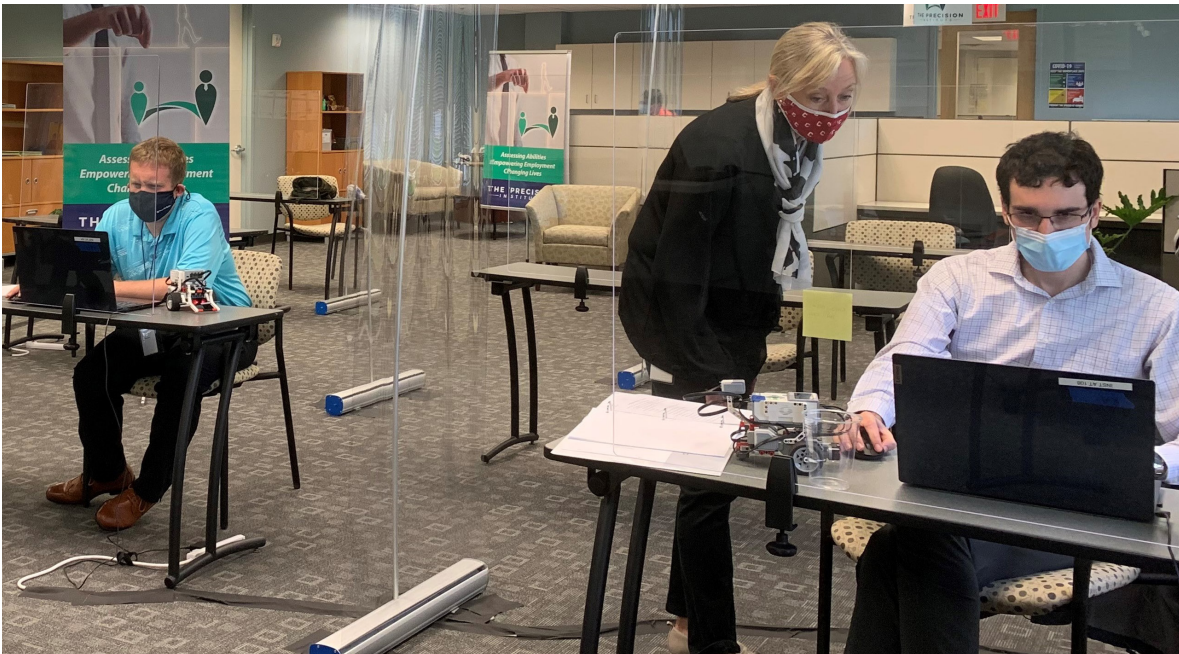




Closing the Employment Gap – Creating Career Pathways for Neurodiverse Individuals



Stradley Ronon highlights [The Precisionists, Inc.](#) and its nonprofit arm, [The Precision Institute](#), headquartered in Wilmington, Delaware, which prepares and trains neurodiverse individuals for jobs in the technology field.

Shown (left) is a Precision Institute assessment class.

Today, one in 54 people is on the autism spectrum. While these neurodiverse individuals offer various skills and abilities to businesses and communities – visual and logical thinking, evidence-based decision-making, energy and passion, curiosity, and problem-solving – 80% of Americans with autism are either unemployed or underemployed. The reason for this striking figure is not that these individuals are unqualified for employment; it is because the typical process to gain employment puts neurodiverse candidates at a disadvantage. Put simply, traditional hiring and interview practices can negatively impact neurodiverse job candidates because many of these individuals do not perform well in traditional job interviews.



Matt N. and Ernie Dianastasis at the Neurodiversity at Work event hosted by The Graham Group in Philadelphia in 2019.

Matt N. is one such neurodiverse individual who had trouble finding employment due to difficulty with, for example, forming social relationships, conveying emotions or making eye contact. "After I got my degrees, I couldn't land a job, and in four years of job searching, only had one interview

... ." As a result, Matt's many talents were not being utilized, and his skills were going unused. That is until he landed at The Precision Institute (TPI), a benefit corporation that creates jobs for individuals across a broad range of disabilities. The company is focused on working with those on the autism spectrum and disabled veterans and creating 10,000 jobs for people with disabilities by 2025.

