

International Academy of Financial Crime Litigators: Third Anniversary

In celebration of the third anniversary of the [International Academy of Financial Crime Litigators](#), a few of its trailblazing Fellows and allies explain in a Q&A the mission of this high-powered group. Uniting some of the world's top academic and litigation professionals in the field of financial crime, The Academy was established in 2018 by [Stéphane Bonifassi](#) of Bonifassi Avocats (Paris), [Lincoln Caylor](#) of Bennett Jones (Toronto) and [Elizabeth Ortega](#) of ECO Strategic Communications (Miami).



[Basel Institute's Managing Director Gretta Fenner:](#)
(top left)

If you could characterize The Academy in just a few words, what would they be?

A group of outstanding practitioners and academics leading the evolution of financial crime litigation worldwide. A group where friendship and shared goals mean that differences of opinion are not only valued but stimulate candid discussions with the power to change thought and practice.

Why do you think the discussions and dialogues that occur within The Academy are necessary?

Although we all think we are speaking about the same things and are in the same community, the discussions we have enjoyed through The Academy reveal how many different approaches there still are. Bringing these together – across geographical borders and perceived boundaries of sector and specialisation – widens our individual perspectives and helps to drive the entire field of financial crime litigation into the future. The diversity of The Academy, and its courage to address the crucial polemics of the age, are two of its great strengths.

[NYU Professor Jennifer Arlen:](#)
(top right)

Why were you drawn to The Academy, what captured your interest?

I am honored to be a member of The Academy. I was drawn to the Academy by the opportunity to benefit from the expertise and insights of lawyers and other litigation professionals who are intellectual leaders in the area of financial crime. I leave each meeting enriched by the discussion.

Litigator Dorothy Siron:

(bottom left)

What skills and knowledge do you take from your participation in The Academy and apply to other areas of your career?

Being a Fellow of The International Academy of Financial Crime Litigators has certainly made me up my game and has introduced me to stellar professionals at the top of their game. It is this pursuit of excellence that I value and have come to enjoy. I have met and made many friends at The Academy who have inspired me to continue to do good work, to keep abreast of changing times and uphold the pursuit of progress that The Academy treasures.

How does collaborating with professionals in different areas of the legal field strengthen your professionalism?

I feel that the practice of law is a living and breathing regimen that responds to the ever changing landscape of the world we live in. The cross-pollination of the many different legal fields gives firsthand insight into what makes the business world tick, and hence what the current climate and needs of the legal world are. It has enhanced my practice to make me more aware and more fluid in responding to client needs and the courts' direction for change, progress or development. As a white-collar crime/cyber crime litigator, my awareness of current risks and exposures enables me to support my colleagues in the business and transactional areas of legal practice.

Academy Co-Founder and Communicator Elizabeth Ortega:

(bottom right)

What role do you think diversity plays in The Academy and the legal field in general?

The Academy unites academics and litigation service professionals and was created in direct response to a gap in the market. Our mission is to be part of a community that consumes ideas, and while these ideas do not have to align with our own views, we grasp the importance of having a dedicated platform to engage in eloquent dialogue that drives respectful resolution.

This melding of forensics, funders, lawyers, communicators and educators raises and tests ideas to better serve the financial crime sphere. Recently, we virtually engaged in open talks and strong views when considering and ultimately filing an amicus brief in an important case. Our shared interest and particular approach to interpreting the rule of law can only amplify the litigation playing field.

Where do you see The Academy going in the next year and beyond?

Looking forward, we maintain a fellowship that is keen to bond over litigation strategies and best practices. We're just scratching the surface of online communication, mentoring and learning. In this quest for knowledge, we pay our dues and strive to earn our stripes. Fellow Ben Gruenstein coined [#TheAcademyBrass](#) hashtag and we're up for the challenge. Our mission to sharpen our axes and contribute pros and cons to litigation and leadership results in daily actions, from thought-leadership projects to honoring the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg to celebrating International Women's Day.

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