

EQUALITY ACTION CENTER

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025





A Word From Our Director

The Equality Action Center has been working with colleagues to respond to the attack on DEI initiatives. In February we wrote an article in Harvard Business Review, “How to Assess the New Legal Risks of Your DEI Policies.” This spring I appeared on the American Bar Association Labor and Employment Section annual conference and webinar seminar series, discussing the future of DEI. EAC’s evidence-based approach—bias interrupters—both had proven effectiveness and does not single out any group for special treatment. Instead, it interrupts bias in business systems to ensure a consistent employee experience.

We are continuing to work with UCSF to equalize access to career-enhancing opportunities for medical faculty. This year we did three workshops with UCSF Division Chiefs, and built a tool that allows them to track access to opportunities. The National Science Foundation grant that supported this work was terminated abruptly halfway through our experiment. We are seeking alternative funding to continue our work.

We just received a \$200,000 grant from the W.W. Kellogg Foundation, which will enable us to convene 20 to 30 companies to build their capacity to ensure a consistent employee experience in performance evaluations and access to opportunities.



We are also working with UCSF’s Innovation Ventures to explore options for commercializing our intellectual property. Stay tuned!

Our inaugural Partner Accelerator program launched in May in Washington, D.C. Participants loved it: virtually all the presenters and panels received the highest ratings possible.

I have also published a new book, *Outclassed: How the Left Lost the Working Class and How to Win Them Back*. My book tour has taken me to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, Politics & Prose in Washington, D.C., the Brooklyn Public Library in New York City, the Harvard Bookstore in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Mrs. Dalloway’s in Berkeley. As of early June, the book has been reviewed or discussed in the Financial Times, Guardian, San Francisco Chronicle, Boston Globe, New York Post and I have appeared on MSNBC’s Morning Joe and National Public Radio stations in San Francisco and Los Angeles. In mid-May, in conjunction Andrea Dittman of USC Marshall School of Business, I launched the New Class Bubble Quiz, which helps people assess whether they’re middle class or elite; already we have over 16,000 responses. It’s fun, zany and will help our research.

Joan C Williams

Founding Director



OUR MISSION

Equality Action Center at UC Law SF seeks to advance racial, gender, and class equality in the workplace and in politics. Our initiatives address inequality at a structural level with concrete, evidence-based interventions. We lead programs that cultivate leadership and level the playing field for everyone. Our focus is pragmatic: our rigorous research is linked with practical steps to produce social or organizational change within a two- to five-year time frame.

OUR TEAM



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FOUNDING DIRECTOR



DR. RACHEL KORN
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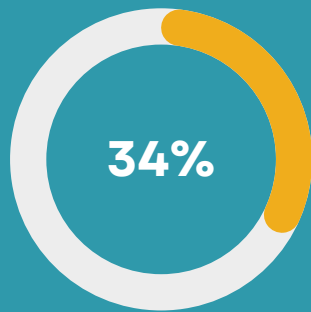
ALINA KILCULLEN
RESEARCH & POLICY FELLOW



ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES IN MEDICINE (ATOM) PROJECT



The ATOM (Access to Opportunities in Medicine) project was launched to address a major, but fixable, reason that women, and women of color in particular, leave the medical field – unfair access to career-enhancing opportunities. Equality Action Center, in partnership with University of California San Francisco, launched the Workplace Experiences Survey (WES) to investigate employee’s perceptions of workplace culture and opportunities available to them and to determine whether there was a level playing field for all groups. Our results showed significant disparities between groups – with Black women, Latinas, and South Asian women reporting some of the worst workplace experiences.



Only 34% of South Asian women reported fair access to career-enhancing assignments compared to 85% of White men.



Almost 70% of Black women, Latinas, and South Asian women reported doing more administrative work compared to only 29% of White men.

In addition, we created the Faculty Tasking Tool, an evidence-based digital tool that allows Division Chiefs of a medical department to easily and systematically track the allocation of work opportunities given to their research faculty. Results showed disparities in the types of opportunities assigned to various groups.

To address these disparities, we created an evidence-based scalable intervention - a customized workshop for the Division Chiefs based on the data collected from the WES and the Tasking Tool, along with strategies to ensure that all groups can have fair access to opportunities in the workplace. As a result of this project, we hope to create a level playing field for all medical professionals and retain the best talent.



REPORT ON INEQUALITY IN THE RESTRUCTURING FIELD



Equality Action Center conducted a large-scale study, commissioned by the American College of Bankruptcy, to examine gender and racial bias in the restructuring field. The Workplace Experiences Survey (WES) was sent to lawyers at over 80 financial advisory firms, law firms, investment banks, and other types of organizations to document lawyers self-reported experiences of workplace culture.

A New Plan of Reorganization

Gender and racial bias in the
restructuring industry



Across these firms, data collected from 764 participants showed substantial levels of inequality in restructuring based on race and gender, age, disability, and LGBTQ+ status. These findings are documented in our most recent published report, “A New Plan of Reorganization: Gender and racial bias in the restructuring industry.” The report also includes our evidence-based Bias Interrupters toolkits – freely available resources that have been accessed over half a million times on our website – which firms in the restructuring industry can use to level the playing field for all groups.





Our annual Leadership Academy is an executive education course empowering law firm partners and in-house counsel to stride confidently to the next level of their careers. With an action-oriented curriculum including strategic decision making, managing gender dynamics, and conflict resolution, participants leave the three-day program reenergized with the hard skills and new network to equip them for success.

The training helps cultivate leadership skills by enabling participants to increase their visibility and value to orgs by leveraging their talents and abilities more strategically. The Leadership Academy has been consistently referred to by participants as “life-changing” since the inaugural 2007 program and has been so impactful that we collaborated with a former attendee to launch a sister program for associates in 2025.

“Career-changing...Nobody ever teaches these things!... Our job is to ensure that female associates and partners at the firm are getting the same opportunities as male associates and partners, and that they know how to recognize and make the most of those opportunities.”

– Stacey Rappaport, LAW alum & executive committee member, Milbank

ATTORNEY TRAININGS

Equality Action Center’s celebrated and intimate attorney trainings distill nearly 30 years of research into practical, evidence based tools designed to help attorneys into the next phase of their careers.





PARTNER ACCELERATOR ACADEMY

Despite advances to gender equity in the workplace, women continue to be underrepresented in law firms at the partnership level. While over 50% of law students and law firm associates are women, they make up less than 24% of equity partners and less than 5% of partners are women of color. With an incredibly successful inaugural program in 2025, receiving perfect ratings from 90% of attendees, the Partner Accelerator Academy is a leadership training that empowers law firm associates to effectively navigate the partner review process and enter partnership with the momentum to succeed.

LEADERSHIP EDGE

Leadership Edge (LE) is a membership program for organizations that strive to level the playing field by addressing the structures that contribute to bias. An alternative to one-off trainings inspiring short-term action, Leadership Edge is designed to provide sustained support to orgs working to push the needle forward.

Programming includes leadership training, professional skill building, and action-oriented conversations around race, gender and first-generation professionals in the workplace. Access is org-wide and designed for both individuals and leaders, enabling organizations to effectively retain, support, and advance diverse talent from within and ensuring a consistent employee experience for all.

