



Danielle Banks

Partner

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Entrusted with leading some of the most notable and complex litigation cases in the Greater Philadelphia area, Danielle Banks devotes a significant amount of her practice to defending businesses, universities and governmental entities against discrimination claims brought under Title VII, Section 1981, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act.

In step with her practice, Danielle leverages her knowledge of the employment law landscape to drive diversity initiatives and principles within the legal profession and the wider community at large.

Danielle defends governmental entities against Section 1983 claims. She also represents businesses in housing and mortgage discrimination cases, advises defendants in asbestos litigation, and handles matters on behalf of religious organizations.

A seasoned trial lawyer, Danielle successfully litigates matters to victory through summary judgment or trial — and appeal when necessary. Danielle's practice is centered primarily in federal court, though she takes matters to trial in state court as well. She has handled appellate oral arguments before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, the Pennsylvania Superior Court and the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania.

As a sought-out diversity leader in the legal industry, Danielle has been honored for her countless contributions, including with the 2024 Philadelphia Bar Association Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Award for her career-long dedication to advancing women and diverse lawyers. Danielle is a former diversity chair for the Philadelphia Bar Association and a current member of the board of directors for the Philadelphia Diversity Law Group, an organization that works to improve the recruitment and retention of diverse lawyers.

Featured Representative Matters

Employment Defense Summary Judgment Victories

- *Fulton-Walker v. SEPTA*, EDPA, No. 22-224

Services

- Litigation
- Trial Practice
- Government Affairs
- Employment
- Products Liability & Mass Tort Defense
- Religious, Educational & Nonprofit Organizations
- Compliance Counseling

Education

- Temple University Beasley School of Law (J.D.)
- Temple University (B.A., *cum laude*)

Admissions

- Pennsylvania
- U.S. Supreme Court
- Pennsylvania Supreme Court
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of

- *Jackson v. Temple University*, EDPA, No. 20-1421-KSM
- *Jackson v. SEPTA*, EDPA, No. 19-cv-0760-JMY
- *Branch v. Temple University*, EDPA, 20-cv-2323-CFK
- *Gardner v. SEPTA*, 824 Fed. Appx. 100 (3d Cir. 2020)
- *Dudhi v. Temple Health Oaks Lung Center*, 834 Fed. Appx. 727 (3d Cir. 2020)
- *Darby v. Temple University*, 2018 WL 3862087 (E.D. Pa. Aug. 14, 2018)
- *Dowdell v. Community College of Philadelphia*, 2017 WL 2506444; 725 Fed. Appx. 198 (3d Cir. 2018)
- *Clarkson v. SEPTA*, 700 Fed. Appx. 111 (3d Cir. 2017)
- *Frederick v. Barbush*, 2015 WL 4393339 (M.D. Pa. July 15, 2015)
- *Jones v. SEPTA*, 2014 WL 3887747, 796 F.3d 323 (3d Cir. 2015)
- *Toland v. SEPTA*, 2:12-CV-02480 (E.D. Pa. Jan. 16, 2014)
- *Hamilton v. SEPTA*, 2014 WL 2862146 (E.D. Pa. June 24, 2014)
- *Lyles v. SEPTA*, 2:10-CV-04424 (E.D. Pa. July 9, 2012)
- *Fields v. SEPTA*, 2011 WL 4392118, 445 Fed. Appx. 496 (3d Cir. 2011)
- *Grier v. SEPTA*, 2:11-CV-05891 (E.D. Pa. Sept. 16, 2011)
- *Parmar v. SEPTA*, 2:11-CV-03022 (E.D. Pa. May 9, 2011)

Pennsylvania

- U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania

Employment Defense Public Hearing/Trial Victories

- *Schurgot v. SEPTA*, 2017 WL 3226859 (E.D. Pa. Sept. 28, 2018)
- *Griggs v. SEPTA*, 2:14-CV-06226 (E.D. Pa. Dec. 8, 2016)
- *Cabiness v. SEPTA*, 14-CV-1371 (E.D. Pa. – June 29, 2015)
- *Patterson v. Shelton*, 95072945 (Phila. CCP – Nov. 7, 2011)
- *Wiza v. SEPTA*, 2:12-CV-02748 (E.D. Pa. June 27, 2013)
- *Brownlee v. SEPTA*, 200706428 (PHRC – Oct. 26, 2010)
- *Barbee v. SEPTA*, 2:04-CV-04063 (E.D. Pa. – Oct. 31, 2006)

