



Pittsburgh Golden Triangle

# Diverse Pittsburgh

*Focusing on the Legal Profession*

## Plans for the Allegheny County Bar Association's Seventh Summer Clerkship Program Underway

Plans for our Summer Clerkship Program in 2011 were approved. The program continues!

This ongoing, successful program represents a commitment from participating legal organizations and local universities, and confirms that the program has value, and is working to meet their needs.

The purpose of the Summer Clerkship Program is to provide an enriching employment experience for fourteen or more first-year minority law students from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, Duquesne University School of Law and the West Virginia University College of Law at participating law firms, corporate law departments and government agencies.



The Summer Clerkship Program features a 10-12 week opportunity during which a summer clerk may be asked to research an issue, prepare a memorandum, or attend the taking of a deposition, a client meeting or hearing in court. Lunch-and-learn sessions provide an opportunity for practicing attorneys to share their practice area experiences with participants. Sometimes a summer clerk will have an opportunity to socialize with attorneys if invited to attend a sporting event, picnic, reception or cultural event sponsored by the legal organization. All of the summer clerks will be invited to attend the Summer Associates Reception held at an upscale restaurant and lounge in July. The reception is sponsored by the Allegheny County Bar Association.



## Pittsburgh Named Number One City for People Seeking Relocation

*Gene Harris, J.D.  
Diversity Coordinator –  
Allegheny County Bar Association*

In this issue we again feature successful women and minority attorneys who are making a difference in the Pittsburgh legal community. These attorneys have decided on Pittsburgh as a place to live, grow their practice and be successful.

In a recent affirmation of Pittsburgh's ongoing transformation, CNBC has named it the No. 1 City in America for people seeking to relocate.

The ranking of cities at CNBC.com praises Pittsburgh's affordability, low crime rate and high-profile sports teams, along with its low unemployment rate, among other qualities, including number of colleges, health of a city's population, arts venues, and stability.

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436 Seventh Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-1818  
www.acba.org

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2007

Published by  
Harris Consulting



## James Baldwin Joins Fox Rothschild as a Partner

James concentrates his practice on mergers and acquisitions, with an emphasis on leveraged buyouts, private equity and venture capital deals. He also has experience in project finance deals; joint ventures; and formation and regulatory compliance of investment funds, including specialty investment companies such as small business investment companies.

A graduate from Georgetown University Law Center and Villanova University, James is a member of the Human Rights Committee of My Own Place, Inc.

James has handled cross-border transactions and international project finance transactions and counsels clients on the structure and terms of their relationship with private and government parties involved in project developments in foreign markets, including China, Africa, Europe, Latin America and other emerging markets. His projects have primarily targeted the energy, heavy manufacturing, technology, telecommunications, infrastructure projects and financial service industries.



James Baldwin

## Copeland Miller, One of First Minority Female Partners at Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis

Rosa has a broad array of litigation experience, with an emphasis in commercial litigation and product liability litigation. She regularly appears in both federal and state courts and also represents her clients in arbitrations and mediations.

Rosa is committed to pro bono work and has handled matters involving protection from abuse, prisoners' rights issues and termination of parental rights. She also supervises pro bono work performed by other attorneys. Rosa has also moderated a panel discussion on how minority attorneys can break barriers and find success in Pittsburgh.

Rosa has represented a wide variety of clients in commercial litigation matters, including food manufacturers and restaurant owners, commercial retailers, municipal entities, educational institutions and real estate owners and developers. She handles all types of commercial disputes and regularly litigates disputes involving real estate and leasing issues. She has also defended clients against malicious prosecution claims, professional liability claims and constitutional claims.



Rosa Copeland Miller

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## Obama Nominates Cathy Bissoon for Vacancy on U.S. District Court

Just two years after U.S. Magistrate Judge Cathy Bissoon first took her seat on the bench, she has the chance to move up. President Barack Obama nominated her to a position on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania.

The confirmation process will likely go into next year. Judge Bissoon will first go through hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee before being voted upon by the full Senate.

She was recommended to the president by Democratic U.S. Sens. Bob Casey and Arlen Specter. Judge Bissoon, 42, was selected for an eight-year appointment to the magistrate's court in July 2008 by the federal court's Board of Judges. The nomination for the district court position -- a lifetime appointment -- is an even greater honor.

"It's fairly overwhelming at this point," Judge Bissoon said. "I look forward to the rest of the process." As is typical during a pending confirmation process, Judge Bissoon did not want to talk extensively about her goals or expectations on the bench.

Chief U.S. District Judge Lancaster and his colleagues are excited by the prospect of Judge Bissoon joining the court. "She has an excellent temperament," he said. "I think temperament is underrated in terms of contributing to the overall performance of a trial judge."



Cathy Bissoon



## Wendell Freeland Successfully Petitions the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to Admit George Vashon to the Pennsylvania Bar Posthumously



Freeland presents the Certificate of Admission to practice law to descendants of George Vashon

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court will try to right a 160-year-old wrong by admitting George Vashon to the bar posthumously. After graduating from Oberlin College and then reading law with a prominent member of the Pittsburgh legal community, African American George Vashon applied in 1847 to be admitted to the Allegheny County bar. Longtime Pittsburgh Lawyer Wendell Freeland says that was before there was a standard test to become a member of the bar. Freeland says the lawyer under whom Vashon studied supported his application to the bar, but Vashon was denied access because the judges decided that since freed slaves did not have the right to vote they could not be admitted to the bar.

Vashon then left for New York where he was admitted to the bar. After the civil war, Vashon returned to Pittsburgh and in 1868 he again applied and was denied admission to the Allegheny County bar. Freeland notes that Vashon was admitted to the bar of the U.S. Supreme Court just a few months later. “It shows how far behind Pennsylvania was at the time,” says Freeland.

He says he knows of no others who were treated in the same manner as Vashon, but he suspects there were others who have been swallowed up by history. Freeland says it is likely that there are similar stories in other states. In a written statement Chief Justice Castille says, “There is no question that denying George Vashon’s admission to the Bar in 1847 and again in 1868 was blatantly discriminatory. By granting this petition, our Court recognizes, and is sensitive to the fact, that those prior practices in the Commonwealth’s earlier history had a real effect on real people.”

The Supreme Court’s May 4<sup>th</sup> order admitted Vashon to the Pennsylvania Bar, stating that, “George B. Vashon possessed the necessary credentials, competency, and good character to practice law in Pennsylvania in 1847 based upon his bachelor and masters degrees from Oberlin College, his mentorship with the Honorable Walter Forward of the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas and his subsequent admissions to practice law in the State of New York and before the U.S. Supreme Court.”