

An Ideal and an Action

An Interview with Greenberg Traurig



EDITORS' NOTE

Richard A. Rosenbaum is the Executive Chairman of Greenberg Traurig, a unified international law firm of more than 2,650 attorneys spanning 45 offices around the globe. He has long been considered a thought and change leader in the broader

legal profession. He joined the firm in 1985 as its 90th lawyer and has since been integrally involved in forming and successfully executing the strategies which have led to the firm's growth and unique culture across locations in the United States, Europe and the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia. He closely guards the firm's long-term core values while still aggressively navigating ever-changing times. Rosenbaum has always put the firm's clients and people first, understanding that a law firm leader works for them, first and foremost. He is proud of his work founding the firm's renowned and wide-ranging "Commitment to Excellence" program, which ensures that all these values remain core to the firm's daily practice and global brand for many years to come.



Shari L. Heyen is Co-Chair of Greenberg Traurig's Global Restructuring & Bankruptcy Practice and Managing Shareholder of the Houston office. Heyen has experience in complex restructuring, bankruptcy, insolvency, and complex commercial litigation matters. She has represented

numerous creditors' committees, debtors, bank groups, acquirers, and other significant constituencies in national Chapter 11 cases and workout proceedings, including complex oil, gas, and energy cases. Heyen has broad experience in the prosecution and defense of fiduciary litigation, real estate, oil and gas, health-care, receiverships, and alternative energy matters.



Chinh H. Pham is Co-Chair of Greenberg Traurig's Venture Capital & Emerging Technology Group and is a registered patent attorney. He advises clients, ranging from startups to public companies, on the creation, development, and management of patent portfolios, the acquisition and exploitation of intellectual property rights,

and identification of risks. Pham counsels clients on IP due diligence through the evaluation of client and competitor portfolios, assists startup clients with strategies for leveraging their IP portfolio, and serves as a mentor to entrepreneurs and early-stage ventures.



Diane N. Ibrahim is the Managing Shareholder of Greenberg Traurig's Delaware office. Over the course of her career, she has handled virtually every type of corporate transactional matter involving Delaware corporations, limited liability companies, limited partnerships,

and statutory trusts. Ibrahim's intimate knowledge of the Delaware General Corporation Law, Delaware's alternative entity statutes, and the intricacies of Delaware common law enable her to skillfully advise clients on various commercial transactions.



Mentioned: **Nikki Lewis Simon**, a commercial litigator with more than two decades of experience, primarily serves as the firm's Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer. In this capacity, Simon designs and guides strategic initiatives and programs to deepen firmwide diversity and inclusion efforts that

further enrich client engagements and community investments. Simon is also an active member of the Greenberg Traurig Labor & Employment Practice team comprised of diverse lawyers who concentrate in strategic DEI and employment counseling.

FIRM BRIEF Greenberg Traurig, LLP (gtlaw.com) has more than 2,650 attorneys in 45 locations in the United States, Europe and the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia. The firm is a 2022 BTI "Highly Recommended Law Firm" for superior client service and is consistently among the top firms on the Am Law Global 100 and NIJ 250. Greenberg Traurig is Mansfield Rule 5.0 Certified Plus by The Diversity Lab and is recognized for powering its U.S. offices with 100 percent renewable energy as certified by the Center for Resource Solutions Green-e® Energy as a member of the U.S. EPA's Green Partnership Program. The firm is known for its philanthropic giving, innovation, diversity, and pro bono.

Richard, will you discuss the importance of diversity as a core value at Greenberg Traurig?

Creating a workplace that is diverse and inclusive is the right thing to do for everyone at every level at every company and institution. At Greenberg Traurig, we have two key drivers that are specific to our law firm.

The first is that diversity is in our DNA. Our origin story is one of diversity out of necessity. In 1967, three attorneys in Miami faced religious discrimination. That did not stop them. They were determined to start their own firm, a new kind of firm that would rival "white shoe" New York firms, with one difference: here, everyone was welcomed – and Greenberg Traurig was born. This philosophy would go on to inform everything we have done in the 55-plus years since. At Greenberg Traurig we are proud of our long-standing, comprehensive, and award-winning diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiative.

