



Diversity & Inclusion Newsletter

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A Conversation with Katrina H. Welch, In-House Tax Director

Interviewer: Sahel Assar, Esq., Chair of the IFA Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Featured Speaker: Katrina H. Welch, Tax Executives Institute (TEI) Board Member and Former International President

- Gordon Food Service North America Director of Tax,
- Head of International and Global Transfer Pricing group at EcoLab,
- Vice President and Tax Director of Texas Instruments.

Ms. Welch serves on the Large Business and International Division subgroup of the IRS Advisory Council and served as International President of the Tax Executives Institute (TEI) for in-house tax professionals.



Q: What does Diversity & Inclusion mean to you, and why is it so important?

A: I am an inclusive person by nature. I love tax, but even more than being a tax person, I'm a people person first. I don't want to work with 20-30 Katrina's, I might as well stay home with myself in a mirror. Difference is interesting, fascinating to me. It's how I operate.

When it comes to different under-represented groups, there's also a sense of fairness and sensitivity to different employees having different needs. It's equity versus equality.

I always try to learn about the environment I'm in and how I can be an instrument for change. How can I influence? How can I help spread information? I led the global tax function at Texas Instruments for fifteen years, and when I was there, diversity and inclusion was, and is, a very high priority. We had a finance and operations diversity group, which I led for seven years. It was about looking for opportunities and influencing where you live.

Q: What challenges did you encounter early in your career and how have things changed?

A: I was a woman when things were less progressive.

As a young lawyer, people said things like "little lady," and, at one of my early jobs, when I had my first child, they assumed I was not going to be taking any leave. I wasn't always given the same opportunities and was sometimes treated differently. Maybe it was out of kindness, but you want to say "let me have the tough assignment!"

Today, I feel like the tax profession as a whole and the lawyers, companies, and firms are more sensitive and are doing more for underrepresented groups. That said, once we get to some of the leadership roles in tax, then maybe it's not so equal.

Q: How do we make tax departments more diverse?

A: So, for TEI, it was about increasing awareness, starting with the pipeline. TEI is for people



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that are members of in-house tax departments, so you're trying to increase diversity within that pool.

It's also about being intentional with every opportunity. If we have a seminar, I don't need four other fifty-year-old women from Texas. I want different backgrounds, representing different groups. It's more interesting, it's a more rich exchange of ideas, and it makes people feel like, "Okay, I can come there, because there's someone that looks like me," "I feel comfortable."

It's the same thing when we're giving opportunities to our members for leadership or volunteer roles. Try not to just pick your friend or the person that has the same background as you. Try to mix it up.

Q: How can leaders in tax departments support and develop diversity and inclusion within their groups?

A: It's never too early to start. There's all kinds of mentor programs certain firms or certain schools are doing. Even at the high school level. We need to be excited about tax, tax is sexy!

If we think it's interesting, we need to show that. It's not, "Oh no, I'm a tax nerd;" It's, "I get to do tax, I get to do this cool stuff, I get to help

my company solve complex business problems with my creative tax solutions."

Q: How do we generate awareness and excitement about tax?

A: One way is to get in front of students ourselves by going to college campuses and recruiting, doing events, meeting and partnering with accounting professors, law professors, and approach it as a kind of grassroots effort. We now can reach people through websites, social media - there's are so many more avenues available to us today than we had before to spread awareness.

Another way is to partner with other groups. NABA is doing a lot of things to spread awareness within their members and partnering with schools. Groups like that are a really good opportunity for the tax profession to reach a more diverse group of people.

Q: How can the tax community do more to improve diversity and inclusion in our field?

A: I think, we're inclusive, but "it's one thing to be invited to the party, it's another thing to be asked to dance." We make them feel like there's a sense of belonging.

There's also reassuring people from the not-undrrrepresented groups that it's not a "I win, you lose" game. We want people to have a seat at the table - that doesn't mean someone's taking your chair. It means we're building a bigger table.

Q: Tax lawyers are like wine - they get better with time and age. Is there a time where more senior male/female partners should hand over the baton? At what point should we continue working?

A: It's a personal desire. Some people have different monetary requirements, so maybe it's not as optional for them. There's physical health - are you able to do that? There's setting - major accounting firms retire between 54 and 62.

I love working and can't imagine retiring. But I'm also looking forward to not working at some point.

As long as you're effective and enjoy what you're doing and want to keep doing it, your clients want you to, your partners do, or if you're at a company, your employer wants you to - I think that's great.



