

Purpose-Driven

An Interview with Brad S. Karp, Chairman, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison

EDITORS' NOTE *Chairman of the firm since 2008, Brad Karp is one of the country's leading lawyers and corporate advisers. He has extensive experience successfully defending financial institutions and other companies in "bet the company" litigations and regulatory matters.*

FIRM BRIEF *Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison (paulweiss.com) is a firm of more than 1,000 lawyers with diverse backgrounds, personalities, ideas and interests who collaboratively provide innovative solutions to their clients' most critical and complex legal and business challenges. Paul, Weiss represents the world's largest public and privately held corporations and investors, as well as clients in need of pro bono assistance.*



Brad S. Karp

high-impact legal efforts to make our society more just and equitable – a key ingredient in our success story.

How do you define the Paul, Weiss difference and what sets the firm apart in the industry?

Paul, Weiss is a purpose-driven firm with an unparalleled reputation for excellence and professionalism. Our commitment to improving our communities and to fighting for social and racial justice dates back to our earliest days, long before such efforts were popular. We don't try to be all things to

all clients; we focus on five areas where we lead the market – public M&A, private equity, litigation, white-collar and regulatory defense, and restructuring. Our firm's entrepreneurial spirit and adaptability enable us to not just survive challenges and uncertainty, but to thrive.

How do you describe Paul, Weiss' culture and what have been the keys to maintaining culture?

The Paul, Weiss culture is one of collaboration, mutual respect, professionalism, diversity and inclusion, and an unwavering commitment to *pro bono* work and to community engagement. We have held fast to these values as we confronted a global pandemic, economic crises, a national racial justice reckoning and a divisive presidential election, investing even more in *pro bono* service and in making our firm even more diverse, equitable and inclusive. Because we have "leaned into" our unique culture, we have remained resilient. In fact, we have become stronger and our community has become closer than ever.

What has made Paul, Weiss so successful at building long-lasting client relationships and client loyalty?

Our lawyers have succeeded in building deep, long-lasting client relationships by delivering unmatched service and by continually going above and beyond. We strive to surpass our clients' expectations every day, we are passionate about our work, and each of us is focused on building bonds of trust with our clients. In addition, because we truly like working with each other, we are able to work across specializations to best support our clients' needs.

How critical is it for Paul, Weiss to build a diverse and inclusive workforce and will you discuss the firm's efforts in this regard?

Our people are our most precious asset; there is a direct connection between our cultivation of a diverse community with unique talents and worldviews, and the firm's continuing success. This commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion goes back to our very beginnings. We were the first major New York law firm to mix religions and the first to hire a Black lawyer, to hire a Black female lawyer, and to make a woman a partner.

Over the years, our market-leading policies and programs have helped advance more women and lawyers of color into leadership positions in the firm and in the industry, and we continue to push for increased opportunities for people of color at all stages of the talent pipeline. While we have made great strides, we recognize that much more work needs to be done to ensure that our firm closely reflects the diversity of the clients we serve and our beloved city of New York.

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“Our firm, the largest in New York City, has long strived to solve our clients’ most complex legal and business challenges, providing our clients with unmatched legal service and a compelling value proposition, in our hometown and around the world.”

In recent years, our Inclusion Task Force, which I co-chair alongside deputy chair Valerie Radwaner and litigation co-chair Ted Wells, launched several initiatives that have increased our accountability and transparency when it comes to diversity, equity and inclusion and that promise to pay dividends in the future. We have also collaborated closely with our Black Lawyers Network in the past year, further expanding opportunities for Black lawyers.

Will you highlight Paul, Weiss’ commitment to *pro bono* work?

Service to others has always been a core part of our mission, as reflected in a series of groundbreaking Supreme Court matters we have handled. We helped end racial segregation by partnering with Thurgood Marshall in *Brown v. Board of Education*; established the principle of “one person, one vote” in *Gray v. Sanders*; and ensured federal marriage equality for same-sex couples in *United States v. Windsor*. More recently, we have worked to preserve voting rights around the country, spearheading a law firm coalition to oppose state-by-state efforts to restrict voting; and filed the first and only private lawsuit, *Sines v. Kessler*, seeking to hold accountable white supremacists responsible for the 2017 violence in Charlottesville.

Not surprisingly, our dedication to New Yorkers in need is a big focus at Paul, Weiss. Last year, hundreds of us were involved in firm efforts to help desperate New Yorkers access pandemic relief; my partner Jeh Johnson, the former Secretary for Homeland Security, and a team of Paul, Weiss lawyers produced an eye-opening report on racism

in the New York state court system; and my partner Jennifer Wu and a large team of associates and counsel wrote an impactful report with the Asian American Bar Association of New York on rising anti-Asian hate incidents across the city and nationwide, among many other such efforts.

What do you see as Paul, Weiss’ responsibility to the communities it serves and to being a force for good in society?

Our firm is in a unique position to support communities in New York City and across the country. Given that reality, we have responded to recent crises with renewed urgency and a sense of duty, redoubling our efforts to support our communities. Since March 2020, we have been engaged in myriad legal efforts in support of pandemic-related relief, racial justice, voter protection, immigrant rights, gun control, reproductive rights, and many other important issues – often in collaboration with our clients. While our ties to the New York community have always been of paramount importance, they have taken on even greater significance in light of rising awareness of racial inequality and the long road to full economic recovery.

What are the keys to New York’s recovery and rebuilding from the pandemic and how critical is a strong public/private partnership to New York’s future success?

Our city has a long history of public/private partnerships, but the philanthropic response to the COVID-19 pandemic last year by the city’s private sector, including by major New York-based companies and law firms, was truly remarkable in impact and in scope. We need to build off of that energy, extending the reach

of city government with private support, as we enter a new, dangerous phase in this pandemic. As we are seeing, public health guidance about more transmissible COVID-19 variants is continually evolving, so close coordination and transparency are essential.

Though our arts and culture, small businesses and transit system are all beginning to rebound, sustaining the path to recovery will require a deeper partnership between the business community, city and state government, and civic and community organizations, that draws on the expertise of our world-leading hospital systems and academic institutions. Our focus should be on meeting the needs of individuals and small businesses most immediately vulnerable to new public health mandates or impacted by structural changes that the pandemic has wrought.

What advice do you offer young people interested in a career in law?

There has never been a more exhilarating and impactful time to be a lawyer. By choosing a career in law, you will have limitless opportunities to follow your passions and build a meaningful career in whichever area speaks to you most forcefully. Whether that’s tapping into your creative side to help businesses find solutions to their most pressing problems, or fighting to safeguard fundamental liberties and freedoms, the law has something for everybody.

If you’re interested in a legal career, the best thing you can do is identify your passion and learn everything you can about it. Find ways to engage with the law, seek out opportunities to distinguish yourself, and identify mentors who can inspire and guide you. ●

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