From Concept to Inception

After leading one of the largest information technology companies in Delaware, Ernie Dianastasis, founder and CEO of TPI, piloted the idea of the program in 2016. His vision was to employ individuals who have often been overlooked by the corporate

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IN FOCUS: ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

In honor of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, Stradley Ronon hosted an external event with clients and the Stradley community, “[The Intersection of Activism & the Law – A Conversation With Simon Tam](#),” which took place on May 11 with moderators **Deborah Hong** and **Brian Seaman**. Simon Tam is an author, musician and speaker and is the founder of The Slants and [The Slants Foundation](#). He found himself thrust into the spotlight when his all-Asian American rock band, The Slants, was denied a trademark for its name because it was considered “disparaging” to Asian Americans. At this presentation, Simon Tam shared the story of how his trademark battle took him all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, how he unexpectedly became a racial justice activist and how he dedicated his life to expanding civil liberties for diverse people across the nation. Simon was joined by guitarist Joe X. Jiang, a musician and filmmaker, who serves as the vice chair at The Slants Foundation.



SIMON TAM



JOE X. JIANG



In just the past year, there have been more than 3,800 recorded incidents of racially motivated hate crimes against this community – an increase of more than 150% compared with the year before. To address the remarkable rise, Stradley Ronon hosted the third installment of our *Understanding Inclusivity* series, which was titled “Unpacking the Rise in Anti-Asian Violence.” This session was designed to foster honest conversations about the rise in recorded incidents of racially motivated hate crimes against members of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. The event took place on April 7 and was attended by 70 members of the firm, including attorneys, business professionals and firm leaders.

THE ACT OF CLAIMING AN IDENTITY CAN BE TRANSFORMATIONAL. IT CAN PROVIDE HEALING AND EMPOWERMENT.

— SIMON TAM

WHAT WE'VE DONE RECENTLY



1.



2.



3.



4.

Celebrated Black History Month by highlighting people and organizations “[Making History Today](#)” through impactful grassroots activities, community engagement and inclusivity efforts. Among those individuals and organizations spotlighted were 1. Malcolm Kenyatta, 2. Terrill Haigler, 3. Just the Beginning – A Pipeline Organization and 4. Ala Stanford, M.D.

CPR DIVERSITY PLEDGE

The firm is pleased to announce it has joined members of the legal and corporate communities to further its commitment to support the inclusion of diverse mediators and arbitrators through the signing of the International Institute for Conflict Prevention & Resolution’s (CPR) Diversity Pledge. Law firm signatories to the pledge agree to discuss the value of diversity and inclusion among those who mediate and arbitrate client disputes.

Senior counsel at Stradley Ronon and member of CPR’s National Panel of Distinguished Neutrals **Bennett G. Picker** said, “By encouraging law firms, corporations and CPR to take this action, we can help push the proverbial needle and create a pipeline of diverse neutrals, including women, persons of color, members of the LGBTQ community and disabled persons.”

STRADLEY RONON CELEBRATES PRIDE MONTH – THE EVOLUTION OF THE PRIDE FLAG

The first known Pride flag – sewn by Gilbert Baker – debuted at the June 1978 San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade. Baker was urged by Harvey Milk, an early gay activist and firebrand, to construct a flag to symbolize the value and dignity of what was then called “the gay community.”

The first iteration of the flag contained eight stripes, each a separate color of the rainbow plus hot pink. Demand for flags increased after Milk’s assassination in November 1978, and hot pink was removed due to the unavailability of fabric in that color. The following year, the San Francisco Pride parade organizers removed another stripe. The six-stripe version, with each stripe having a separate meaning, would become the historical standard of the Pride flag for the next several decades. This flag is shown in image A.

There have always been variations of the Pride flag, with each version reflecting our history while striving for increased awareness of our diverse community. For example, during the height of the AIDS epidemic, some flags were made with a black stripe to memorialize those who succumbed

to the disease. Some flags contain the stars from the U.S. flag with the six rainbow stripes in place of the 13 red and white stripes. And South African activists blended the traditional rainbow flag with the South African national flag.

