

# WiS Week 2024

## Leader Spotlight

**WOMEN IN  
SECURITIZATION**

*Renew. Reengage. Reimagine.*



**Michelle Abad**

Partner

**Winston & Strawn LLP.**

**How do you personally define diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and why are these principles important to you?**

To me, DEI stands for 'everyone having either a seat at the table or the opportunity to join it, and feeling supported and empowered to express themselves'. We've started to discuss DEI and associated matters, putting them front and center in our personal and professional lives. I feel that in the escalation and nomenclature process, we have lost the understanding that at the end of the day, we are talking about individuals and their personal awareness of how they go about their daily lives. It is important to always ground DEI at an individual level, and consider how, as a society, we can make each person's life easier and better.

**In your opinion, what are some of the biggest challenges women still face in the finance sector, and what strategies do you believe are effective in addressing these challenges?**

In the long term, the biggest challenge for the industry is building a robust pipeline, not just of women but across all historically underrepresented groups. This ensures we have diverse leadership with diverse lived experiences, who are willing and able to listen and cultivate equitable work environments.

To create and strengthen that pipeline, I believe the industry needs to pay more attention to microaggressions and lingering cultural gender expectations. In my experience, gender inequity is best addressed when managers take a proactive approach in fostering healthy work environments, setting the tone, and allowing us all to do our best and grow.

**What inspired you to pursue a career in structured finance?**

It should come as no surprise that my answer will boil down again to people. I do not think there are many who go to law school with the clear goal of working in structured finance, but I found my groove and passion when I found my crew. From a lawyer's perspective, and I think this is true for other roles within the sector, it's a highly creative field, always keeping you challenged. It's fun!

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### **What does WiS mean to you?**

WiS is so many things, but first and foremost, it helps create support networks. WiS provided a platform where I could connect and create personal relationships with both peers and role models. Those personal relationships make work itself easier, even when negotiating across the table, and just as important, cemented the support, visibility, and sponsorship necessary to grow in my career.

### **What inspires you to continue to grow in this industry?**

As a recently appointed partner in a large law firm, I am determined to build that pipeline!

### **What is your favorite book?**

"I Remember Nothing" by Nora Ephron is my go-to read when I need a heavy dose of fun and wit.