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Affect Surpassing Effect for Ukraine: A reflection of one international tax professional on her role to help during the war in Ukraine *by Mira Pivnyuk, Principal, PwC*

I will never forget coming home from a business trip on February 23, 2022 and listening to Ukraine's President Zelensky's address our nation. He sounded as if there was no hope. I did not want to believe this heartbreaking scenario and quickly tried to quiet my fears by going to bed after a days' long trip. I was startled awake at 4:30 am the next morning to a text message from a friend saying: "I am so sorry and know I am there for you." I would receive so many notes like this from my friends and colleagues in the coming days and weeks, and for that I will be forever grateful. They gave me strength to go on.

That next morning, my world spiraled out of control. In the middle of the night my beloved country of Ukraine was showered with Russian bombs... a war... in the middle of Europe... in my home country... seemed like a bad nightmare. All my immediate family was living in Ukraine. I started frantically calling to find out if everyone was alive and ok. We were the lucky ones. While bombs exploded within a kilome-

ter of some of my loved ones, to date most of my family is relatively safe and, most importantly, alive. Many of my fellow countrymen and women are not as lucky. In the days to come as I watched portions of my country being destroyed, I realized that sitting at home and watching this nightmare unfold was not an option for me. It was time to jump in and help.

As much as I identify myself as Ukrainian, I also identify myself through my career and volunteering efforts, which align with my purpose, provide an outlet and support during challenging times. At PwC, I joined a team of my colleagues coordinating PwC's response to the war in Ukraine. As a firm, living our purpose and values, we aspire to harness our collective power to care for the people who need it most and come together as a community. It was time to turn something heart wrenching into positive action by utilizing our skills to help.

It's amazing to see how many professionals, throughout the

various organizations, rallied and continue to work together to help humanitarian efforts as well as aid in rebuilding. Whether it is helping one refugee family at a time or supporting the non-for-profit organizations providing aid to people on the ground.

We also have the privilege of lending our professional skills and experience to address the ongoing concerns of the business community and begin to help efforts to rebuild. It's so inspiring to see how our colleagues in Ukraine continue work and offer help while frequently in danger and with their families displaced. Often literally working from the bomb shelters they deliver on engagements as well as care for others! Their strength, grace and professionalism under the direst circumstances is awe inspiring.

The impact of the war in Ukraine goes far beyond Ukraine or Russia -- it is having effects on countries, businesses, and communities all over the globe from operations, infrastructure, capital, people, and workforce, as well as tax and trade



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issues. In my capacity as an international tax professional and as part of PwC, I am contributing to help navigate the tax implications to the impacted global supply chains, the effect of sanctions on the business operations, international tax consequences of movement of people and workforce and assistance with rendering our consulting experience in the rebuilding efforts.

While it is still difficult for me personally to wake up every morning hoping my loved ones are safe, being a member of the international business community and calling upon the skills I have acquired over the years toward helping others gives me purpose during these difficult times.

We should all have a sense of pride at how much our collective power as professionals and members of the global community, in these trying times, can have a positive effect.



Sponsorship of Diversity Students to Attend IFA USA's Annual Conference

IFA USA's Special Initiatives Committee as well as the Executive Committee approved a joint proposal by the Diversity & Inclusion and Academic Committees to sponsor several diversity students to attend IFA USA's Annual Conference. The Conference, IFA USA's 50th Annual was held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Washington DC on June 2-3, 2022. IFA waived the conference fee and covered the travel, lodging, meals, and other out-of-pocket expenses (up to a cap) for the students selected.

We reached out to various affinity groups that represent African American, Asian American, Latin American, and Native American students. Due to conflicts with their academic calendars and summer internships, we were unable to get students from every affinity group. However, we were delighted to have Jeremy Garcia from the National Latina/o Law Students Association (NLLSA) and Nathan McCurtain from the National Native American Law Students Association (NNALSA) join us at the Conference.

The Academic Committee once again coordinated the IFA USA Writing Competition. This year's award winners, Mohanad Salaimi representing the University of Michigan Law School (faculty advisor Professor Avi-Yonah) and Nory Dianne Miano representing Georgetown University Law Center (faculty advisor Professor Smiley) attended the Conference to receive their awards at Thursday's luncheon. A dinner with Peter Barnes, Suchi Lee, and Tracy Kaye connected the students from the affinity groups and the writing competition winners. These student delegates formed strong bonds while spending time together at the Conference.



IFA Diversity Scholar Jeremy A. Garcia on Attending the 2022 IFA-USA Annual Conference

Upon arrival, I was greeted by Suchi Lee and Professor Tracy Kaye and met Nathan McCurtain from NNALSA. I then met IFA Global President Peter Barnes, and IFA's Writing Competition Winners Nory Dianne Miano and Mohanad Salaimi, both recent LLM graduates.

During dinner, we bonded over our respective law school experiences, career trajectories and learned from Peter, Suchi, and Professor Kaye, about IFA and the profession. As I learned more about IFA, I thought about my classroom experience and how truly interesting the field of taxation is, despite what others may say! As we parted ways for the night, I was ready and excited for the following day—the first day of the conference.