First Amendment Defense Dismissals

- *Lyons v. National Baptist Convention USA*, 007545 (S. Ct., Dist. of Columbia)
- *Askew v. The Trustees of the General Assembly of The Church of The Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith*, 3rd Cir., 11-1916 684 F.3d 413

Defamation Defense Dismissal

- *Bell v. Butkovitz*, 160803265 (Phila. CCP)

In the Public Interest

- *In re City of Philadelphia Litigation*: Danielle represented plaintiff Ramona Africa after the City of Philadelphia dropped a bomb on the house of a back-to-nature group known as the MOVE organization. This incident resulted in the tragic loss of life and the vast destruction of property. A substantial litigation arose out of this incident, and after a two-month trial, the jury returned a verdict in favor of Africa.
- *Cureton v. National Collegiate Athletic Association*: Danielle represented the plaintiffs in a class action suit brought on behalf of four Black student-athletes

asserting a disparate impact claim based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and certain administrative regulations. The suit sought an injunction to bar the use of Proposition 16's minimum standardized test score requirement to determine freshmen eligibility to participate in Division I sports at NCAA-member colleges. The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania found a disparate impact and ruled in the plaintiffs' favor. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit ultimately reversed on jurisdictional — not substantive — grounds. The eligibility rule ultimately was changed by the NCAA, and that change was consistent with the plaintiffs' proffered alternative.

Community Impact

Widely respected throughout the legal community, Danielle spends much of her time on diversity efforts and is dedicated to the advancement of women as both a personal and professional commitment. She is committed to strengthening the next generation of women and diverse legal talent through mentorship and acting as a sounding board and tireless advocate.

In addition to her roles with the PDLG and Philadelphia Bar Association, she is the immediate past chair of Stradley Ronon's inclusion committee and served on the firm's hiring committee for a two-year term. Danielle is also a frequent speaker and thought leader in the diversity space, discussing important and timely topics on race, gender and inclusion.

Memberships

- Member, American Bar Association Litigation Section
- Member, Board of Directors (and Former Co-President), Philadelphia Diversity Law Group
- Member, Barristers' Association of Philadelphia
- Member, National Bar Association
- Member, Philadelphia Bar Association
- Member, Pennsylvania Bar Association House of Delegates
- Member and Past Chair, Stradley Ronon Inclusion Committee
- Former Diversity Chair, Philadelphia Bar Association
- Former Special Advisor, American Bar Association Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary Committee
- Former Chair, Philadelphia Bar Association's Justice Sonia Sotomayor Diversity Award Committee
- Former Chair, Philadelphia Bar Association Federal Courts Committee
- Former Member, Executive Committee, Temple Law Alumni Association
- Former Ex-Officio Member, Philadelphia Bar Association Diversity in the Profession Committee
- Former Co-Chair, Philadelphia Bar Association's Women in the Profession Committee
- Former Member, Board of Governors, Philadelphia Bar Association
- Former Member, Board of Directors, Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia
- Former Member, Board of Directors, SeniorLAW Center
- Member, Philadelphia Bar Association Diversity Advisory Panel

