Session 501 | Reaching Beyond the Brass Ring – Understanding Your Career Options Other Than GC

We’ve all been to panels on how to become a GC, and it’s traditionally been presented as the brass ring. But what if that’s not? What if you hate brass rings? What if you’re heading down a path that’s not calling you anymore, or what will leave you fulfilled – for any number of reasons? you don’t align with companies and their products or services; you don’t want to deal with “managing” the C Suite/CEO egos; corporate structure doesn't work for you; the pace of in house work and life isn’t what you thought it would be; you actually like practicing law vs. managing a department; you’re actually tired of practicing law; you’re feeling another calling. At that point, what are your options? You’re still ambitious and intellectually curious, just wanting to swim in a stream that's actually flowing in your direction. Join us for this frank conversation on how to source your options, be curious about what’s possible at this stage in your career, and hear and share insight into what paths may be available for you if you don’t want to become a GC.

Moderator:
Angeline G. Chen, Of Counsel, DLA Piper

Speakers:
Victoria Lai, Founder and CEO, Ice Cream Jubilee
Selena Loh LaCroix, Vice Chair of Technology Practice, Korn Ferry
Tommy Shi, Director of Inclusion and Diversity, Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner
John C. Yang, President and Executive Director, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Bettina Yip, Associate General Counsel for Employment and Litigation, Petco
ANGELINE G. CHEN

Angeline G. Chen has over 25 years of corporate business experience, nearly two decades of which were in the aerospace and defense industry, including 10 years as a general counsel and service on several boards of directors. Her extensive operational perspective informs her practice area focus in the areas of governance, compliance, cybersecurity, risk management, national and homeland security, business strategy, regulatory and government affairs.

She joined DLA Piper after serving as Vice President, General Counsel, Chief Compliance Officer and Corporate Secretary at Siemens Government Technologies (SGT). In addition to leading a diverse team of contracts, compliance, international trade, security, and quality professionals, at SGT, Angeline was responsible for spearheading the legal aspects of the integration and divestiture of certain Siemens acquisitions and asset transfers into and out of SGT, and responsible for supporting US national security-related due diligence on various M&A transactions.

Angeline previously served as Deputy Associate General Counsel for Info Security at the NSA; VP, GC and Chief Compliance Officer for Marinette Marine Corporation; Associate General Counsel for Advanced Concepts and Technology with Lockheed Martin Corporation (LM) and the general counsel for LM's Center for Innovation; Associate General Counsel for International Launch Services; and Assistant General Counsel with the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization. She taught “Technology, Terrorism, and National Security Law” for 15 years at George Mason University Law School, and a course on organizational behavior management at University of Maryland University College for 2 years.

She is a frequent speaker on topics relating to cybersecurity, national security, compliance and diversity. She is deeply committed to the advancement of women and people of color in industry and the legal profession, previously serving as the Executive Champion for Siemens AAPI resource group. She currently serves on the Board of Advisors for Women, Power and Influence in the Law and the Georgetown University Cybersecurity Law Institute. She has previously served as a Director on the boards of SGT, MMC, Space Systems Loral, and SSL Federal. She is an active member of NACD, WCD, the Association of Corporate Counsel, APABA-DC, and the ABA.

Angeline has a JD from Villanova University, an LL.M from Georgetown Law Center, and an MBA from the University of Maryland. She spends most of her free time these days trying to get used to being an empty nester and torturing her husband with the threat of adopting more cats.
Victoria Lai is the Founder and Chief Icecreampreneur of Ice Cream Jubilee, where she dreams up ice cream flavors inspired by international desserts, boozy cocktails, and childhood treats, like Banana Bourbon Caramel, Thai Iced Tea, Cookies & Cookie Dough, and Gin & Tonic sorbet. As the CEO, Victoria also manages finance, operations, growth, human resources, marketing, and strategy for the company.

Victoria Lai founded Ice Cream Jubilee as a blog that featured her passion for inventing ice cream flavors. At the time, she was working as a lawyer and presidential appointee at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in the Department of Homeland Security. Before this appointment, she clerked in the Second Circuit and Southern District of New York for the Hon. Denny Chin, worked as a corporate litigator, and advised the Democratic National Committee and a presidential campaign as the Director of Asian American Pacific Islander Outreach. She holds a J.D. from Fordham University and a B.A. from Wellesley College.