I spent both days at the conference networking and attending various panels, covering topics such as taxation and cryptocurrencies, and many new tax areas that I had never heard of, such as the OECD's Pillar II project. Then there was the Gala where I met other Hispanic and Latina/o lawyers and other tax professionals. We discussed how they ended up in the tax field and bonded over great food and drinks. All of this led me to an important takeaway from the conference, the need to diversify the tax law field.

While diversification may be difficult to achieve, it improves the decision-making process leading to more business, attracting more clients, and providing equity across the board. Networking during the IFA conference and meeting various

professionals, all of which spoke highly about the field, inspired me to help bring change to the field by relaying IFA's message to NLLSA members and beyond. I was truly heartened by IFA USA's mission to ensure that it is an organization which welcomes all individuals regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation and disability and any other dimensions of diversity.

As a Latino, I know that others who look like me only make up a small percentage of the legal profession. However, I am not against breaking barriers and finding my own seat at the table. I might even bring my own table! We need to move past the fear of working in the tax space and join organizations, like IFA, that promote diversity and want people like myself to be part of the ranks. IFA has a valuable network full of lawyers willing to mentor law students and young lawyers to become the next generation of tax professionals and leaders in the field. Those two days gave me an opportunity to meet a variety of tax professionals who are willing to help me and others to grow to become illustrious tax professionals.

In closing, thank you IFA, Suchi Lee, Peter Barnes, Tracy Kaye, Rita Julien, Stephanie Kleefstra, Robert Santia, Pedro Corona de La Fuente, David Ancelovici, William Byrnes, and all the other great people I met during the conference. It was a terrific experience.

The header features the IFA logo on the left, which consists of the letters 'I' and 'A' intertwined within a white circle. To the right of the logo, the text 'Diversity & Inclusion Newsletter' is written in a white, serif font. The background is a collage of crumpled paper in various shades of brown, tan, and beige, with the silhouettes of diverse human faces in the same colors overlaid on it.

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The D&I Committee would like to recognize USA Branch President Peter Connors for his support for the Diversity Scholars program and his contributions to D&I initiatives at IFA-USA.



Left to right:
Back row: Suchi Lee, PwC; Jeremey Garcia, NLLSA; Nathan McCurtain NNALSA; Peter Barnes, President, IFA Global

Front row: Prof. Tracy Kaye, Seton Hall Law School; Dianne Miano, Georgetown University; Mohanad Salaimi, University of Michigan



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Poem of the Month: “The Hill We Climb” by Amanda Gorman, National Youth Poet Laureate

We’ve seen a force that would shatter our
nation rather than share it,
Would destroy our country if it meant
delaying democracy.
And this effort very nearly succeeded.
But while democracy can be periodically
delayed,
It can never be permanently defeated.

In this truth, in this faith, we trust.
For while we have our eyes on the future,
History has its eyes on us.

This is the era of just redemption.
We feared it at its inception.
We did not feel prepared to be the heirs
Of such a terrifying hour.
But within it we’ve found the power
To author a new chapter,
To offer hope and laughter to ourselves.

So while once we asked: How could we
possibly prevail over catastrophe?
Now we assert: How could catastrophe
possibly prevail over us?

We will not march back to what was,
But move to what shall be:
A country that is bruised but whole,
Benevolent but bold,
Fierce and free.

We will not be turned around,
Or interrupted by intimidation,
Because we know our inaction and inertia
Will be the inheritance of the next
generation.

Our blunders become their burdens.
But one thing is certain:
If we merge mercy with might, and might
with right,
Then love becomes our legacy,
And change, our children’s birthright.

So let us leave behind a country better
than the one we were left.
With every breath from our bronze-
pounded chests,
We will raise this wounded world into
a wondrous one.

We will rise from the gold-limned hills
of the West!
We will rise from the windswept
Northeast, where our forefathers first
realized revolution!
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities
of the Midwestern states!
We will rise from the sunbaked South!

We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover,
In every known nook of our nation,
In every corner called our country,
Our people, diverse and dutiful.
We’ll emerge, battered but beautiful.

When day comes, we step out of the
shade,
Aflame and unafraid.
The new dawn blooms as we free it,
For there is always light,
If only we’re brave enough to see it,
If only we’re brave enough to be it.



We Would Love to Hear From You!

How to Contact Us:

Please feel free to contact the IFA (USA) Diversity & Inclusion Committee, by e-mail at diversity@ifausa.org.

We would love to learn more about international tax professionals actively promoting diversity and inclusion, and any suggestions you may have with respect to programming to promote diversity within IFA and within the tax profession in general.

