

How Our Firm Supports Lawyers of Hispanic Heritage

By Pedro Jaime Torres-Díaz, Angela Quiles Nevarez, and Arcelia N. Magaña

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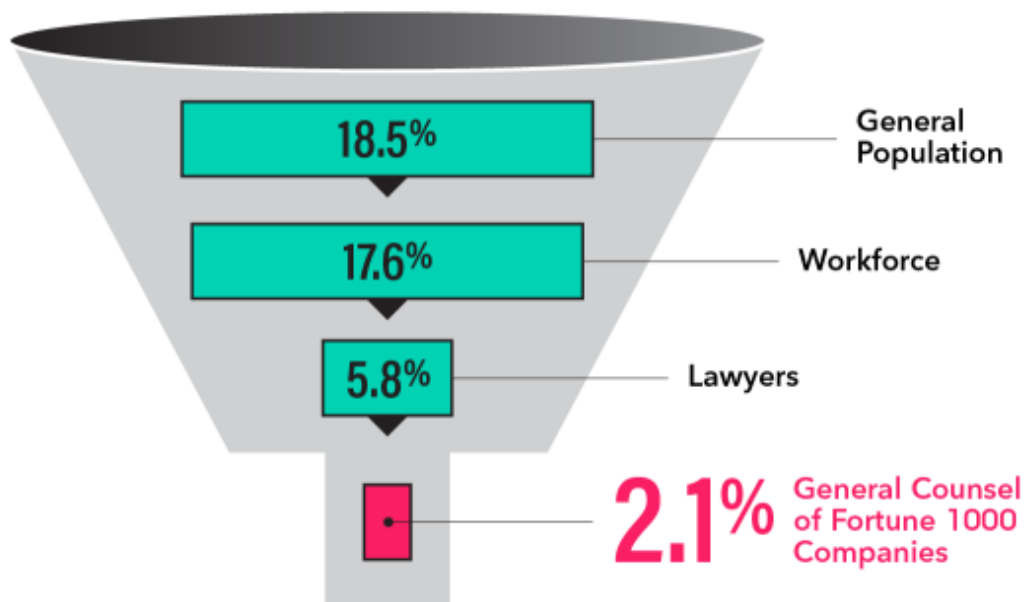
Jackson Lewis P.C. shows its support to attorneys of Hispanic heritage and its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion by sponsoring programs designed to develop and support their careers, the firm says. Attorneys Pedro J. Torres-Díaz, Angela Quiles Nevarez, and Arcelia N. Magaña are highlighted and share their stories.

Despite making up over 18% of the U.S. population, Latino, Latina, and Latinx attorneys account for just over 5% of U.S. attorneys. Simply put, this gap is too large.

The importance of diversity within the legal industry cannot be overstated. Increased representation bridges gaps in access to legal representation and encourages impartiality and a just application of the law.

Following are some of the ways that national labor and employment law firm Jackson Lewis P.C. endeavors to support its attorneys of Hispanic cultural heritage.

Latino and Hispanic Representation



Note: 2019 Data

Source: The U.S. Census Bureau, the Department of Labor, the Minority Corporate Counsel Association.

Bloomberg Law

Development and Retention: Mentorship in Action

When it comes to retention, support is key. Attorneys of color, and specifically, women attorneys of color, are leaving the profession in droves due to a lack of support. But what do we mean by “support?”

Jackson Lewis shows its support through a commitment to DEI and diverse attorney recruitment and retention by investing in diverse associations and initiatives, allowing its associates to count 50+ hours of DEI work toward the firm’s billable hour requirement, creating spaces for Latino/a/x attorneys to connect.

This includes the firm’s Hispanic Attorney Resource Group (HARG) and Jackson Lewis’s robust mentoring program that connects associates and of counsel attorneys to principals who can assist them in progressing to the next level of their careers.

The firm’s mentoring program, RISE (recruit, integrate, succeed, and excel), is a level-based mentoring system specifically tailored to associates at each career stage. RISE creates equal access to great mentoring across all offices, and connects attorneys to one another as well as to the firm’s professional development resources regardless of geographic location.

Nearly 50% of the firm’s attorneys participate in RISE, either as a mentor or as a mentee, including nearly half of those in HARG.

