



2018 The Disability Rights Bar Association's Biennial West Coast Civil Rights Conference Speakers Bios

Michael Allen - Relman, Dane & Colfax PLLC

Closing Panel: Housing: Resisting the Assault on Desegregation under the Fair Housing Act [3:00 - 4:30]

Michael Allen is a partner at Relman, Dane & Colfax practicing primarily in the area of civil rights litigation. He represents individuals and organizations in cases and matters under the Fair Housing Act and related civil rights laws. A significant part of his practice is focused on the obligation to "affirmatively further fair housing," and he has brought successful cases under the False Claims Act and by way of HUD administrative complaints to enforce that obligation. He also leads the firm's disability rights practice. He has also written and lectured widely and appeared in electronic and print media articulating the firm's work in these areas.

Prior to joining Relman, Dane & Colfax, Mr. Allen was Senior Staff Attorney at the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law from 1995 to 2006, where he focused on civil rights policy development and litigation involving people with psychiatric disabilities. Mr. Allen previously was an attorney with Legal Services of Northern Virginia from 1985 to 1995, with a focus on representing low-income clients in housing litigation and policy advocacy.

Chancela Al-Mansour - Executive Director, Southern California Housing Rights Center

Closing Panel: Housing: Resisting the Assault on Desegregation under the Fair Housing Act [3:00 - 4:30]

Chancela Al-Mansour has been the Executive Director of one of the largest fair housing advocacy agencies in the country, the Housing Rights Center, since 2010. At the Housing Rights Center, she oversees the agency's 65 cases, on average, filed annually in federal court or referred to the state or federal administrative agencies and the agency's numerous contracts with federal, state and local governments to do their federally required fair housing compliance. Chancela worked at Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County for 16 years as a staff attorney and Directing Attorney of the housing and consumer law unit and at the Western Center on Law and Poverty on a two year fellowship that focused on fair housing advocacy.

Chancela serves on the board of the Community Reinvestment Coalition and is an active member of the National Fair Housing Alliance and Black Women Lawyers of Los Angeles. She is a graduate of Vassar College and U.C. Davis School of Law.

Alexis Alvarez - Legal Aid at Work

Plenary Panel Education: Dealing with OCR's diminished civil rights enforcement [8:45 - 10:15]

Alexis Alvarez is a staff attorney at Legal Aid at Work where she advises and represents people with disabilities facing discrimination in employment and unequal access to government programs and services. Before joining Legal Aid at Work's Disability Rights Program, she was a staff attorney with the Disability Rights Legal Center's Cancer Legal Resource Center in Los Angeles, where she helped people tackle legal issues related to cancer. Alexis clerked for Judges Robert L. Hess and Barbara M. Meiers of Los Angeles Superior Court and Judge Gilbert M. Román of the Colorado Court of Appeals. She is a founding member of the National Coalition for Latinxs with Disabilities. Alexis received her J.D. in 2011 from the UC Davis School of Law and her B.S. with honors in 2007 from Colorado State University. During law school, Alexis was a senior articles editor for the UC Davis Law Review and served on the board of the La Raza Law Student Association.

Peter Blanck - University Professor and Chairman, Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University

ABA/BBJ National Study of Lawyers with Disabilities and Who Identify as LGBT+ [12:00 - 1:15]

Workshop B: Diversifying your Law Practice / Rights Movement [1:15 - 2:45]

Peter Blanck is University Professor at Syracuse University, which is the highest faculty rank granted to eight prior individuals in the history of the University. He is Chairman of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University.

Blanck holds appointments at the Syracuse University Colleges of Law, and Arts and Sciences, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics, School of Education, and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. Prior to his appointment at Syracuse, Blanck was Kierscht Professor of Law and director of the Law, Health Policy, and Disability Center at the University of Iowa. Blanck is Honorary Professor, Centre for Disability Law & Policy, at the National University of Ireland, Galway. Blanck received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Rochester, a Juris Doctorate from Stanford University, where he was President of the Stanford Law Review, and a Ph.D. in Social Psychology from Harvard University.

