

# Critical Conversations on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion,

and Racism

# **CONVERSATIONS**

Being Seen & Heard: How Can We Create More Space for Diversity & Inclusion in the Legal Market?

Mirna Santiago: Bias Buster Who "Rules the Law"

Effects of COVID on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Efforts

Erica Lai: Remaining Hopeful

# **LEGACY**

2021 NAWL Rising List

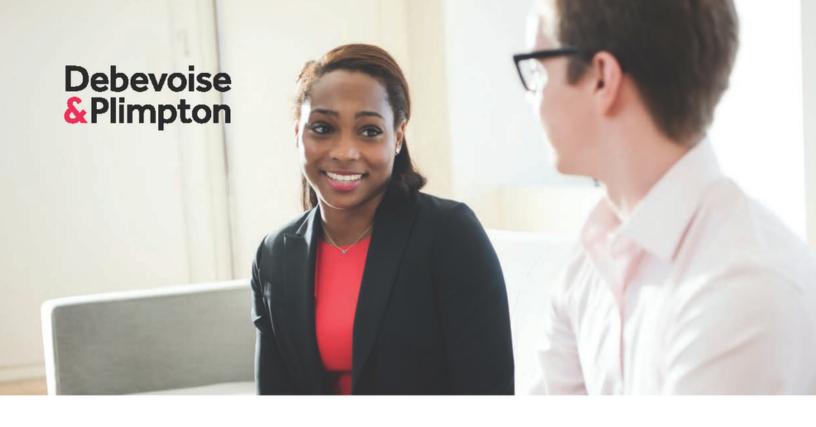
NAWL Board Member Reflections

# **MEETING THE MOMENT**

NAWL Letter to Biden Administration

NAWL Statement on the Derek Chauvin Verdict

NAWL Condemns Recent Acts of Violence Committed Against the Asian American Community



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# WOMEN LAWYERS JOURNAL

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Send submissions via email to iretamoza@nawl.org.

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- Advocacy via NAWL's Advocacy Committee and NAWL's Amicus Committee, which reviews requests for participation as amicus curiae in cases of interest to NAWL members. A sampling of recent issues includes enforcement of Title IX, employment discrimination, women's health, and domestic violence issues.
- Community outreach through Nights of Giving. Throughout each year NAWL hosts a series of philanthropic networking events across the country to support organizations whose mission is to empower women and children.
- Continued learning with the Women Lawyers Journal®. This national publication provides a forum for the exchange of information and presentation of articles about women in the law and society.

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# CONVERSATION WITH THE EDITORS

In May 2021, the *Women Lawyers Journal* celebrated the 110th anniversary of its first publication in 1911.





To commemorate the 110th anniversary of the Women Lawyers Journal, the current Co-Executive Editors, Kirtana Kalavapudi (top picture), and Courtney Worcester (middle picture), and the NAWL Publications Manager, Isabell Retamoza (bottom picture), recorded a NAWLTalks podcast about the incredible and important legacy of the journal, and the call to action they hope to communicate to our members in this issue. What follows is an excerpt of their conversation.

**Isabell:** First, I want to thank you both for joining me today! I'm thrilled to be talking with you both today about the legacy of the *Women Lawyers Journal* and this issue of the journal. So, Courtney, as we celebrate the 110th anniversary of the journal, could you tell us about its history?

Courtney: Sure! I'd be happy to! The Women Lawyers Journal has been around since 1911 and when it first started the best way to think about it is that it almost served as what we would think of today as a listserv for women attorneys. As they were admitted to the bar, they could add their name to the journal and it really was just a way for them to communicate with each other.

Obviously, over time it has evolved into a full-fledged journal. The journal serves as a way for us to communicate and publicize NAWL members, their activities and address current events and issues that are important to our members.

