covers an important change to the definition of parentage in Pennsylvania, marking a win for families across the Commonwealth.

Thank you for reading, and for your continued commitment to creating a workplace that celebrates and uplifts diversity in all its forms. We look forward to continuing these important conversations together.

We want to hear from you! If you have ideas for future DEI programs or know someone who would be a great speaker, please reach out to **Carolyn Mirabile** or **Gabi Outlaw** and let us know.

## The Quiet Advantage: How DEI Elevates Legal Work and Client Impact

Over the past year, DEI initiatives have faced heightened scrutiny, with law firms and universities increasingly pressured to dismantle these programs or risk losing substantial funding. But it begs the question: have we paused to consider how DEI initiatives might elevate the quality of our legal work and deepen our impact on clients?

Despite today's shifting political climate and the scrutiny surrounding DEI initiatives, it is more important than ever for attorneys, regardless of race, gender, age, or sexual orientation to recognize the quiet but powerful advantage DEI brings to the legal profession.

Practicing in New York City, I see firsthand the rich diversity of our environment. Our adjusters are diverse. Our carriers are diverse. And our clients, more than ever, reflect a wide range of backgrounds and identities. In such a landscape, it is not just strategic, but essential that law firms reflect the diversity of the people they serve. When clients see attorneys who look like them, speak their language, or understand their lived experiences, it builds trust. It makes clients feel seen, heard, and most importantly, understood.

I strongly believe that this reality is not limited to our client base. The courtrooms we step into are evolving as well. Judges, clerks, and adversaries are all increasingly representative of the communities we serve. Our effectiveness in these spaces depends not only on legal knowledge but also on cultural fluency and empathy.

A Forbes article titled "The Power of Diversity and Inclusion: Driving Innovation and Success" put it plainly: "The financial performance of companies prioritizing diversity and inclusion consistently outperforms their peers." Diversity does not just make us feel good; it makes us better all around. It sharpens our perspectives, strengthens our critical thinking skills, and attracts opportunity.

Years ago, while working at another firm, I attended a legal conference. I was the only Black attorney present from my firm. A high-ranking executive from a major insurance brokerage, also notably a Black woman approached me. She smiled and said, "I've been waiting to see your firm hire more diverse attorneys." From that moment forward, she made it a point to seek me

out at industry events and even asked that I be assigned to her cases. That was the first time I saw, in real time, how representation affects perception and business.

The benefits of DEI extend beyond client engagement. In trial, especially in a city as diverse as New York, juries are made up of individuals from all walks of life. Diverse trial teams and expert witnesses not only reflect the realities of our jury pool but also resonate more effectively with them. As highlighted in the American Bar Association's Litigation Radio episode on "Expert Diversity – It's About Winning Cases" notes, "A diverse panel of attorneys and experts leads to better thinking by helping legal teams understand how jurors with different backgrounds and experiences will interpret evidence and testimony."

In my experience at Weber Gallagher, and especially with the General Liability Group in the New York City office, I have seen a genuine commitment to these principles in practice. We make intentional efforts to retain experts of varying backgrounds, ages, and experiences and understand that this inclusivity enhances both our trial preparedness and our credibility before juries.

Diversity and inclusion are not just buzzwords. They can be very strategic advantages. As the world becomes more interconnected and our communities more multifaceted, embracing DEI is not only the right thing to do; it is also the smart thing to do.



By: Felicia Romain



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## The Importance of a Second Language: Overcoming Language Barriers as a New York Lawyer



**By: Brandon Small**

Growing up as a Brooklyn native and a child of Jamaican American immigrants, I was always encouraged to learn a language other than English as I knew the importance of being able to communicate with New York's various and diverse populations. My mom of Jamaican origin moved to the United States, to New York, a city of immigrants and a melting pot of different languages and cultures. As a lawyer who works with New York populations, I strove to learn a language that most New Yorkers, and most of America now speaks: Spanish. According to the Census Bureau, now more than 1 in 5 people ages 5 and older speak a language other than English, with the most common second language being Spanish.

My path to learn Spanish was partially enforced, but I learned to love the language and continued to learn it by choice. Growing up in New York City as a student at Brooklyn Technical High School, every student had to take units of credits in a language other than English. As a result of this, I took Spanish classes all through

high school, and continued in college at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. Eventually Spanish became my major and I ended up studying abroad in Spain during my junior year of college for a language learning experience outside of the classroom based more in immersion. After graduation, I would then return to Spain between college and law school on an Ann Cornelisen language learning fellowship. With this fellowship I was able to return to Spain and with my language proficiency, take classes in Spanish. I was also able to work at a law firm in Spain and eventually wrote a thesis in Spanish about employment law and the gig economy in Spain with the rise of workers from apps such as Uber and Deliveroo. Being able to communicate, read, and write in Spanish was a very rewarding and fruitful experience.

