



Principal, Los Angeles

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Katessa M. Charles is a principal in the Los Angeles, California, office of Jackson Lewis P.C. and is a co-leader of Jackson Lewis' Black Attorney Resource Group. Her practice focuses on representing employers in workplace law matters, including preventive advice and counseling.

## Practices

- Disability, Leave and Health Management
- Financial Services
- Employment Litigation
- Privacy, Data and Cybersecurity
- Restaurants
- Trials and Appeals
- Healthcare
- Manufacturing

## Education

- Georgetown University Law Center, J.D. 1989
- University of California, Santa Barbara, B.A. 1985

## Admitted to Practice

- 9th Circuit Court of Appeals 1995
- California - C.D. Cal. 1992
- California - E.D. Cal. 2000
- California - N.D. Cal. 2000
- California - S.D. Cal. 2012
- California 1990

Katessa is a legal strategist, problem solver, and committed advocate. Katessa resolves commercial and employment disputes, including unfair competition, trade secret, contract, privacy, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation claims. She defends corporate clients against claims brought under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, Family Medical Leave Act, California Fair Employment and Housing Act, California Wage Orders, and other related federal and state statutes and regulations. She has experience in a broad range of industries from manufacturing to entertainment, and has arbitration and jury trial experience in state and federal courts.

Katessa counsels employers in all areas of employment law, including state and federal wage and hour, employee compensation, privacy, employee leaves of absence and performance, employment and service agreements, outside salespersons, independent contractors, unfair competition, and trade secret issues. Katessa represents employers in administrative proceedings, including responding to charges filed with the California Civil Rights Department, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, California Labor Commissioner, and U.S. Department of Labor.

Katessa assists employers with reducing their workforces, developing personnel handbooks, and training supervisory employees on the prevention of sexual harassment.

Katessa also speaks on a multitude of employment and management related topics, including hiring and firing, leaves of absence, disability accommodation, personnel policies, discrimination laws, trade secrets, unfair business practices and privacy in the workplace.

## Trials to Verdict

- *Morales v. Trinity Services Group, Inc.* (Case no. 2:20-cv-01556-JAK) (GJSx) United States District Court, Central District of California, 2024 [First Chair/Jury Trial Defense Verdict]
- *Robert Varkonyi v. United Launch Alliance, LLC* (Case No. CV 00359) SB-MRW, United States District Court, Central District of California, 2024 [First Chair/Jury Trial Defense Verdict]
- *John F. Stephens v. Goldberg Segalla, LLP* (Case No. CV 20-5216) PSG (PDx), United States District Court, Central District, 2021 [First Chair/Bench Trial -Judgment for Defendant]
- *Melissa Ignat v. Yum! Brands, Inc.* (Case No. 30-2008-00114748), Orange County Superior Court, 2015 [First Chair/Jury Trial Defense Verdict]

- Anthony Jackson v. Metal Improvement Co. (Case No. CV12-1755) MWF (CWx), United States District Court, Central District, 2013 [Second Chair/Jury Trial Defense Verdict on the wrongful termination, race discrimination, retaliation, whistleblowing to FAA; Plaintiff's verdict on whistle blowing to OSHA. Total award to Plaintiff was \$85,000 for back wages. No award punitive damages and attorney fees]

## Honors and Recognitions

- Jenesse Center, Inc., "Champion of Justice Award" (2013)
- *LA Focus Newspaper*, "Top Black Attorneys" (2011)
- *Los Angeles Business Journal*, "Most Influential Women Lawyers in Los Angeles" (2017)
- *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, "California's Top Women Lawyers" (2018 and 2020)
- Public Counsel Pro Bono Award (2012)
- *Super Lawyers®*, "Super Lawyers" (2004-2010, 2012-2019)
- *Super Lawyers®*, "Top Women Attorneys in Southern California" (2019)

## Pro Bono and Community Involvement

- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (Life Member; Board of Directors, International Parliamentarian, 2010-2014) First Greek-lettered sorority established and incorporated by African-American college women
- Crystal Stairs, Inc. (Board of Directors, 2011-2020) Childcare services and advocacy program for low-income families in the communities of South Los Angeles, Compton, Gardena, Hawthorne, Inglewood and Long Beach
- Jenesse Center, Inc. (Legal Advisory Board, 2007-2013) Domestic violence intervention program located in South Central Los Angeles providing resources and advocacy for victims of domestic violence
- Member, The Links, Incorporated (2013 to present)

## Published Works

- "An Overview of New Laws Affecting California Employees," *Bloomberg BNA*, (February 2014) [Author]

## Speeches

- "Anatomy of an Employment Case, Part II Trial Strategies," NBALES Annual Conference (Miami, October 2023) (panelist)
- "Labor and Employment Hot Topics," NBA CLS Corporate Counsel Conference (Miami, February 2022) (presenter, moderator)
- "Race, Politics, and Religion in the Workplace - Hot Topics as Employees Return to Work" ACC CLE (Los Angeles, April 2021) (presenter)
- "Pathway to Partnership," University of San Francisco School of Law, Black Law Students Association (March 2021) (panelist)
- "20/20 Vision—A Look Ahead to 2020 and the Top Challenges for In-House Counsel," Corporate Labor and Employment Counsel Exclusive (New Orleans, LA, November 2019) (presenter)
- "Powerful Women in the Courtroom," Los Angeles Daily Journal, Women Leadership in Law Panel Discussion (Beverly Hills, CA, May 2019) (panelist)
- "Women in the Courtroom," Los Angeles Daily Journal, Women in Leadership Forum Panel Discussion (Beverly Hills, CA, May 2018) (panelist)
- You've Got a Deal! Perspectives on Successful Negotiation & Mediation Strategies," Black Women Lawyers Annual Retreat, (La Jolla, CA, June 2016) (panelist)