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# "Simply having the courage and humility to start these difficult conversations and continue them so that we are able to ignite further change" - Kirtana Kalavapudi

**Isabell:** Thank you, Courtney! As you described the journal's legacy is founded in meeting the moment for women lawyers across the country so let's talk about how the journal and this issue, in particular, are meeting the moment today.

Kirtana, what are your thoughts on this issue?

**Kirtana:** My thoughts on this issue are a continuation of our last issue which talked about "looking inward to ignite change." And in light of everything that's happened in the last year with regards to the pandemic highlighting all the inequities whether economic, social, and even legal across the country, this issue is focusing on just that, the importance of addressing systemic racism within the context of the legal field as well as raising awareness, and raising the bar on how we could increase equity, diversity, and inclusion in the legal field.

It's also such a multi-faceted approach to this issue in talking about it from a place of raising awareness. Simply having the courage and humility to start these difficult conversations and continue them so that we are able to ignite further change and really start to see diversity, inclusion, and equity increasing in the legal field; and even serve as a catalyst for igniting that change in other aspects of our country. Courtney, what are your thoughts?

Courtney: I agree! I think what was interesting to see was how the various articles came together for this issue. When you start talking about wanting to create an issue that's focused on racism and the legal community's response to it -- that's a very broad topic. The issue could cover a lot of different aspects and what I found fascinating, and I'd like to say it was planned but I think it just came together that way, we ended up with articles focused on the positives that we've seen over the past year and the changes that we've seen.

For example, we have the interview with Kelly Daniel, who's the first Black Editor in Chief of the University of Kentucky's Law School Journal, and what an amazing accomplishment that is for her. We also have information from Dr. Abrahams that talks about how unlike in 2008, when we went through economic struggles, this time we didn't see diversity budgets getting cut to the extremes and we didn't see the same level of layoffs that were happening to women attorneys and minority attorneys. Then on the opposite spectrum, we have the interview with Dr. Destiny Peery which reflects on the ongoing challenges that law firms are still struggling with. Overall I thought this issue of the journal came together nicely to show both how much progress we've made in a lot of areas but still how much more there is to do.

**Isabell:** Thank you both Courtney and Kirtana! I think too this issue not only covers such a range of important topics, but also showcases the leaders that are doing the work of ensuring and advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal field. This issue is a fantastic tribute to all these women and the work they do.

Now, I would love to do more of a deep dive into the content and talk about the articles that you both wrote for this issue. Courtney, in your article featuring an interview with the APABA-DC President Erica Lai, you titled the article, "Remaining Hopeful." Could you tell us what Erica Lai is remaining hopeful about and maybe what we should be continuing to be hopeful for?

Courtney: Absolutely! It was such a treat to get to know Erica. Over the past year, APABA-DC has been putting on a variety of different seminars and CLE's for their members and for the general public that focused on trying to tackle some of the difficult conversations and issues around the rise in hate crimes against the community.

Against that backdrop, it is amazing that she is so hopeful. Something I took away from speaking with her is leading an affinity bar is a lot of work and difficulty on a good day, and then you add to that, a pandemic in which everything and everyone has gone remote and working from home and you're dealing with all of the competing pressures and time commitments. Then you add, thinking that this was going to be an economic hit to minority and women attorneys and how can we make sure 2008 doesn't repeat itself.

Then at the same time, we see the rise in the numbers of hate crimes against the Asian American community. Through these competing events and issues, how can it all be tackled as an affinity bar, and part of tackling all of this is recognizing what you can't do. As lawyers, we are not experts on this, and can't necessarily fix every problem.

Then it never quite seems to happen. We see some progress but it's never the progress you think you're going to see. This time a lot of people, including Erica, are hopeful that we're going to see more significant change because this time it feels different.