Because the second most spoken language in New York is Spanish, you can more easily reduce language barriers and connect with New Yorkers through the Spanish language. It has been eye opening to work on pro bono immigration matters where I can use my Spanish to assist people on their path to citizenship and help with their immigration status. I also am able to build relationships with clients and witnesses on my cases without a language barrier. This cultural competency allows me to speak with my Spanish speaking clients directly, building a rapport and trust.

A foreign language such as Spanish has only been beneficial, allowing me to think and communicate differently with clients and other attorneys. Spanish has also been extremely helpful when gathering information as a lawyer. For example, during depositions with a Spanish interpreter, it gives me the ability to hear the questions and answers twice, and understand the nuances of the witnesses' answers. It has also been important to be able to communicate with clients who speak Spanish as their native language to gain more information on situations, precise details, and on cases that would normally be more challenging to uncover or would require a translator.

Being in the field of law with a Spanish speaking ability is gratifying and rewarding. I am able to connect with clients, better handle depositions, and gain more information and details on my cases where there otherwise would be a language barrier. Learning another language has given me a very rewarding skill, and I highly recommend lawyers learn another language not only to open doors and opportunities, but also to strengthen your lawyering as well.

## A BIG WIN FOR FAMILIES AS PA SUPREME COURT EXPANDS DEFINITION OF PARENTAGE

In a much anticipated decision, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has now defined parentage to include intent-based parentage in the landmark case *Glover v Junior*. Historically Pennsylvania recognizes parentage of a biological parent, adoption, presumption of parentage or estoppel and a contract in cases where a child is born through Assistive Reproductive Technology. But what about a case where a same-sex couple conceives a child using a sperm donor and Assistive Reproduction Technology, but the couple did not enter into a contract and they separated before the child was born? The en banc Court held the doctrine of intent-based parentage will be recognized in Pennsylvania.

In the present case, prior to the parties being married they discussed starting a family and once married they reached out to a fertility clinic to discuss their options including in vitro fertilization. One month after being married they entered into a contract with a fertility clinic for donated sperm. The contract only had one line for the signature of the Intended Parent, which Glover signed. The parties selected a donor who had the same characteristics of Junior. Thereafter, the parties relocated to Philadelphia where they continued to work with the clinic at their Pennsylvania location, and the IVF Agreement was signed by Glover as "Patient" and Junior as "Partner." In August 2021, the parties conceived via IVF, whereby Glover's egg was used. Junior accompanied Glover to appointments and both parties signed an agreement in anticipation of Junior's step-parent adoption of the child. Both parties also signed affidavits expressing their intent for Junior to adopt the child. The terms of the contract included a statement that Junior would have the same equal rights as a biological parent.

Unfortunately, before the child was born the parties separated and Glover informed Junior she no longer intended to proceed with Junior's second-parent adoption after the child was born. Glover then filed a divorce complaint. After several proceedings in custody court and before the appellate court, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court was asked to determine whether individuals can enter into an enforceable agreement to determine parentage and parental rights. After considering prior Pennsylvania cases defining and recognizing parentage, the majority of the Court held Junior established parentage by intent-based parentage. It should be noted the Pennsylvania Supreme Court held contract based parentage and parentage by estoppel were not proved in the present case.



**By: Carolyn Mirabile**  
**Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**  
**Leader**

# A BIG WIN FOR FAMILIES AS PA SUPREME COURT EXPANDS DEFINITION OF PARENTAGE - CONTINUED

The Court noted the record was replete with evidence supporting intent-based parentage. In the present case, Junior did not share any genetics with the child and the parent's relationship ended before the child was born. Thus neither a biological relationship or opportunity to adopt was present in this case. Further, since the marriage was not intact when the child was born, Junior could not establish parentage through the marital presumption. Additionally, facts showed Junior was prevented from having a relationship with the child so parentage by estoppel was also not available in this case. Finally, contract principles were not present in this case because the parties were a married couple when they decided to have a child and the Court did not recognize a transaction involving an offer, acceptance and consideration.

The Court noted the record was replete with evidence to support a holding the parties mutually intended to bring a child in the world and raise the child together and further that Junior participated in that process by entering into multiple contracts pertaining to conception and birth of the child, playing an active role in selecting the sperm donor, selection of a donor with similar characteristics as Junior, equally sharing the costs of conceiving the child and assisted Glover with the IVF process. They also both planned a baby shower together and selected a name for the child. More importantly, the parties signed affidavits stating their intentions to both equally parent the child including exercising equal rights as a legal parent for the child. The Court confirmed the prior paths to parentage remain in Pennsylvania, and although a contract or a writing is not required to be a parent a writing which expresses each parent's written affirmations provides strong evidence of intent even if the actual writings do not meet the elements of a contract.