Blanck has written articles and books on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related laws, and received grants to study disability law and policy. Blanck and Robin Malloy are editors of the Cambridge University Press series Disability Law and Policy.

Blanck is Chairman of the Global Universal Design Commission (GUDC), and President of Raising the Floor (RtF) USA. He is a former member of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, a former trustee of YAI/National Institute for People with Disabilities Network, a former Senior Fellow of the Annenberg Washington Program, a former Fellow at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School, and has been a Mary Switzer Scholar. Prior to teaching, Blanck practiced law at the Washington D.C. firm Covington & Burling, and served as law clerk to the late Honorable Carl McGowan of the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.

Joan Bullock - Dean of the Thomas Jefferson University School of Law

Workshop B: Diversifying your Law Practice / Rights Movement [1:15 - 2:45]

Joan Bullock is the President and Dean of the Thomas Jefferson School of Law. Previously, she served as a senior founding faculty member and the Associate Dean for Teaching and Faculty Development and acting Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the Florida A&M University College of Law.

Joan is a Michigan lawyer and CPA who has practiced before the United States Tax Court and has assisted many start-up enterprises with outsourced general counsel and CFO services and law firms with business advisory services.

Joan is a fellow of the American Bar Foundation and is active in the American Bar Association (ABA). She is a past chair of the ABA Law Practice Division and is currently serving on the Women Rainmakers and Diversity and Inclusion Committees. She is also a representative of the Law Practice Division to the ABA House of Delegates. Additionally, Joan is a member of the Council of the ABA Section of Science and Technology Law and serves as vice-chair of its Membership and Development Committee. Joan previously served as chair of the Goal III Subcommittee-Pathway to the Profession for the ABA Council for Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Educational Pipeline.

Joan is the author of *How to Achieve Success After the Bar: A Step-by-Step Action Plan*. Written as a workbook for recent law graduates interested in starting their own practice, this publication takes the graduate/new attorney through daily exercises over a period of 8 weeks, facilitating the transition from the classroom to ownership of a viable legal practice. She also wrote the chapter, “The Importance of Diversity and Inclusion for Attorney Wellness” in the recently published book, *Be the Best Lawyer You Can Be: A Lawyer’s Guide to Physical, Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellness: Staying Physically, Mentally, Emotionally and Spiritually Healthy*. Both are published by the ABA Law Practice Division.

Lawrence Carter-Long- Director of Communications for the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund

Workshop B: Controlling the Narrative: Disability and Cultural Identity in the Media [1:15 - 2:45]

Lawrence Carter-Long is the Director of Communications for the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund, where he spearheads DREDF's Disability & Media Alliance Project. Mr. Carter-Long was previously a Public Affairs Specialist for the National Council on Disability—the independent federal agency behind the Americans with Disabilities Act. A lifelong activist, as an adult he has been a modern dancer, radio show host and producer, and was the curator/co-host of groundbreaking festival “THE

PROJECTED IMAGE: A HISTORY OF DISABILITY ON FILM” on Turner Classic Movies reaching 87 million people. Mr. Carter-Long’s advocacy has been awarded by the likes of former NYC Mayor Mike Bloomberg and the American Association of People with Disabilities. In his communications work, Mr. Carter-Long has both set-up media coverage of numerous disability issues in, and been interviewed by, respected outlets like USA TODAY, ASSOCIATED PRESS, the NEW YORK TIMES, THE DAILY SHOW, the BBC and CNN among other notable news sources. He’s even given DEAR ABBY advice about disability and dating.

Jeralyn Cave - Senior Communications Associate at the Advancement Project

Workshop B: Controlling the Narrative: Disability and Cultural Identity in the Media [1:15 - 2:45]

Jeralyn Cave is a Senior Communications Associate with Advancement Project’s national office where she leads communications for the organization’s Opportunity to Learn and Quality Education projects, focused on dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline and combating school privatization. In this role, Jeralyn develops communications strategies with the organization’s education justice partners and trains youth and adults on messaging, press and media engagement and crisis communications. Cave additionally works with racial justice movement partners to combat criminalizing narratives and media coverage of Black and Brown youth. As a result of her leadership, Advancement Project and their partners have been featured on CNN, MSNBC, POLITICO, NPR, U.S. News & World Report and The Nation. Jeralyn is an MPA graduate of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.