It's hard to quantify but with what we have seen over the past year with the level of engagement, and the depth of engagement with people continuing to be engaged when potentially the issue leaves the front page of the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal, these issues remain front of mind. With all of this in mind, Erica remains hopeful that this time we are going to see more of a fundamental change in the legal field compared to what we've seen in the past.

despite the very tragic events that have occurred over the past year, the level of engagement within the community and with allies is unlike anything we've seen before." - Courtney Worcester

Through all of this, it's imperative to try to find your voice and find the best way that you can add to the conversation to be accretive instead of additional. Because there's always a concern, and Erica spoke about this during our interview, if things get diluted, the message gets lost. So, Erica is hopeful in part because, despite the very tragic events that have occurred over the past year, the level of engagement within the community and with allies is unlike anything we've seen before.

For those of us who have been in the legal field for a while, we can become a bit jaded because we've heard and said, This is going to be the change, right? This is going to be the event. From now on, we will have increased numbers of women and minorities in law firms as associates, as equity partners, and general counsels that are more representative of a diverse group.

Isabell: Thank you, Courtney. You talked about earlier how this issue of the journal highlights a lot of positive change that has occurred over the past year while also illustrating the work that still needs to be done.

In this issue, Kirtana wrote featuring an interview with Dr. Destiny Peery, a social psychologist, legal scholar, and researcher for the annual NAWL Survey on the Promotion and Retention of Women in Law Firms. Your article looks at the ongoing challenges and issues within the legal field. Kirtana, could you share with us a few key insights from your conversation with Dr. Peery?

**Kirtana:** Thanks, Isabell. In my conversation with Dr. Peery, she really emphasized the importance of entire law firms taking on the responsibility to not

# "It will be difficult, it will be messy, and can be uncomfortable but growth comes from discomfort." - Kirtana Kalavapudi

only understand their own biases in sitting down and taking the time to ask themselves the difficult questions but also engage in ongoing evaluations and/or assessments of those biases and stereotypes. Often, we think of diversity and inclusion trainings as a 'check the box' exercise in which you attend a training or a CLE for an hour and then you move on.

This was one of my takeaways from my conversation with Dr. Peery was that we must engage in this ongoing evaluation and have open yet difficult conversations with one another in a safe space. Oftentimes when events occur back to back that precipitate that change that Courtney had mentioned it is discussed for a few weeks or a few months and then gets put on the back burner. I believe that this time it's different. Not only are, unfortunately, events happening one after the other creating momentum but additionally, there has been this collective dedication and interest in educating ourselves about how we think, why we think the way we think, and then what are some ways that we can think a little bit differentlywhich starts with self-awareness and educating ourselves.

Dr. Peery mentioned that oftentimes in any sort of organizational setting, whether it's a law firm or any other type of business, there tends to be a focus on looking to the person of color or persons of color for that education. Which ends up being quite burdensome because not only is that person of color or persons of color already dealing with biases and stereotypes on a daily basis whether in the workplace and or outside of the workplace but are also then charged with educating their peers. Dr. Peery hopes that law firms and organizations will start to focus on doing the work themselves, and more specifically starting at the top.

The leaders of the firm need to be proactive in having these conversations and having them regularly, working with outside consultants to then get the expertise, reframe the conversation so that it is productive and then people can walk away with the confidence to then interact with their peers and make those necessary changes.

Another insight from Dr. Peery, and I have noticed this as well, is acknowledging that we all have biases and stereotypes and taking that time to find our humility and doing the work of really learning about the experiences of persons of color such as reading books, talking to individuals and creating that space for people of color to share their truth. This was the larger theme that I understood from my conversation with Dr. Peery was how can we create that space for people of color to not only be seen and heard but also be included.

Once we're able to have those conversations and create that safe space for one another, I would like to think and I'm hopeful that we will start to see that change. It will be difficult, it will be messy, and can be uncomfortable but growth comes from discomfort.

Lastly, I believe that no matter what the issue tends to be, we need to encourage individuals to be vulnerable and remind one another that this is a strength rather than a weakness. This is the unifying truth of my conversation with Dr. Peery is that sharing your story and being vulnerable places everyone on a level playing field because all of us have experienced various adversities and various difficulties and once we start sharing those stories and genuinely listening with empathy and then acting with empathy, then I believe we will start to see the necessary change.