## UPCOMING DEI EVENTS

Our Annual Cultural Food Potluck Luncheon will be held June 25 at each WG office. We invite everyone to bring a dish that reflects your heritage or holds special meaning to you.



**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25**

Think of it as a space where you can pop in, take a breather, and talk (or just listen!) about everything going on around us. It's free-flowing and no pressure – you can express your thoughts or simply learn from the unique life experiences of others.

You'll receive an email with more info and you'll register to receive a link to join.



**THURSDAY, JULY 10**

## Juneteenth - Understanding Its Importance and Why We Celebrate It

Juneteenth, also known as "Freedom Day," is the oldest national celebration of the end of slavery in the United States. It marks the day when enslaved people in Texas — who were among the last to know — finally learned that they were free, 2½ years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863.

On June 19, 1865, Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, and informed enslaved Black people that they were free under the law. This moment was a powerful turning point in American history, but the fight for freedom didn't end there. Juneteenth honors that victory and the long, continuing journey toward equality for all Black Americans.



**Ruby Delarosa**

Juneteenth represents freedom, resilience, and the long struggle for justice. While it celebrates the legal end of slavery, it also symbolizes the ongoing fight for civil rights and equality. It's a reminder that freedom is not always immediate and that social change takes time, often with setbacks along the way.

The day is about acknowledging the painful past of slavery, but it's also about celebrating the strength and perseverance of Black communities throughout history. It's a day to reflect on how far we've come and how much further we need to go to create a truly just and equal society.

Juneteenth is more than just a historical date — it's a chance for us to learn about our shared past, celebrate diversity, and honor those who have fought for freedom. Here's why it's important for everyone to recognize and support Juneteenth:



### 1. Understanding History

Juneteenth helps us better understand the history of slavery and its lasting impact on our country. By learning about it, we can acknowledge the pain of the past and work toward healing and reconciliation.

### 2. Honoring Black Communities

Juneteenth is an opportunity to recognize the resilience, contributions, and achievements of Black Americans. It's a celebration of culture, community, and the ongoing fight for equality.



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# diversity matters NEWSLETTER

## Juneteenth - Understanding Its Importance and Why We Celebrate It - Continued



### 3. Promoting Equality and Justice

While Juneteenth commemorates freedom, it also reminds us that the journey toward full equality is ongoing. Supporting Juneteenth is about continuing the work of creating a society where everyone — regardless of race, background, or identity — has equal opportunities and rights.

### 4. Building Empathy and Connection

Juneteenth encourages us to reflect on the experiences of others and deepen our understanding of their struggles. It helps create a more compassionate, inclusive society where people from all walks of life are treated with dignity and respect.



### 5. Creating Awareness and Action

Celebrating Juneteenth also brings awareness to the work that still needs to be done in the fight for racial justice. It serves as a call to action to keep pushing for positive change in our communities, workplaces, and institutions.

In conclusion, Juneteenth is a day of reflection, remembrance, and celebration. It's about honoring the legacy of those who fought for freedom, recognizing the progress made, and understanding the work that still needs to be done to achieve true equality. By supporting Juneteenth, we all contribute to creating a more compassionate world. Let's embrace Juneteenth as not just a day of remembrance, but as an opportunity to continue learning, growing, and acting in support of justice for all.



### Resources

- [Juneteenth Reading List](#)
- [ABA-Wide 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge ©](#)
- [Juneteenth Digital Toolkit](#)



# DIVERSITY MATTERS NEWSLETTER

## What is Pride and Why Is It Important?



**Ruby Delarosa**

Pride is a celebration of the LGBTQ+ community and the fight for equal rights, acceptance, and respect. It's a time to honor both the history of struggle and the progress made toward a more inclusive world for everyone, no matter who they love or how they identify.

Pride began after the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City, when LGBTQ+ people stood up against police mistreatment. That moment sparked the modern LGBTQ+ rights movement, which continues to push for a society where everyone can live openly and fearlessly. Today, Pride is a celebration of how far we've come and a reminder that there's still work to be done.

Pride isn't just about parties or parades — it's about making sure everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, feels seen and accepted. Pride stands for love, equality, and the idea that everyone deserves to live authentically and freely.