In 2013, Victoria entered her flavors in a city-wide ice cream competition and won People's Choice for Best Ice Cream in DC. Inspired by this success, she left her job in 2014 to open her first store in the Navy Yard area of Washington, D.C. by Nationals Stadium. Ice Cream Jubilee currently has three locations, in Washington, D.C.’s Navy Yard and U Street neighborhoods and in Arlington, VA. Ice Cream Jubilee ships nationwide and is available in Whole Foods Markets in DC, VA, MD, PA, KY, OH, and southern NJ.

Ice Cream Jubilee has been named one of the Best Ice Cream Shops in America by People Magazine, the Drew Barrymore Show, Thrillist, Food & Wine, and has been voted the Best Ice Cream in D.C. in the Washington CityPaper and Washingtonian Magazine. Victoria's transition from government lawyer to icecreampreneur has been featured by NBC Nightly News, More Magazine, and Bloomberg News.
Selena Loh LaCroix joined Korn Ferry from a prominent management consulting and executive search firm where she was the Global Leader of the Technology & Communications practice. There, she worked on board advisory and executive-talent management in the technology sector, with expertise in the semiconductor, IoT and cybersecurity segments. She has also incubated and developed the cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, blockchain and IoT segments. Previously, Selena led the Global Legal, Regulatory & Compliance practice and continues to spend time recruiting General Counsels and other strategic legal roles today.

Prior to this, Selena was Vice President of General Counsel, Asia Pacific, at Honeywell International and she served as senior counsel to Texas Instruments Incorporated. Her experience spans cross-border joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, intellectual property licensing and monetization, global corporate governance and compliance, and litigation management.

Selena currently sits on the Board of the Texas Chapter of the National Association of Corporate Directors. Most recently, she was a Board Member of Integrated Device Technology (Nasdaq: IDTI) and Chair of the Nomination Committee until its acquisition by Renesas in 2019.

Selena holds an LLB Hons, Law from the National University of Singapore and completed a graduate program in American Law at the University of California at Berkeley & Davis.
TOMMY SHI

Tommy Shi is the Director of Inclusion & Diversity – US for Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner, where he is responsible for strategic initiatives and the delivery of projects and activities related to inclusion and diversity in the US offices of the firm. Tommy collaborates with firm leadership, the Global Inclusion & Diversity Action Board, Partner Champions and firm Affinity Groups in advancing the firm’s Inclusion & Activity goals.

Tommy most recently served as the Director of Diversity & Inclusion for Day Pitney, where as a member of the senior management team, he led the development and implementation of the firm’s strategic diversity and inclusion plan by serving as a thought leader, ambassador and advocate. Prior to Day Pitney, Tommy was the Diversity and Inclusion Officer for Mercedes-Benz USA, leading the strategic direction, development and implementation of the company’s Diversity and Inclusion strategy. Tommy’s responsibilities embraced Marketing, Sales, Human Resources and Dealer Network Activities. Tommy was also responsible for the company’s Corporate Giving activities. Tommy joined Mercedes-Benz USA as a Counsel in the legal department after working as a litigation associate at Riker, Danzig, Scherer, Hyland & Perretti in Morristown, New Jersey.

Active in diversity activities and organizations and a frequent speaker on diversity issues, Tommy has received a Corporate Leadership Award from the Asian Pacific American Lawyers Association of New Jersey; an Outstanding 50 Asian Americans in Business Award and a Vanguard Award from the Automotive Hall of Fame. Other awards include an Award of Excellence from the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, the Diversity Advocacy Award from the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers Association and a Corporate Achievement Award from the Organization of Chinese Americans.

Tommy is President of the Board of Directors for the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund and a past president of the Asian Pacific American Lawyers Association of New Jersey. Tommy has served as a member of the Leadership Advisory Council of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association; the Association of National Advertisers’ Multicultural Marketing and Diversity Committee; the PGA Diversity and Inclusion Committee, the Corporate Advisory Board of the Association of Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting and the Board of the Tri-State Diversity Council. He has served on the New Jersey Supreme Court Committee on Character and also as a Trustee and Chair of the Young Lawyer’s Committee of the Morris County Bar Association.