# **Investing in diversity, equity & inclusion** pays off for everyone.

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# NAWL PRESIDENT REMARKS AT 2021 MID-YEAR MEETING

According to Webster's Dictionary, "Resilience" is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, toughness. And the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape or elasticity.

Psychologists and human development experts speak of resilience as the 7 "C's": competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping, and control.

As I think about resilience, I rewind the clock to this time last year. The news of COVID and the potential implications of a global pandemic had just begun to hit the mainstream. We were in the final planning weeks before our Mid-year meeting. We started to see in-house departments begin to restrict travel and participation in conferences. We knew we needed to adjust – we could not hold a meeting if many of us could not participate. And what about our speakers? Our sponsors had generously given to support the event. The contracts with the venue and other vendors?

Over the course of one weekend, we quickly shifted and created a new possibility. We canceled the in-person event – but we were among the first to shift to a 100% virtual program. Thanks to our committee, the Board, the NAWL staff, and the willingness of our speakers, sponsors, and our members, we recovered quickly, and we sprung back into shape.

We held an outstanding inaugural virtual conference and have gone to deliver innovative and best-in-class virtual programming at our Annual Meeting, the General Counsel Institute, affinity group events, and other virtual events that delivered substantial value to our participants and our sponsors.

For me personally, the past 8 months as NAWL President has strengthened my resilience. In many ways, it is not at all the year that I had hoped for.

But, as I have overcome my disappointment in not being able to connect in person, I have found greater purpose in our Mission.

In our voice and the role, we play as advocates. In supporting the advancement of our members and advocating for the dignity of women and the equality of women under the law.

In working with my fellow board members, Karen Richardson, the NAWL staff, and with our outstanding volunteers to strengthen this organization, to establish the infrastructure that is expanding our reach and amplifying our voice while giving our members greater opportunities.

I still miss being able to spend time with all of you whom I know very well and to get the opportunity to make new connections with those of you I have not yet met. I miss being able to make an in-person toast to the planning committee co-chairs, Heather Stenmark and Lisa Hamasaki, and the Planning Committee members on a job very well done.

But it is an outstanding honor to lead this historic organization during a time of immense challenge, profound change, and a great opportunity. I am incredibly excited about all we have accomplished and all that is yet to come over the next months.



# NAWL WRITES TO THE WHITE HOUSE

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The President
The White House
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Dear President Biden:

The National Association of Women Lawyers ("NAWL") congratulates you and Vice President Kamala Harris on your election and inauguration to the Presidency and Vice Presidency of the United States.

NAWL's mission is to provide leadership, a collective voice, and essential resources to advance women in the legal profession and advocate for the equality of women under the law. Since 1899, NAWL has empowered women lawyers and cultivated a diverse membership dedicated to equity, mutual support, and collective success. Your Administration's recent efforts to advance gender equality and equal rights have made it clear that our foundational principles in this area are aligned. NAWL is grateful to have an Administration prepared to address the needs of women.

To that end, NAWL would welcome the opportunity to serve as a resource to your Administration in its efforts to fight for women's equality. NAWL enjoys a long-standing history as a respected proponent for the advancement of women lawyers and women's equality under the law. NAWL is uniquely positioned to harness legal expertise and networks across the country and, through those resources, convene various and sometimes competing stakeholders to find practical solutions and reach collective consensus.

Additionally, as the Administration continues to develop policy that impacts our constituency, we call upon you to address several priorities critical to the advancement of women lawyers and women's equality:

## **Judicial Appointments**

We applaud your historic appointments of diverse leaders, women, and LGBT+ individuals to your cabinet and other senior posts. We were inspired by your appointment of Vanita Gupta to the role of Assistant Attorney General. In 2016, NAWL recognized Ms. Gupta for her professional achievement, positive influence, and valuable contribution to women in the law and in society by presenting her with NAWL's Arabella Babb Mansfield Award. In the spirit of these appointments, we urge you to fulfill your campaign promise of appointing Black women to the federal judiciary, including the Supreme Court of the United States.