Pride is a call to celebrate diversity, reject discrimination, and show kindness and understanding to those who are different from us. It's a reminder that love is love, and we should support people in being true to who they are. Supporting Pride is about more than just showing up for the parade — it's about creating a more inclusive, supportive world for everyone. Here's why it matters:



### Visibility Is Important

For a long time, LGBTQ+ people were ignored or treated unfairly. Pride gives them a chance to be visible, share their stories, and show the world who they are. By supporting Pride, we help make sure everyone's voice is heard.

### It Promotes Equality

Pride is about making sure everyone gets treated fairly, no matter who they love or how they identify. It's about fighting for equal rights and breaking down the barriers that still exist.



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# DIVERSITY MATTERS NEWSLETTER

## What Is Pride and Why Is it Important? - Continued



### It Helps Push for Change

There are still many challenges to overcome, from legal protection to social acceptance. Pride helps keep these issues in the spotlight, pushing for the changes that will make the world a more just place for everyone.

### It Builds Empathy

Supporting Pride helps build understanding and compassion. It encourages us to put ourselves in other people's shoes and see the world from their perspective, which makes us all better people.



### It Creates Safe Spaces

In our workplaces, schools, and communities, everyone deserves to feel safe and respected. By supporting Pride, we're making sure LGBTQ+ people feel welcome and valued, just like anyone else.



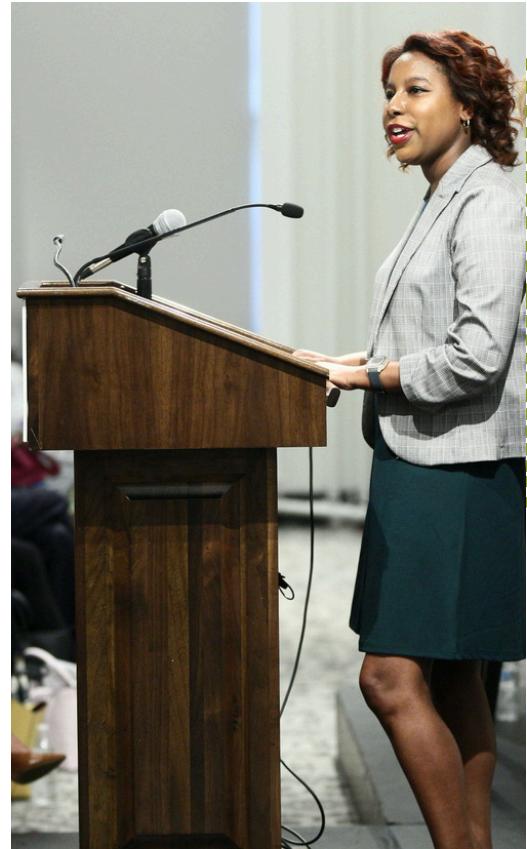
In the end, Pride is more than just an event — it's about standing up for dignity, respect, and equality for everyone. When we support Pride, we're sending a message that we stand with the LGBTQ+ community and believe in a world where all people can live without fear. It's a reminder that we should treat each other with kindness, and that we're all stronger when we embrace our differences.

So let's make sure we keep supporting Pride — not just for one month, but all year round. Let's work toward a world where everyone is free to be themselves.

# DIVERSITY MATTERS! CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to associate, Gabrielle Outlaw, for being elected to the Philadelphia Bar Association's Board of Governors.

The Philadelphia Bar Association, founded in 1802, is the oldest Association of lawyers in the United States. Its mission is to serve the profession and the public by promoting justice, professional excellence and respect for the rule of law.



Weber Gallagher is excited to announce that Gabi Outlaw has been appointed as the Co-Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee.

Gabi will co-chair with Carolyn Mirabile, who has led the committee since 2023.

Together, they will enhance efforts to recruit, retain, and advance diverse professionals, raise awareness about DEI, and host educational programs.

# DIVERSITY MATTERS

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### WEBER GALLAGHER'S DEI ACTION CHECKLIST

- Join Weber Gallagher's Diversity & Inclusion Committee and actively participate.
- Recommend a diverse attorney or staff person for employment at Weber Gallagher.
- Write an article about diversity and inclusion for Weber Gallagher's diversity newsletter, Diversity Matters!
- Attend one (1) or more conferences, programs, or CLE seminars on diversity-related topics.
- Attend one (1) or more program(s) sponsored by Weber Gallagher's Diversity Committee.
- Participate in "The Breakroom," a small group discussion fostering a safe place to share your thoughts and experiences while learning about your colleagues.
- Read an article or book about diversity and inclusion.
- Develop a mentoring relationship with an attorney, law school graduate, or law student of a diverse background.
- Mentor a high school student, college student, or paralegal interested in pursuing a career in law.
- Learn about the impact of subtle, unconscious, and implicit bias by visiting Project Implicit and take one of the surveys.