- Member, The Forum of Executive Women

Recognitions

- Senior Fellow, Litigation Counsel of America
- *The Best Lawyers in America* (Philadelphia: Litigation - Labor and Employment) (2018-26)
- *Pennsylvania Super Lawyers* (Employment & Labor) (2024-26)
- *The Best Lawyers in America* (Lawyer of the Year: Philadelphia: Litigation - Labor and Employment) (2022)
- Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Award, Philadelphia Bar Association (2024)
- Professional Excellence Awards: Power Player, *The Legal Intelligencer* (2022)
- Most Influential Black Lawyers, Savoy Magazine (2022)
- Best of the Bar: Philadelphia's Top Lawyers: Employment Litigation, *Philadelphia Business Journal* (2017, 2020)
- Albert S. Dandridge III Diversity Award, Philadelphia Bar Association's Business Law Section (2019)
- Nation's Best, Lawyers of Color (2019)
- Women of Distinction, *Philadelphia Business Journal* (2017)
- Diverse Attorney of the Year, *The Legal Intelligencer* (2013)
- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Champion of Social Justice and Equality Award, Rutgers School of Law–Camden's Black Law Students Association (2013)
- J. Austin Norris Award, Barristers' Association of Philadelphia (2012)
- Cecil B. Moore Community Service Award, Temple University Beasley School of Law's Black Law Students Association (2007)
- Distinguished Alumni Award, Temple Law Alumni Association (2005)
- Most Powerful and Influential Women Award, National Diversity Council
- The National Black Lawyers Top 100

Featured Speaking Engagements

- Panelist, "Temple Law Alumni Association Lifetime Achievement Award Ceremony Posthumously Honoring Temple University President JoAnne A. Epps," Temple University Beasley School of Law
- Panelist, "Understanding Legal Risks While Staying True to Your DEI Strategy," Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia
- Moderator, "Breaking Down Barriers to Access & Progress," Philadelphia Bar Association
- Panelist, "Black Lawyers Matter: Celebrating JoAnne Epps' Legacy, Impact and Vision," Temple University Beasley School of Law
- Co-Moderator, "Women in Leadership in the Legal Profession," Pennsylvania Bar Institute
- Moderator, "Reimagining DEI: Finding New Pathways in the Wake of the Supreme Court's Affirmative Action Decision," Philadelphia Bar Association and Barristers' Association of Philadelphia
- Moderator, "Summer Quarterly Meeting: Celebration of Inspirational Trailblazers," Philadelphia Bar Association
- Panelist, "The C.R.O.W.N. Act: Understanding Hair Discrimination, Current Laws

and Policies,” Stradley Ronon CLE

- Panelist, “Implicit Bias — The Silent Interrupter: Tips for Recognizing and Rooting Out Implicit Bias,” Association of Corporate Counsel, Women In The House and Information Governance Networks
- Panelist, “From Recruitment to Retention: Attracting and Keeping Diverse Talent,” Women in Law Summit Series, Driving Diversity in Law & Leadership
- Panelist, “Cultivating Male Allies & Change Agents,” Women in Law Summit Series
- Panelist, “History of Black Lawyers in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania,” Tucker Law Group CLE: Standing on the Shoulders: The Black Philadelphia Lawyer
- Speaker, “First Amendment Developments and Signs for the Future,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute 10th Constitutional Law Conclave
- Speaker, “Navigating Legal Minefields in Day-to-Day Church Operations,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute
- Panelist, Pennsylvania Bar Association's Fifth Annual Diversity Summit

Publications

Affirmative Action Is a Matter of Faith for Religious Institutions

January 12, 2024

Experience

Stradley Ronon Secures Victory in Third Circuit for Temple University

The Third Circuit sided with Stradley Ronon’s client, Temple University, wherein the plaintiff alleged race discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and violations of the Family and Medical Leave Act. A three-judge panel affirmed the District Court’s judgment and held that the lower court did not err by allowing Temple University to use evidence discovered after the plaintiff’s termination. The Third Circuit found that such evidence was relevant to rebutting the plaintiff’s testimony at trial and held that the District Court’s jury instructions were sufficient.

Summary Judgment for SEPTA Discrimination Claims in the EDPA

Stradley Ronon secured summary judgment for SEPTA in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania for discrimination claims based on age, sex and race. The plaintiffs argued that they were paid less than their colleagues, unfairly denied promotions and retaliated against for filing complaints. The judge agreed with Stradley Ronon’s assertions that the plaintiffs failed to adduce any evidence they were compensated unfairly, identify a single comparator or provide proof of their qualifications for promotion. Additionally, the Court found there was insufficient evidence of retaliation for the case to proceed to trial.

