

FIRM NEWS

Schulte partner Michael Swartz commences term as Co-Chair of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

September 27, 2023

Schulte Roth & Zabel partner Michael Swartz has commenced his term as Co-Chair of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Among the country's foremost civil rights organizations, the Lawyers' Committee was formed after President John F. Kennedy convened more than 200 lawyers from across America to "mobilize the nation's leading lawyers as agents of change in the Civil Rights Movement."

The Lawyers' Committee has evolved from volunteers representing individuals to full-time lawyers leading high-impact litigation, fighting injustice and protecting voting rights, equal opportunity in employment, education, housing, and so much more. As President Joe Biden recently noted at the Lawyer's Committee 60th Anniversary Reception at the White House, "civil rights is the unfinished fight of America, and [the Lawyers' Committee is] leading the fight for them after having led the fight for the past 60 years."

As Co-Chair of the Lawyer's Committee Board, Michael will be uniquely positioned to use his extensive experience as a litigator to help lead the organization's mission to use the training and influence of lawyers to move the struggle for the protection of civil rights from the streets to the courts.

"At this critical juncture, particularly as our country's tragic failure to redress past wrongs increasingly comes to light, there is an urgent need for our nation's bar to fight for those who have been discriminated against

and underrepresented within our judicial system and in society,” stated Michael. “I am proud to take on this pivotal role and will work to focus national attention on the ongoing fight for civil rights and to protect our democracy.”

Michael has a long career of pro bono litigation advocating for justice and equality, inside and outside the courtroom. Michael is also Co-Chair of the firm’s Litigation Group and Chair of its Pro-Bono Committee, and served as Co-Chair of the firm’s Task Force for Racial Justice Initiatives, which was formed in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder.

“Michael exemplifies the best of the private bar. From his skillful stewardship of critical nonprofit governance functions to his visionary work as lead counsel in cutting-edge pro bono civil rights litigation, he is well-primed to take up the mantle of leadership and continue the rich history of prior Co-Chairs of the Lawyers’ Committee,” said Damon Hewitt, president and executive director of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

Michael leads the Schulte pro bono litigation team that represents the last three living survivors of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. The lawsuit seeks justice for the survivors and Greenwood, the once prosperous Black community in Tulsa, OK that was attacked by a white mob, including members of the Tulsa Police Department and the Oklahoma National Guard, who killed hundreds of Black residents, injured thousands more and destroyed more than a thousand homes and businesses. The lawsuit seeks to restore the Greenwood neighborhood and otherwise abate the nuisance caused by the Defendants. The case represents one of the most innovative attempts to use existing laws to hold governments accountable for persistent racial inequalities, has garnered significant national attention, and is currently being taught at Harvard Law School.

Most recently, Michael has joined the legal team advocating for justice on behalf of the Palm Springs Section 14 survivors, who had been relegated to a small neighborhood known as “Section 14” because of racist restrictive covenants, only to have the City of Palm Springs and its agents burn and bulldoze their homes in the 1960’s, demolishing the neighborhood to make way for commercial development. A 1968 report from the California attorney general’s office characterized it as a “city-engineered holocaust.”

Michael is head of the firm's Shareholder Activism Litigation Group and is a member of the Executive Committee. His litigation practice includes shareholder activist litigation, securities litigation, private investment fund disputes, M&A litigation and other corporate control disputes.

Practices

LITIGATION

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Attachments

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