A graduate of the Boston College Law School, Tommy holds a Bachelor of Arts from the Johns Hopkins University.
John C. Yang is the president and executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, where he leads the organization’s efforts to fight for civil rights and empower Asian Americans to create a more just America for all through public policy advocacy, education, and litigation. His extensive legal background enables Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC to address systemic policies, programs, and legislative attempts to discriminate against and marginalize Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) and other minority communities.

John is an established leader in the Asian American and Pacific Islander and broader civic community. In 1997, John co-founded the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing the direct service legal needs of Asian Pacific Americans in the D.C. metropolitan area. He served as chair of the Asian American Justice Center, as well as president of NAPABA from 2003 to 2004, and since 1998, he has served as Co-Chair of NAPABA’s Judiciary and Executive Nominations & Appointments Committee. In that capacity, he has worked extensively with the White House and the U.S. Senate in securing the nomination and confirmation of over 20 Asian American and Pacific Islander federal judges and numerous other Senate-confirmed Presidential appointments.

John is an experienced attorney with over two decades of policy, litigation, and corporate expertise. He served in the Obama Administration as Senior Advisor for Trade and Strategic Initiatives at the U.S. Department of Commerce, where he was the principal advisor to Secretary Penny Pritzker on issues related to Asia and worked with the White House and other U.S. agencies on strategic and economics issues concerning the region. Previously, John was a partner with a major Washington, D.C. law firm, and also worked in Shanghai, China for several years as the legal director for the Asia-Pacific operations of a U.S. Fortune 200 company.

John graduated with honors from George Washington University Law School, where he served on the George Washington Law Review and the Moot Court Board. Chambers USA recognized John as one of “America’s Leading Business Lawyers” and as a Washington, D.C. “Super Lawyer” by Law & Politics.
Bettina Yip is currently VP, AGC – Employment & Litigation at Petco in San Diego, CA. Previously, she held the positions of Associate General Counsel - Labor & Employment at Recology; General Counsel of Pet Food Express; VP, Associate General Counsel & Assistant Corporate Secretary at the J.M. Smucker Company (f/k/a Big Heart Pet Brands, f/k/a Del Monte Corporation); and General Attorney at AT&T.

Bettina graduated magna cum laude from Wellesley College and received her J.D. from Columbia University School of Law, where she was a Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar. She was a Notes Editor on the Journal of Asian Law at Columbia and was the recipient of the Florence N. Shientag Award from the New York Women's Bar Association.

Bettina is active in the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA), having served as Vice President – Programs & Operations, Secretary, Southeast Regional Governor, co-chair of the Awards Committee, chair of the Nominations and Elections Committee, co-chair and founder of NAPABA’s Mentoring and Labor & Employment Committees, and Mentor Program sub-committee of NAPABA’s In-House Committee. In 2004, Bettina was named one of NAPABA’s Best Lawyers Under 40.

She was also the first Asian American to serve on the State Bar of Georgia’s Board of Governors and founded the People’s Law School for the Asian Community in Atlanta. She currently sits on the State Bar of Georgia Seeking Equal Justice and Addressing Racism and Racial Bias Committee. She was also on the Advisory Committee of the Corporate Counsel Women of Color from 2006 to 2020.

Bettina spends her free time hiking and wine tasting with her husband and 3 rescue dogs, Sasha, Freddy, and Hank.
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Moderator

• Angeline G. Chen, Of Counsel, DLA Piper
Our Journey as Asian American Attorneys

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”

- Lao Tzu
Let's talk numbers

• According to Vault/MCCA survey released in 2014:
  • Non-white attorneys represented 15% of the law firm population. This percentage grew from 14.56% in 2013 to 14.99% in 2014, showing a gradual incline since the recessionary low of 13.44% reported in 2009.
  • 22.75% of associates belonged to a racial/ethnic minority group, up from 20.78% in 2007.
  • Minority lawyers represented 8.22% of all partners, compared to 7.85% in 2013 and 6.30% in 2007.
  • A higher proportion of minority partners were salaried than held equity in their firms. Attorneys of color represented 10.21% of non-equity partners, compared to 7.53% of equity partners.
  • The survey found that the number Asian American attorneys in law firms slowly but steadily increased at all levels from associate to equity partner.
  • However, compared to the broader law firm population, Asian American attorneys were less represented at the partnership and management levels than other attorneys of color.

