



In this installment of the NALSC Member Profile, the spotlight is on one of our newest Board members, Ethel Badawi. Ethel is the co-founder and principal of Pollack Badawi Group (PBG) based out of Washington, DC, where she focuses on placing associates and partners. Specifically, Ethel is most passionate about placing first generation attorneys and attorneys of color. She was the first in her family to attend law school and found it challenging to navigate the legal profession without mentors/role models, so she is seeking to be part of the solution with her recruiting practice.

Growing up in the suburbs of Chicago, Ethel was very involved in dance and performed at the opening ceremonies of the 1994 World Cup!! She also was named the homecoming queen at her high school. She did not dream of becoming a lawyer when she was younger but decided to attend law school because she wanted to be in a solid profession and “followed the crowd” of other twenty-somethings who decided to attend graduate school at that time. Knowing that she did not want to be a doctor, Ethel felt that lawyering was a logical, alternative option. Ironically, she earned her law degree while working as a corporate recruiter by day, foreshadowing what her professional future would hold. She looks back now and acknowledges that recruiting was a “calling” for her, much more than being a lawyer.

Unlike a lot of recruiters who come to find it later in their professional lives, Ethel’s work history has a consistent theme of recruiting throughout. Indeed, during college, she worked in admissions on work study, and her first job out of college was for an economic consulting firm, serving as a recruiting coordinator. She did spend a few years practicing law at Barnes & Thornburg before pivoting to career services work. In 2011, Ethel became the Associate Director at George Washington University Law School’s (her alma mater) Center for Professional Development and Career Strategy, where she honed her skills of career advisement and counseling.

The idea of opening her own legal recruiting shop was born from hours spent running with her current business partner, Abe Pollack. Abe and Ethel worked together at GW Law’s Career Center and spent time running road races together. The adrenaline and ideas were flowing as they debated opening a fitness studio together as their next professional endeavor. That idea was ultimately vetoed (by Ethel’s husband!) and replaced by the smart decision to open their legal recruiting company, which they did in 2018.

One of Ethel’s tactics for staying sane as a legal recruiter is to acknowledge that “you can do everything right and a deal can still fall through” so you must “learn from it and move on.” She’s not one to dwell on past mistakes or lost deals, as she instead focuses on moving forward with her practice. In fact, Ethel believes that her ability to compartmentalize her work is one of her major strengths because she refuses to let her work solely define her. Perhaps her strong sense of perspective comes from the years (2012-2017) she spent living in various parts of North Africa, where she was an avid food and travel blogger. Having that global perspective likely keeps her grounded

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in the daily pendulum swings of legal recruiting.

Ethel credits part of her perspective to the book *An Immense World* by Ed Young, which forced her to see the world in different ways and challenged the traditional presumptions we all have about this world. Perhaps her grounded perspective also comes from losing her father at a young age and being acutely aware that things are fleeting. “Grief has shaped my life in many ways” she shared, and she leans on *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion as a book that helps anchor her with reality and hope.

One of the professional challenges she faces today is the difficulty in finding the time and coordinating the logistics to meet every candidate in person. She loves talking and interacting with her lawyer-candidates and helping them maximize their career potential. She finds that in-person connection is most important and continues to make that a priority in her recruitment.

When she’s not recruiting, Ethel engages in other meaningful work such as focusing on her philanthropic endeavors. Last year, she created a philanthropy leadership program and giving circle for AAPI professionals in the DC area, culminating in a successful number of charitable contributions to local non-profits. She is looking “to break the traditional power dynamics between donors and non-profits” by making philanthropy available to everyone who wants to participate, not just the uber-wealthy.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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It’s difficult not to feel a bit lightweight when comparing one’s guilty pleasures to Ethel’s – she does not watch much TV and does not follow pop culture! As she puts it, “I’m basically a 90-year-old” when it comes to talking about TV, movies, and pop culture. She prefers listening to chamber music and reading but did admit to liking the TV show, *Ted Lasso*!

Ethel will be a huge contributor to the NALSC Board and if you have not had the chance to get to know her, you should do so at the upcoming symposia and conferences. She is full of fresh ideas and perspectives, and we are lucky to have her!