Discrimination Claim Win for Temple University

Stradley Ronon secured summary judgment for Temple University in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania for an age and disability discrimination matter. The plaintiff was terminated when he refused to return to work. He claimed he was denied reasonable accommodations for his position and argued that a younger person

replaced him. The Court agreed with the arguments provided by Stradley Ronon's litigation team and dismissed all claims against Temple University.

Temple University Victorious in Eastern District

Stradley Ronon represented Temple University in a significant win in *Branch v. Temple Univ., et al.* The matter involved a Plaintiff, who brought race claims under Section 1981 and Title VII for his discipline and termination against Temple and two individual defendants. The Plaintiff also claimed a violation of his FMLA rights and retaliation under all of the statutes. The trial involved over 15 witnesses and over 200 documentary and video exhibits. The Stradley litigation team had five days of trial, and the jury deliberated for six hours before returning a complete defense verdict on all counts.

Temple University Wins in Eastern District

Stradley Ronon represented Temple University in a significant victory in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. The Court granted summary judgment to Temple on all of plaintiff's discrimination claims, entering judgment in Temple's favor and ending the case without the need for a trial. Importantly, plaintiff's argument that Temple should be precluded from offering declarations from any Temple employees as evidence in support of its motion for summary judgment, describing those witnesses as "interested" in an attempt to suggest bias, was squarely rejected by the Court which noted that plaintiff's argument ran counter to current Third Circuit precedent.

Community College of Philadelphia Wins in the Third Circuit

Stradley Ronon attorney Danielle Banks secured a significant victory in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit for the Community College of Philadelphia. The plaintiff, an adjunct professor who works at CCP, claimed that he was not promoted to a full-time position as a result of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and his combined race and gender by the two final decision makers hiring for the position.

Banks filed a motion for summary judgment, arguing that the plaintiff's claim failed because he could not establish that he was qualified for the position. Although the plaintiff had advanced through three rounds of interviews, the final decision makers ultimately discovered that he lacked the necessary credits to qualify for the position.

Judge Quinones Alejandro agreed with Stradley Ronon's argument and determined that the plaintiff failed to state a discrimination claim. Stradley Ronon vigorously opposed the plaintiff's motion for reconsideration, which was denied. In the plaintiff's subsequent appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, Banks again argued that the district court had correctly ruled in CCP's favor, based on the relevant record evidence. The court agreed with all of the points made in the district court's opinion and affirmed summary judgment for CCP.

SEPTA Wins Dismissal on All Counts in Employment Discrimination Case

Stradley Ronon's trial team secured a full defense jury verdict in an employment discrimination case brought against the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA).

Plaintiff filed an administrative complaint in 2012 with the Pennsylvania Human Rights Commission against SEPTA, alleging that she was denied a promotion because of race discrimination, gender discrimination and retaliation for filing a lawsuit against SEPTA. The plaintiff later amended her complaint to include allegations of quid pro quo sexual harassment. Once her claims were filed, the plaintiff began applying for a series of other promotions. By the time the plaintiff filed her civil lawsuit against

SEPTA in 2014, she claimed she had been denied a total of seven promotions because of quid pro quo sexual harassment, gender discrimination and retaliation.

Stradley Ronon represented SEPTA at trial and, after four days of testimony, the jury returned a verdict in SEPTA's favor on all counts.

SEPTA on Track in Eastern District of Pennsylvania Case

Stradley Ronon secured a defense verdict on behalf of SEPTA and its medical director in a retaliation suit filed by the transit agency's former laboratory manager in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. The plaintiff contended that several disciplinary actions taken against her while she was employed in the medical department, including a 30-day suspension without pay and a transfer to a different department, constituted retaliation for the sexual discrimination claim she filed with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. The plaintiff also claimed that her paid suspension fell under the forms of adverse action mentioned by Title VII's substantive provision.

After significantly narrowing the case through motion in limine practice, the Stradley Ronon trial team secured a complete defense jury verdict. The Third Circuit ruled that a suspension with pay does not qualify as an "adverse employment action" under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, affirming the trial court's decision to throw out a retaliation suit against SEPTA.