In just the past four years, there have been two major changes to the flag, both of which reflect the desire of the queer community to become more inclusive. First, during Pride Month 2017, the city of Philadelphia unveiled a rainbow flag with black and brown stripes added to the traditional six to represent people of color in the queer community, whose voices and concerns were often disregarded. This flag is shown in image B.

And even more recently, the flag evolved once again to embrace trans members of the community through the inclusion of light blue, pink and white stripes. These stripes reflect the transgender Pride flag created by Monica Helms in 1999. This flag is shown in image C.

The mutability of Pride flags is a testament to the strength and diversity

of the broader queer community. We are not centralized; we have no leader; and our understanding of the world, ourselves and each other is constantly evolving. While many people recognize only the six-stripe rainbow flag because it is anchored in their own experience, the evolution of Pride flags encourages all of us to keep examining who we are, what we stand for and what work still needs to be done.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



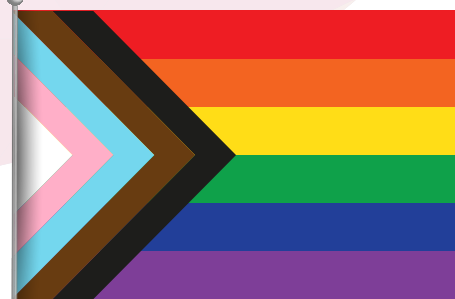
Kevin Aldridge is a paralegal in the Litigation Department. He lives in South Philly with his fiancé and their three cats.



A. The “original” Pride Flag by Gilbert Baker: red (life), orange (healing), yellow (sunlight), green (nature), blue (serenity) and purple (spirit).



B. The 2017 flag, which reflects a more inclusive vision of pride.



C. The 2019 flag, which includes the stripes representing the trans community.

AWARDS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Shareda Coleman **Selected to Serve on Six-Person Leadership Council for the Meritas Black Lawyers Forum**

Associate
Shareda Coleman

has been selected to serve on the Leadership Council for the Meritas Black Lawyers Forum, an infrastructure for Black attorneys within Meritas to create global connections, facilitate mentorship, increase visibility and form a worldwide community. As a mid-level associate and social justice advocate, Coleman is committed to amplifying the conversation surrounding racial equity in the legal community.

"The Forum provides us with a dynamic platform to enhance mentorship and professional development opportunities for Black lawyers," Coleman explains. "I'm honored to help lead this initiative not only to provide Black lawyers with greater visibility but also to provide a safe space to discuss, advocate and address issues of importance to our community on a global scale."



Aliza S. Dominey **Joins the 100 Women in Finance Washington, DC, Committee**

Associate **Aliza S. Dominey**

has been selected to the 100 Women in Finance Washington, DC, Education Committee. Through her role, Dominey helps plan peer

engagement, philanthropy and education events to further the progress of women who have chosen finance as a career and enables their positive influence over pre-career young women.

100 Women in Finance's nearly 20,000 registered members strengthen the global finance industry by empowering women to achieve their professional potential at each career stage.



Jamie M. Gershkow **Participates in 'Ring the Bell for Gender Equality' Ceremony at Nasdaq**

Partner **Jamie M. Gershkow**

participated in the seventh annual "Ring the Bell for Gender Equality" initiative. The bell-ringing ceremonies are a partnership among U.N. Women, Women in ETFs, International Finance Corporation, Sustainable Stock Exchanges Initiative, U.N. Global Compact and the World Federation of Exchanges, the aim of which is to bring attention to the pivotal role that the private sector can play in advancing gender equality and to raise awareness about the business case for women's economic empowerment.

Gershkow is co-head of events and education of Women in ETFs New York, a nonprofit organization that seeks to bring together people to champion goals of diversity, equality and inclusion in the exchange-traded funds' industry.

2021 DIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



Stradley is pleased to announce that **Zunara Ishtaiq** is the recipient of its 2021 Diversity Fellowship.

Zunara is a second-year law student at Rutgers Law School and hopes to focus on corporate and securities law because, in her own words, "both of these practice areas play a central role in our country's economy and society."