Trevor Finneman - Partner at Almazan | Finneman

Trevor Finneman is a partner at Almazan | Finneman, where he litigates a broad range of state and federal cases. Trevor has successfully litigated cases involving employment discrimination, disability discrimination, educational rights, and personal injury throughout California. In his disability discrimination practice, Trevor primarily represents Deaf and hard-of-hearing plaintiffs who have experienced discrimination in a variety of contexts, including work, school, and in prison.

Trevor earned his law degree from the UCLA School of Law. Prior to law school, Trevor earned B.A. degrees in Political Science and Religious Studies with highest honors and distinction in general scholarship from UC Berkeley.

Amanda Goad- Audrey Irmes Director of the LGBTQ, Gender & Reproductive Justice Project, ACLU of Southern California

Workshop A: Navigating the Tension between Free Speech, Free Exercise of Religion and Civil Rights [10:30 - 12:00]

Amanda Goad is the Audrey Irmes director of the LGBTQ, Gender & Reproductive Justice Project at the ACLU of Southern California. She fights for the rights and civil liberties of LGBTQ people through litigation and policy advocacy. She was the lead attorney representing the plaintiffs in the Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission case during its early rounds.

Amanda was previously senior staff attorney at ACLU SoCal and a staff attorney in the LGBT & HIV Project of the National ACLU, where she contributed to numerous litigation victories including Henderson v. Thomas (desegregation of prisoners living with HIV in Alabama), Rummell v. Kitzhaber (marriage equality for same-sex couples in Oregon), and Bassett v. Snyder (domestic partner benefits for Michigan public employees), as well as to the advancement of nondiscrimination laws and other LGBTQ-affirming policies at the local, state, and federal levels, and to community education projects like the publication Transgender People and the Law.

Amanda also previously served as Director of Litigation at Inner City Law Center in Los Angeles, as Senior Counsel in the New York City Law Department, and as Legal Coordinator for a group providing pro bono name change assistance to transgender New Yorkers. In 2015, Amanda was named one of the 40 Best LGBT Lawyers under the age of 40 by the National LGBT Bar Association.

Amanda is an alum of Harvard Law School, Rice University, and Teach for America. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network.

Kara Janssen - Attorney at Rosen Bien Galvan & Grunfeld LLP

Workshop A: School to Prison Pipeline [10:30 - 12:00]

Kara J. Janssen is an associate at Rosen Bien Galvan & Grunfeld LLP. She works on complex litigation and prelitigation matters in federal and state court, including class action litigation and individual representation on behalf of people with disabilities. Prior to joining RBGG, Ms. Janssen worked as a Staff Attorney at Disability Rights Legal Center, a national non-profit legal center based in Los Angeles, and at Disability Rights Advocates, a non-profit legal center with offices in Berkeley and New York City. Ms. Janssen received her J.D. from New York University School of Law, where she was a Root-Tilden-Kern scholar, and a B.A., magna cum laude, from University of Arizona.

Daniel J. Losen - Director of the Center for Civil Rights Remedies, an initiative at the Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles (CRP) at UCLA

Plenary Panel Education: Dealing with OCR's diminished civil rights enforcement [8:45 - 10:15]

Workshop A: School to Prison Pipeline [10:30 - 12:00]

Daniel J. Losen is director of the Center for Civil Rights Remedies, an initiative at the Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles (CRP) at UCLA. He has worked at the Civil Rights Project since 1999, when it was affiliated with Harvard Law School, where he was a lecturer on law. Losen's work concerns the impact of law and policy on children of color and language minority students including: the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act with a focus on promoting diversity, access to effective teachers, and improving graduation rate accountability; the IDEA and racial inequity in special education; school discipline and revealing and redressing the "School-to- Prison Pipeline;" and protecting the rights of English learners to equal educational opportunity. On these and related topics he conducts law and policy research; publishes books, reports, and articles and works closely with federal and state legislators to inform legislative initiatives. Both for The Civil Rights Project, and independently, he provides guidance to policymakers, educators and advocates at the state and district level. Before becoming a lawyer, Mr. Losen taught in public schools for ten years, including work as a school founder of an alternative public school.