These programs focus on increasing the firm's diversity pipeline, connecting top talent with leaders across the firm's attorney resource groups and offices, integrating diverse attorneys into the firm, and helping them succeed.

From a practical standpoint, programs like RISE and other firm investments in DEI initiatives assist attorneys of all levels in developing a sense of belonging within their environment. These practices reinforce the idea that the workplace is investing in the growth and success of the attorney just as much as the attorney is investing their time and talent into the growth and success of their workplace.

Mentorship in Practice

These profiles of some of our attorneys of Hispanic heritage illustrate how Jackson Lewis puts mentorship into practice in its offices.

Pedro J. Torres-Díaz, Office Managing Principal (Miami)

Pedro joined the Miami office of Jackson Lewis in 2005, after practicing law in Puerto Rico (where he is originally from) for eight years. He did not know anyone and had no connections to the legal community in Miami.

From day one, Jackson Lewis was supportive in his efforts to connect and grow within the office and the community. Case in point—Pedro became the national president of the Hispanic National Bar Association in 2016 with Jackson Lewis's unwavering support, an organization committed to the advancement of Latinos and Latinas in the legal profession.

Part of what inspired Pedro to pursue this role was Jackson Lewis' own commitment to that same goal; firm leaders including Gregory Alvarez, David Jimenez, Vincent Cino, Kevin Lauri, Ed Cherof and others not only provided Pedro with opportunities for growth, but also with the tools and support that are necessary to achieve success in this profession.

Pedro used the HNBA platform to share his own experiences with others and learn from them about how to further improve his own work environment. In the end, Pedro sees mentorship as a moral obligation, to help others in the same way that others helped him in his career.

Angela Quiles Nevarez, Of Counsel (Philadelphia)

Orgullo or pride in la familia y comunidad is something that Angela's parents—like many Latino/a/x parents—instilled in her from a very young age. But that orgullo and acknowledgment of Latino contributions to this country have historically been lacking in the legal profession. So, she asked herself, "how can I make an impact?"

After joining Jackson Lewis in 2013, Angela sought out the firm's attorney resource groups to establish connections with attorneys across the country who had cultural backgrounds similar to her own. She met Pedro J. Torres-Díaz, a fellow Boricua, who had been practicing with the firm for years and had served as past-president of the Hispanic National Bar Association.

They forged an organic mentoring relationship, turning to one another for general advice and support. Having a mentor who had already navigated various facets of the practice of law and achieved success, all while seamlessly blending it with his Latino roots, has been instrumental to Angela's perspective on longevity in the legal profession.

Through her mentor relationship with Pedro and other Jackson Lewis leaders, Angela has learned that personal stories and cultural scripts only strengthen professional stories and contributions to the profession. Today, she is co-chair of the firm's HARG and strives to use her cultural script and experience in the profession to the advantage of firm clients and attorneys of color of the next generation, including her colleague and mentee Arcelia Magaña, a rising 5th year Latina attorney.

Arcelia N. Magaña, Associate (San Diego)

Arcelia credits having mentors and being a mentor as being critical to her personal and professional growth. She is a first-generation college graduate, the first in her family to go to law school, and now the first attorney in her family.

All of these firsts naturally bring a sense of pride and accomplishment, but the path toward being the first, and achieving professional success as the first, is riddled with fear of the unknown and doubt. As a first-generation Chicana, Arcelia has found that the most effective way to quash those fears and doubts is by talking to those who came before her—people who look like her or have a similar background as her—taking their pearls of wisdom, adding a few of her own, and sharing them with others.

Arcelia believes it is our responsibility, as professionals who have “made it,” to not only light the way, but to keep it lit for future generations.

Mentoring programs assist attorneys of all levels, particularly those from institutionally marginalized groups, in establishing crucial connections to assist them as they seek to advance to the next level of their careers, effectively creating a pipeline towards elevation and success.

Latino, Latina, and Latinx law students and lawyers, of all levels, must be supported within the legal profession if we intend on forging a legal system that works for all, not just the historically prioritized few.

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Arcelia N. Magaña is an associate in the San Diego office of Jackson Lewis P.C. An experienced litigator, she provides insight into best practices to develop a stable, high-functioning workforce to avoid the disruption and expense of litigation.

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