The second driver is one of Greenberg Traurig's greatest differentiators: the way we operate. It can be summed up in two simple but powerful words: we act. We do so swiftly and decisively. While others may wait for corporate consensus, follow trends, or check boxes, we are already at work with a strategic plan. This formula of strategic, decisive action helped us grow into a global powerhouse with 2,650+ attorneys and 45 locations across the United States, Europe and the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America. Our strategic, decisive action goes beyond business and financial success. It drives the success of our DEI programs and our quest for a more just world.

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Richard, what advice would you give about how to create an effective diversity initiative?

Writer Joel Barker said, “Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.” The sentiment in Barker’s quote is integral to how we approach our DEI initiative. Our vision is to work toward creating a more just and equitable workplace and community where every individual feels valued, has a sense of belonging, is comfortable as their true self, and is provided the opportunity, voice, mentorship, training, collaboration, substantive skill development, and connections to reach their greatest potential. To do this, we must act. If you change behaviors, you can change perceptions. That’s why at Greenberg Traurig we act by putting diverse people in leadership roles, recruiting from a diverse talent pipeline, and putting together diverse teams on client matters, to name a few.

It also holds true that if you change perceptions, you can change behaviors. That’s where our sensitivity training, transparency, open communications, affinity groups, and a core culture of respect from top down and bottom up change our behaviors, our firm, the legal profession, and our community for the better.

To help ensure that our commitment to excellence extends to our DEI initiative, we are fortunate to have an internationally recognized thought leader in the field, Shareholder Nikki Lewis Simon, as our Chief DEI Officer.

Richard, how do you know your actions at Greenberg Traurig are having a real impact?

We set strategic and measurable goals that cover all aspects of inclusion and diversity.

As of December 31, 2022, almost half of our U.S.-based attorneys were diverse – women, ethnically diverse, and/or LGBTQ+. When it comes to attorneys who serve on the highest governance committees, lead offices and/or firm-wide practice groups or departments, approximately half are diverse. In 2023, 46 percent of the attorneys elevated to shareholders and of counsel were diverse.

Following are snapshots into the thinking of three Greenberg Traurig attorney leaders who are each fully committed to the future of our culture of inclusion: Shari L. Heyen, Chinh H. Pham, and Diane N. Ibrahim.

Shari, how did you overcome preconceived stereotypes to emerge as one of the Co-Chairs of Greenberg Traurig’s Global Restructuring and Bankruptcy Practice and Managing Shareholder of the Houston office?

Greenberg Traurig values leaders from different backgrounds, with different experiences, and different voices. As a woman and supporter of the LGBTQ+ community, I am grateful to be at a firm that has allowed many diverse individuals, like myself, to be at the forefront of change in the legal profession. By being your authentic self, and not an externally generated version of who you are, you are able to foster genuine relationships. These relationships in the legal field can make all the difference in your career and on your potential positive impact on others.

At Greenberg Traurig, I get the opportunity to lead teams and collaborate with diverse attorneys across locations and practices to bring innovative advice to clients in complex restructuring, bankruptcy, insolvency, and high-level commercial litigation matters. I intentionally surround myself with a strong group of diverse

individuals. During these times of economic uncertainty and geopolitical unrest, it is especially critical to have diversity of experience, logic, and thought to allow for a broader range of ideas that work for our clients in real time in an increasingly complex world.

Being in a prominent leadership position, it is important for me to recognize my responsibility to serve as a role model. It is vital for me to make myself visible, accessible, and available to engage with others and work toward providing my team with means for success.

I encourage women who want to lead to be intentional with their actions. Leaders must make sure their voices are both used and heard; to lead by example to make a difference in their organization and community for the greater good.

Chinh, your escape from Saigon was a harrowing experience for a 10-year-old. How do you feel that informed your commitment to creating a more just world?

My family and I fled Vietnam in 1975 following the fall of Saigon. We left as refugees with dreams of finding a better life and opportunity and were fortunate to have made our way to the United States. In 2003, I joined Greenberg Traurig, truly a firm of opportunity where every individual is respected and provided the tools to succeed. Today, I am Co-Chair of the Venture Capital & Emerging Technology Group at this global, powerhouse law firm. Our business departments, firm and legal practice leadership, and our attorneys collaborate at a unique level. This has been key to our ability to meet and exceed the expectations of our clients, our colleagues, and our communities. With the full backing of the firm, I am proud to serve as the first Asian American president of the Boston Bar Association.