Michael Nunez - Attorney at Rosen Bien Galvan & Grunfeld, LLP

Workshop A: Navigating the Tension between Free Speech, Free Exercise of Religion and Civil Rights [10:30 - 12:00]

Michael Nunez is an associate at Rosen Bien Galvan & Grunfeld, LLP. He works on complex litigation and prelitigation matters, including class actions, with a particular focus on ensuring that people with disabilities obtain equal access to government services, technology, transportation, and public accommodations. Mr. Nunez also has experience representing clients in employment discrimination and white collar criminal defense matters.

Mr. Nunez is a graduate of Stanford Law School and earned his B.A. at Stanford University. Prior to joining RBGG, he was a Staff Attorney at Disability Rights Advocates, a national non-profit impact litigation center.

Mr. Nunez received a California Lawyer of the Year (“CLAY”) Award in 2018, and was named a Northern California Rising Star by Super Lawyers in 2016 and 2017. Mr. Nunez is a member of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California General Order 56 Advisory Committee. He is also a member of the Board of Directors for the Light House for the Blind and Visually Impaired in San Francisco.

Mr. Nunez was also a member of the RBGG team that submitted an amicus brief in the *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* on behalf of former U.S. Representative Tony Coelho, a principal author of the ADA, and a coalition of ten disability rights organizations.

Robin M. Pearson- Pearson & Schachter, Professional Law Corporation

Workshop B: Diversifying your Law Practice / Rights Movement [1:15 - 2:45]

Robin Pearson is a founder and an owner of Pearson & Schachter. She is an experienced trial lawyer effectively litigating cases involving a broad range of commercial matters including contracts, unfair business practices, real estate, insurance, employment, professional liability, construction disputes and creditors rights in federal bankruptcy. She is also an accomplished negotiator with extensive mediation experience.

Before founding Pearson & Schachter, Robin was with the firm of Miller Starr Regalia. She has authored articles on real estate, employment and insurance issues. Robin served as President of the Contra Costa County Bar Association (CCCBA) and Chaired the CCCBA Diversity Committee from 2002 - 2017. She served as a member of the Board for Family Support Services of the Bay Area, currently serves on the Board of the

National Kidney Foundation, and is a member of the Board of CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children). Ms. Pearson is a Past-President of Black Women Lawyers of Northern California and is the immediate past Chair of the State Bar Council on Access & Fairness.

Ms. Pearson received her BA from the University of Virginia and her JD from Boston College Law School.

Jennifer Pizer- Law and Policy Director, Lambda Legal

Workshop A: Navigating the Tension between Free Speech, Free Exercise of Religion and Civil Rights [10:30 - 12:00]

Jennifer Pizer is the Law and Policy Director for Lambda Legal, the oldest and largest national legal organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and people living with HIV. Since joining Lambda Legal's staff in 1996, Pizer has been a leading voice for ending marriage discrimination against lesbian and gay couples, for stopping anti-LGBT discrimination in employment, health care, and education, and against the misuse of religion to discriminate. In addition to litigating impact cases, she develops legislation, advises policymakers, and works with community advocates to advance family law and nondiscrimination protections, and to oppose overbroad religious exemptions.

Pizer has served as an adjunct professor of law at USC School of Law, Loyola Law School and Whittier Law School. Before joining Lambda Legal, she litigated intellectual property and complex business cases with a leading San Francisco firm, was legal director of the National Abortion Rights Action League, and clerked for Hon. Ann Aldrich of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio. She is a graduate of NYU School of Law and Harvard College.

