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From left: Stradley Ronon's Spain & Latin America Practice Group Co-Chair Carolina Cabrera, associates Nicolás Lombo and Gabriela N. Arce de Smith, and Co-Chair Frances Gauthier.

## Diversity – Law Firms

### How A Unique Practice Serves The Community

The Editor interviews **Frances Gauthier**, Diversity Chair of Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP and Co-Chair of the Firm's Spain and Latin America Practice Group and **Carolina Cabrera**, Co-Chair of the Firm's Spain and Latin America Practice Group.

Ms. Gauthier, Of Counsel, practices in Stradley Ronon's Wilmington office while Ms. Cabrera, an Associate, is in the Firm's Philadelphia office. Ms. Gauthier and Ms. Cabrera are members of Stradley Ronon's Business Practice Group. Ms.

Gauthier represents publicly and privately held business entities in a broad range of corporate and commercial matters. Some of Ms. Gauthier's representative matters also include: (1) certification of minority business enterprises and women business enterprises; (2) preparation of Spanish and English versions of transaction documents, (3) representation of clients in international business transactions. Ms. Cabrera focuses her practice on real estate, commercial finance and other general corporate matters.

**Editor:** Tell me a little about Stradley Ronon's Spain and Latin America Practice Group.

**Cabrera:** Stradley Ronon's Spain and Latin America Practice Group is comprised of attorneys with a diverse range of cultural and legal backgrounds and experience. Many of our attorneys have lived in Latin America and Spain and are fluent in Spanish. Our varied intellectual and cultural outlook, real-life international experience,

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rience and comprehensive first-hand knowledge of the region's cultures and business practices has and will to continue to benefit our clients. Our lawyers are members of the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and board members of various nonprofit organizations dedicated to servicing the Hispanic community. Our group is equipped to counsel in numerous practice areas, including litigation, business and financial services, nonprofit and religious organizations, intellectual property and alternative dispute resolution, real estate and tax.

**Editor: When and how was the group started?**

**Gauthier:** Throughout my years of practice for smaller firms, I was often asked to handle transactions involving Latin American countries. In each instance, I had been the only Hispanic attorney at the firm. However, after I joined Stradley in 2005 the firm hired three other Hispanic attorneys, Carolina Cabrera (from Honduras), Gabriela Arce de Smith (from Argentina) and Nicolás Lombo (from Colombia). With our respective backgrounds and the fact that there are other Stradley attorneys who are fluent in Spanish, who have lived in Spanish speaking countries, we agreed that the firm was well-situated to have a Spain and Latin America Practice Group. With our familiarity with Latin American business practices and culture, and our international reach through our Meritas affiliation, we developed a strategic plan to offer these services to clients, which the firm fully supports.

**Editor: Are you aware of other firms that have similar practice groups?**

**Cabrera:** To our knowledge no other law firm has an existing group based here in Philadelphia. There are a number of firms that have similar practice groups based in other large cities such as in New York City, Los Angeles, Miami and Washington, D.C. Stradley Ronon's decision to establish a Spain and Latin America Practice Group was in response to the pressing need to assist the growing Hispanic business community in the Greater Philadelphia region.

**Editor: Do the clients of the Spain and Latin America Practice Group overlap**

**with other groups? How do you go about finding clients?**

**Gauthier:** Stradley Ronon has clients with ties to Spain and Latin America, specifically in our Intellectual Property Practice Group, which routinely registers trademarks and patents in Latin American countries. In addition, our Business Practice Group advises clients that have contracts with distributors in Latin American countries, including Mexico and Argentina. Historically, Stradley Ronon has advised clients that supported the Hispanic community in the Philadelphia region, and our Chairman William Sasso has strong relationships with the Hispanic leaders in the city. Furthermore, the members of our practice group are active in local groups and events benefitting the Hispanic community. We build relationships with the people we interact with and let them know about the services we can provide for them.

**Editor: How does this group contribute to Stradley Ronon's ongoing diversity efforts?**

**Cabrera:** The establishment of the Spain and Latin America Practice Group simply formalizes Stradley Ronon's longstanding commitment to the community where our lawyers work and live, and to promoting minority participation in the legal profession. Varying perspectives and differing views are key to the success of any enterprise servicing the unique needs of both local and international clients. Many of our diverse attorneys make it their personal and professional goal to take an active role in minority and diverse organizations. For example, partner Deborah Hong hosted the national board meeting for the National U.S. Hong Kong Business Association. Stradley Ronon was also one of the few law firms in Philadelphia to have a female managing partner: Jane Landes Foster served as managing partner from 1999 to 2005.

**Editor: What has the response been within and outside of the firm to the Group?**

**Gauthier:** The response has been positive. The partners and associates are enthusiastic about further developing our ties with U.S. companies doing or seeking to do business in Spain or Latin America, and with Spanish and Latin American

companies looking to do the same in the U.S. Our clients are thrilled as well that the firm has committed to developing this practice group and providing it with the resources it needs to grow and help our clients meet their business objectives.

**Editor: Give us a brief background on some of the group's members.**

**Cabrera:** I am originally from Tegucigalpa, Honduras. I work in the firm's Business Practice Group and focus my practice on nonprofit/corporate, real estate and finance matters. During college, I participated in an eight month study abroad program with the University of Valencia, Spain. I am bilingual in both English and Spanish. I am a member of the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and also serve as a board member of Congreso de Latino Unidos, a nonprofit organization serving the educational and social needs of the Hispanic community in the Philadelphia area. I have also served as a past board member of the Hispanic Bar Association of Pennsylvania and President of the HBA's Legal Education Fund, an organization raising scholarship funds for law students.

**Gauthier:** I am a first generation American. My parents emigrated from the Dominican Republic in 1962. I am a member of the firm's Business Practice Group where I focus on representing business entities in a broad range of corporate and commercial matters including corporate governance, alternative entity law, mergers and acquisitions and corporate restructurings. I chair Stradley Ronon's Diversity Group, as well as the ABA Section of Business Law's Diversity Committee. I am also a founding board member and the vice president of the Delaware Hispanic Bar Association.

Another member of our group is Nicolás Lombo. He was born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia and is a member of the firm's nationally recognized Investment Management Group where he assists investment companies, investment advisers and broker-dealers on regulatory and compliance issues. Nicolás is bilingual in Spanish and English. While in law school he served as president of the Association of Hispanic and Latin American Students.

There are more than ten attorneys in the group, however, and this is just a sampling of our backgrounds.