



Jonice Gray Tucker
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WHF Member Spotlight – January 2019
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Hometown

I am a native of Washington, D.C.

Fun Fact

I was born on Friday, May 9 and was named for my grandfather John. Ten years ago, my daughter, Jillian, was born on Friday, May 9. She is named for both of my grandparents, John and Lillian. As an added bonus, our birthday often falls on Mother's Day. Jillian takes every opportunity to remind me that she is the best gift I ever could have received. And, she's right!

Walk me through your journey in the financial services industry and how your career has evolved to your current position.

I went to college on a merit-based biomedical scholarship. To the shock (and maybe even dismay) of many, I then decided to go to law school instead of medical school. In September 2001, I joined the litigation group at Skadden in Washington, D.C. after completing a federal clerkship. One of the first cases to which I was assigned was an FTC enforcement action against a major U.S. bank that involved a complex set of consumer protection issues. The next several years proved to be fascinating as major enforcement actions by the FTC were reshaping the consumer protection landscape for financial services companies.

During my years at Skadden, I worked with many bank and non-bank financial institutions on investigation, litigation, and compliance matters. I liked what I was doing and, before I knew it, I had developed a specialty that I had not really planned.

In 2009, I took a leap of faith and departed with other colleagues to become a founding partner at Buckley Sandler. We were at the height of the financial crisis and, as a result, were helping our clients through an array of challenges never before confronted.

To be sure, leaving Skadden at that time was among the riskiest (and scary) professional decisions I have ever made. I had invested a lot in my career at Skadden, and Skadden, in turn, had invested a great deal in me. In addition, on a personal level, I had an infant and a toddler at home. Departing to form another law firm was not in the plan, and I only had about 48 hours to decide what I was going to do.

Well, I accepted the challenge and it has been an adventure indeed! Over the past 10 years, through the collective efforts of our partners and colleagues, the firm has grown from 40 lawyers to approximately 150 lawyers in five U.S. offices and in London. We routinely represent the nation's most prominent bank and non-bank financial institutions as well as innovative, emerging companies such as fintechs. In the process, I've been able to work on cutting-edge issues, including many of the once-in-a-generation issues that our industry has faced in recent years.

Apart from client work, my broader activities within the industry also have been instrumental in shaping my career. I have become a frequent speaker and author on topics impacting the financial industry, which has significantly broadened my network and given me a chance to build relationships with an array of other lawyers in the industry.

And, in a circumstance that I never would have imagined, I became the Chair of the American Bar Association's Banking Law Committee in 2017. The committee is among the most active in the ABA's Business Law Section and has more than 2,000 members. To my knowledge, I am the youngest person to ever hold this position, which is a tremendous honor.

What do you love most about what you do?

Much of my practice focuses on representing clients in high-stakes, confidential government supervisory matters, investigations, and enforcement actions, particularly those involving the Department of Justice, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Federal Trade Commission, banking regulators, and state attorneys general. While the work can be stressful for everyone involved, it is also extremely rewarding to support companies, and their leadership, in such situations.

I have typically achieved greatest success when the general public has no idea that I have ever been involved in a particular case because there was a confidential resolution, or better yet, the case was closed altogether. There is hardly a better feeling than being able to call a client to report that an agency has found the Company's position persuasive and has decided to close an investigation without taking further action.

To be sure, successful outcomes require hard work, advocacy, and creative problem-solving strategies, but there is also an interpersonal element that is extremely important. You are often working with companies during their most challenging of times when tensions are running very high, so in many cases you aren't just a lawyer. You are also trusted advisor, therapist, and, if you're lucky, now a life-long friend.

Hobby

I wish I had more time for hobbies, but, alas, there are only 24 hours in a day! With that said, as a family, we like to travel and will take a trip at every opportunity. We started traveling with our kids when they were very young, and, over the years, we have been

fortunate to be able to take them to more than 25 countries. Along the way, we've learned about other traditions and cultures, seen some amazing places, and had more than a few adventures that were like episodes of the "Amazing Race"!

Please describe your involvement with WHF.

I have been a member for at least 10 years. Over the years, I have enjoyed attending various programs offered by WHF and have even had the opportunity to speak on panels.

What have you gained from being a member?

WHF provides unique value, and I wish that I had the time to be more involved than I am. Among other things, WHF's programs provide timely information on the most important issues facing our industry, and often are delivered in a forum that provides the opportunity for meaningful, substantive dialogue. As an added bonus, that forum also provides a gateway for building relationships with other women in the industry!

How do you make the best use of your day? (think techniques to enhance productivity, time management, time out, meditation/prayer, etc.)

In jobs that are as all-consuming as those that we do, it is easy to just get overwhelmed. In my opinion, it is very important to make time in each day to do something that brings you balance because it facilitates the ability to be the best version of you in your personal and professional life. I often find that equilibrium through exercise. I run or cycle almost every day. And, although I said I'd never become a SoulCycle junkie, you can find me there two or three times a week for its dose of intense spin plus positive affirmation.

Who or what inspires you?

I am inspired by ordinary people who do extraordinary things, particularly those who have beaten the odds. By way of example, I serve on the Advisory Board of the Ron Brown Scholar program. The organization provides college scholarships and mentoring to African American young people with extraordinary promise. Many of these young people have overcome the most challenging of circumstances – extreme poverty, physical disability, absentee parents, neglect, and sometimes all of these things. Despite odds stacked against them, they emerged as leaders inside and outside of the classroom, with most attending the top colleges in the nation and giving back to their communities, among other accomplishments. When I think about inspiration, I cannot think of better examples.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

A long time ago, a female colleague told me that I could do all things, but I may not be able to do them at the same time. This was a liberating piece of advice that remains top of mind for me because I am involved in many professional activities outside of client work. I try to focus on doing the very best job on what I am doing at the time, and I remind myself that there will be another stage or phase when I will have the opportunity to take on other challenges.