Sylvia Torres-Guillen - Director of Education Equity of ACLU Southern California

Plenary Panel Education: Dealing with OCR's diminished civil rights enforcement [8:45 - 10:15]

Sylvia Torres-Guillén is the ACLU of California's Director of Education Equity, leading the ACLU's statewide focus on educational equity and students' rights. She manages a statewide team, leading, creating, and implementing a vision to promote civil liberties,

civil rights, and racial, economic, and equal justice in education in California through legislation, litigation, and advocacy. Sylvia is dedicated to protecting the constitutional rights of all children and students to ensure an equal, equitable, and excellent educational opportunity for all, focusing on vulnerable students, including students of color, LGBTQ youth, immigrant students, and low income students. She is lead counsel on ACLU's education equity litigation, including lead counsel for *Community Coalition v. Los Angeles Unified School District*, a lawsuit seeking to compel LAUSD to provide the proper amount of funding and services to high-need students. The matter resulted in a settlement to provide over \$150 million dollars to 50 of LAUSD's highest need schools.

Michelle Uzeta - Law Office of Michelle Uzeta

ABA/BBJ National Study of Lawyers with Disabilities and Who Identify as LGBT+
[12:00 - 1:15]

Workshop B: Diversifying your Law Practice / Rights Movement [1:15 - 2:45]

Closing Panel: Housing: Resisting the Assault on Desegregation under the Fair Housing Act [3:00 - 4:30]

Michelle Uzeta is a civil rights attorney who has specialized in disability rights and fair housing litigation since 1993. Before starting a solo litigation practice in 2013 Michelle served as the Legal Director of the Disability Rights Program at the Loyola Public Interest Law Center, the Litigation Director at the Southern California Housing Rights Center and an associate managing attorney at Protection and Advocacy, Inc. (now Disability Rights California), participating in and overseeing individual and class action litigation throughout California. Michelle is licensed in both Hawaii and California and is rated a Southern California Super Lawyer and Southern California Top Woman Lawyer in the category of Civil Rights.

Michelle is a graduate of Stanford University and earned her Juris Doctorate and Certification in Public Interest Law at the University of California, Davis. She is a sitting Board Member of the Disability Rights Bar Association, and also serves on the Litigation Committee of the Civil Rights Education and Enforcement Center.

Ian Watlington- Disability Advocacy Specialist, National Disability Rights Network

Workshop B: Controlling the Narrative: Disability and Cultural Identity in the Media [1:15 - 2:45]

Ian Watlington is a nationally recognized disability rights advocate and public speaker. In addition to his work at the National Disability Rights Network, where he trains the nation's Protection and Advocacy System in the areas of self advocacy, information and referral, education, and outreach, Ian has appeared on CBS, NBC, NPR, and Canadian Public Radio. He has created and conducted trainings for the Transportation Security Administration, teaching disability etiquette and awareness in order to better meet the needs of travelers with disabilities and he speaks annually to students at George Washington University Medical School on the intersection of disability and sexuality.

Candis Watson Bowles - Managing Attorney - Youth Practice Group, Disability Rights California

Workshop A: School to Prison Pipeline [10:30 - 12:00]

Candis Watson Bowles oversees the Youth Practice Group at Disability Rights California. Her team of attorneys represent students who have been denied special education supports and services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and equal educational opportunities under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Since Ms. Bowles joined DRC in 2008, she has participated in a variety of advocacy efforts that have improved the lives of children. Her notable cases include Sam Doe et al v. Pasadena Unified School District, a case in which plaintiffs sought to end segregation of students with behavior related disabilities. She was also counsel in A.C. v. Schwarzenegger, a case against the State of California, local and state defendants for failing to provide educationally-related mental health services to students. Ms. Bowles and her practice group also represent youth in a number of systemic advocacy matters aimed at reforming juvenile facilities, court schools, county offices of education and local education agencies that fail to provide integrated mental health, behavioral and trauma-informed services for youth involved in the juvenile justice and dependency systems. Ms. Bowles also works on policy and advocacy to end bullying, restraint and seclusion and segregation of students with disability related behaviors.

Ms. Bowles is a graduate of the University of California Berkeley where she majored in East Asian Languages - Japanese Studies. She attended law school at the University of Southern California.