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The Affinity Group model is one of the tools Greenberg Traurig uses to foster our firm’s culture of belonging and opportunity for all. We currently have seven groups focusing on gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, and veteran status. These groups create an engaging environment to promote success for its members through collaboration and professional and business development. An important element of these groups is the participation of allies, champions of diversity, equity, and inclusion irrespective of how they self-identify. Allies’ experiences provide an important dimension to the conversation which often results in a more robust outcome with regards to a group’s programming, recruitment, and business development. The groups also work with external professional and community organizations for greater impact. I am proud to have served for more than 10 years as a leader of the firm’s Asian Pacific American Affinity Group.

Diane, when you were named managing shareholder of Greenberg Traurig’s Delaware office, you were the first woman, and the youngest person, to do so. How does this reflect the firm’s commitment to DEI?

Affinity bias is a real challenge for many organizations. By naming me, a first-generation Egyptian American woman, as the managing shareholder of the Delaware office at a young age, Greenberg Traurig recognized the idea that the next leader of the office could be different than those who had come before. This reflects a genuine commitment to diversity and inclusion. I do a significant amount of recruiting in my role at the firm, and I always share with candidates that there is no obstacle to success here at Greenberg Traurig other than your own drive to succeed.

The firm’s platform allows me to have a visible role and mentor other women. As a mother of three young children, I understand the challenges many women attorneys face during child rearing years, and I work diligently to be an approachable resource for them. More formally, I also act as a mentor in the Good2Great (G2G) Executive Coaching Program, a diversity initiative developed by Greenberg Traurig that supports the firm’s high-potential women shareholders. In this capacity, I provide advice, introductions, and access to opportunities for growth and development to ensure that the next generation of women have the opportunity to reach their greatest potential.

Greenberg Traurig’s culture of collaboration and diversity directly benefits the firm’s clients. I work on complex cross-border matters on teams comprising talented and diverse attorneys across the United States and as far reaching as London, Milan, Berlin, Shanghai, Seoul, and Mexico City. This platform allows each of our attorneys to bring our unique experience and specific knowledge to provide broader, seamless service to our clients.

Richard, how does it enrich a law firm to have a diverse group of attorneys?

According to “Diversity Wins,” a McKinsey report, “The business case for inclusion and diversity is stronger than ever. For diverse companies, the likelihood of outperforming industry peers on profitability has increased over time...” Before DEI programs were “popular,” we knew that our culture of inclusion was one of the keys to our success. When you have teams where individuals have different backgrounds, experiences, world views, and approaches, you are

going to be able to offer more robust, creative solutions for clients and the communities they serve. Because of this, our top-tier attorneys, and teams, working collaboratively across industries, practices, and markets can provide even greater value and service to our clients.

What is the key to team success?

Team success, in work and in life, is about having character, an eye for excellence, the drive to ultimately succeed and a commitment to giving back. This is not just about the legal industry. In fact, I am reminded of these important values by my wife, Inga Rosenbaum, based in Warsaw, Poland. Inga was a fashion model when younger and prizes beauty, total commitment, and being the best. But in recent years, she found the courage to follow her true passion. She became immersed in the training, breeding, and competitive showing of our now-world class Samoyed and Cane Corso dogs. Inga aims for the best, brings passion to the dogs every day and refuses to let others tell her what she can or cannot do – now multiple international winners of best in show, best in breed, and other honors. And Inga has remembered to give back to the less fortunate, becoming heavily involved in Fundacja Cane Corso Rescue Poland (Cane Corso Rescue Poland Foundation), which helps care for and place abused or abandoned Cane Corsos, an urgent need.

Doesn’t even more need to be done?

At Greenberg Traurig, we are inspired by how our diversity story began and proud of how far we have come. We know more needs to be done. We are committed to continue making our firm, the legal profession, our communities, and the world a more just place for now and for future generations. ●

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