Mileposts

TOP REASONS FOR ATTENDING LAW SCHOOL

• To develop a satisfying career
• Intellectual challenge
• To help individuals
• Financial security
• To change or improve society
• Parental expectations or influence

A Portrait of Asian Americans in the Law ("The Portrait Project") (2017)
Are we making progress?

Asian American attorneys are represented in virtually every sector of the legal profession, have been the largest minority group in major law firms for nearly two decades, and represent approximately 5% of all lawyers nationwide. However, Asian American attorneys:

- Are significantly underrepresented in the leadership ranks of law firms, government, and academia;
- Have the highest attrition rates;
- Have the lowest ratio of partners to associates amongst all groups; and
- Report inadequate access to mentors and contacts, lack of formal leadership training programs, and lack of recognition of their work as a primary barrier to career advancement.

How Do You Define Success?

“Success isn’t about the end result, it’s about what you learn along the way.”

- Vera Wang
What We’re Told

Asian Americans in Higher Education
Percent of Asian Americans (25+) with a bachelor’s degree or higher

Advanced Degrees

Median Household Income, by Race/Ethnicity (2018)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, (2019), 2018 ACS 5-Year ACS 50201 Select Population Profiles
Note: The AAPI category is aggregated by weighted averages.
Wherever you are is who you are

- Influences
- Experiences
- Aspirations
- Ambitions

- Skills
- Competencies
- Networks
- Achievements

You
Career Paths (based on true stories)

What we think our career path looks like

What it really looks like
Where and who do you want to be?

“If you do not change direction, you may end up where you were heading.”

- (erroneously but often attributed to Lao Tzu)
Options and Choices

Manager versus Individual Contributor
- GC / Partner
- Staff Attorney
- Solo

Generalist versus Specialist
- Contracts
- Ethics
- DEI
- Legal Ops

Attorney

Close Adjacent
- Compliance
- Privacy
- Lobbying
- Gov’t / Leg. Affairs

Far Adjacent
- CEO/CFO/CAO
- Entrepreneur
- Writer
- ???

Blank Space

Leadership and Community

Personal and Environment Factors

Manager versus Individual Contributor
- GC / Partner
- Staff Attorney
- Solo

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Blank Space

Leadership and Community

Personal and Environment Factors
Pivot Points and Transitions

“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.”

- Chinese proverb
Risks and Opportunities

Take time to evaluate where you are / where you want to be

• What is your risk tolerance
• How much do you need / want to stay in your “comfort zone”
• What is your “possible”? Where is your heart leading you?
• What are the environmental constraints / can you mitigate or work around them?
• What is important to you? What resonates with you? What makes you happy?

What would you do if you could not fail?
Professional Considerations

“Real knowledge is to know the extent of one’s ignorance.”

- Confucius
Things to keep in mind

• Attorney Client privilege / Attorney Work Product doctrine
• Bar admissions and requirements
• Educational requirements
• Credentials for specific paths (e.g., certifications)
• Environmental or positional requirements (e.g., applicable standards, insurance)
• Ethics considerations
What are you going to do about it?

“My actions are my only belongings. I cannot escape the consequences of my actions. My actions are the ground upon which I stand.”

- Thich Nhat Hanh
Make a Plan

• Self-reflect and evaluate what you want and articulate why
• Honestly assess your strengths, ambitions, and what drives you
• Openly consider all your career options and relevant factors (level of interest/self-fulfillment, salary, location, flexibility, etc.).
• Narrow that list to three to five to research further / rank according to your own criteria.
• Pick an option and establish clear short-term and long-term goals.
• Expand your network.
• Learn more and try it out (information interviews, volunteer, etc.)
• Update your professional brand.
Tips

“Be not afraid of growing slowly, be afraid only of standing still.”

- Chinese proverb
Questions?