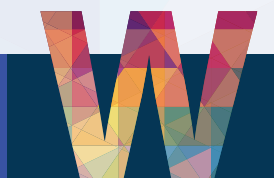
As the diversity fellow, Zunara will have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience working both at the firm and in-house by splitting her summer between Stradley Ronon and one of the firm's most valued clients, **Aberdeen Standard Investments**. In addition to gaining practical experience, Zunara receives mentorship and financial support in the form of a \$10,000 scholarship.

PHILADELPHIA BUSINESS JOURNAL

Stradley Ronon Attorneys Lead D&I in the Financial Industry Discussion With the *Philadelphia Business Journal*

Matthew R. DiClemente, co-chair of the firm's investment management group, and **Brian Seaman**, chief diversity officer and counsel at the firm, served as panelists at the *Philadelphia Business Journal* event "Diversity and Inclusion in Philadelphia's Financial Industry" on Feb. 11. DiClemente and Seaman discussed how the financial services industry can move toward a more diverse and inclusive future. Read the full piece [here](#).

STRADLEY RONON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP





Dean V. Krishna, a partner and member of the firm's tax group, shares advice for students seeking a career in law, his recent career accomplishment (joining the firm's partnership in January 2021) and the area of practice he looks forward to developing. Watch both videos [here](#) and [here](#).

"One of the areas of practice I have enjoyed developing has been our investment management M&A practice. Investment management is part of the DNA of Stradley, and to combine that with our M&A practice, to help founders and institutions do M&A deals in a way that few, if any, other firms are able to do, has been tremendously rewarding."

Closing the Employment Gap

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community – simply because their skill sets didn't shine through in a typical interview process. The program catapulted into reality when Jack Markell, former governor of Delaware and former head of the National Governors Association, selected "employment of people with disabilities for a better bottom line" as the No. 1 issue all governors across the U.S. would focus on for the 2012-13 term.

As part of that effort, Markell called on all 50 governors to do a better job of increasing job opportunities for people with disabilities, stating that "employing people with disabilities is not about charity, but it's about what's in the business's best interest."

Dianastasis worked alongside Markell and recruited the CEO of Specialisterne, Thorkil Sonne, to join the effort. Sonne, an expert from Denmark, developed an approach to find, assess and train people on the autism spectrum in IT jobs. After piloting these innovative concepts, Dianastasis quickly created 40 positions in a year, including roles in software development, data management, documentation and digitization, and quality control.

The Stradley Connection

Stradley Ronon has a long-standing tradition of serving not only our clients but also the communities in which we work and live. Upon learning about

TPI, the firm immediately offered its assistance through Chairman Emeritus **William Sasso** to help navigate the legal processes of creating TPI's nonprofit arm, The Precision Institute. The institute assesses and trains individuals impacted by autism and other developmental disabilities and prepares them to enter the workforce in technology and business services positions throughout the U.S. The institute's signature Assessment &



Training Program, which serves as a multiweek "job interview," includes an in-depth three- or four-week assessment and training program that teaches valuable technical skills and workplace readiness skills. In addition, the institute also works closely with its client partners to define the project work and deliverables to ensure that associates and teams will be successful. Most importantly, the institute looks beyond the autism diagnosis and developmental disability to identify each candidate's motivation and unique attributes. And its success is

obvious – since the creation of **The Precision Institute, 80% of its job candidates have received offers from its business partner, TPI, and the retention rate after one year of employment is 90%.**

Finding Purpose Today

The power of work has transformed lives in our local communities and across the country. TPI has employed 160 people since launching in 2016. **"The Precision Institute embraces your differences and sees them as assets. They take into consideration the whole you, not just what is on paper or how you appear at face value. They even find talents you didn't know you had,"** said Amy L., one of The Precision Institute's success stories and employees.

Creating job opportunities for our neurodiverse community has given many individuals hope, independence and power in their daily lives. TPI's business model for disability employment and its persistence in changing the workplace landscape with the goal of employing 10,000 people is a mission everyone at Stradley Ronon can get behind. To learn more about TPI and The Precision Institute, please visit theprecisionists.com and theprecision.institute.



For more information on Stradley Ronon's diversity and inclusion efforts, please contact [Brian Seaman](mailto:bseaman@stradley.com) at bseaman@stradley.com or 215.564.8171 or visit www.stradley.com/diversity.

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