# **Gender Policy Council**

We also applaud your Executive Order establishing a Gender Policy Council during Women's History Month on International Women's Day. The Council's direct access to the White House is critical to collaboration on decisions that impact women. It is imperative that the Council remains fully funded and staffed for the duration of your term so that equitable policies remain at the forefront of the Administration's agenda.

# NAWL WRITES TO THE WHITE HOUSE

# Reversing the Impact of COVID-19 on Women

We are grateful that one of your top priorities is reigning in the COVID-19 pandemic. As your Administration is well-aware, those most impacted by the virus are women, especially women of color. The pandemic has presented issues of increased gender-based violence, food insecurity, job loss, and pay disparity, while it has highlighted the shortcomings in access to childcare and leave policies. As millions of American women struggle, many have been forced to give up on their own ambitions. In addition to slowing the spread of the virus, we ask that the Administration thoughtfully develop strategies to reverse the professional and economic losses women have suffered in the pandemic and implement policies designed to empower all women culturally, economically, politically, and socially long after the virus has abated.

# **Equal Rights Amendment**

Finally, we call upon you to work with Congress to remove the Equal Rights Amendment's ratification deadline and urge the U.S. Archivist to include the Equal Rights Amendment as the 28th Amendment to the United States Constitution. NAWL was one of the first national organizations to endorse the ERA and was present for its first reading and presentation at the National Women's Conference in 1923. In 2020, Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the ERA since Congress proposed the amendment in 1972, pushing the ERA across the constitutional threshold for ratification. In sum, ratification of a constitutional prohibition against gender-based discrimination is long overdue.

Action from the White House supporting inclusion and justice for all is essential in amplifying the collective voice of people of all races, ethnicities, gender identities, and sexual orientations, and providing America with solutions to the issues we have faced since our nation's founding. As the oldest national bar association focused on women lawyers and equality for women, NAWL reiterates its offer to serve your Administration with NAWL's institutional knowledge and resources on the issues impacting our constituents.

We are committed to serving with you to address this critical agenda. Your success in the Office of the President is all Americans' success.

Congratulations and best wishes,

Karen M. Richardson Executive Director

cc:

Office of the Vice President
Office of Counsel to the President and Vice President
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# NAWL STATEMENT ON THE DEREK CHAUVIN VERDICT APRIL 20, 2021

As the Honorable Justice Thurgood Marshall stated, "[i]n recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute." George Floyd was more than a movement, he was a son, a father, a brother, a partner, a human. The American justice system has for too long neglected to ensure that justice is rendered equally, without prejudice, across all humanity. In finding Derek Chauvin guilty of the murder of Mr. Floyd, the American justice system moved one step closer to fulfilling its true promise.

But even as we applaud the guilty verdict, the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) recognizes that there is still much work to be done to achieve racial justice in America. NAWL is committed to being part of that work – within its own organization, in the legal profession, and in the country overall. Together we can ensure that we continue to move toward a more just and inclusive society.



# **BEING SEEN & HEARD**

# **How Can We Create More Space for Diversity & Inclusion** in the Legal Market?

Written By Kirtana Kalavapudi (pictured left), Policy Analyst for the Social Security Administration & the Co-Executive Editor of the Women Lawyers Journal

"Diversity is having a seat at the table. Inclusion is having a voice. Belonging is having that voice be heard." - Liz Fosslein

The 2020 Report on Diversity in U.S. Law Firms shows that while law firms in the United States have made some progress in increasing diversity and inclusion, it has been relatively modest. Specifically, the report found that 26.48 percent of associates were people of color, 15.17 percent of associates were women of color, 47.45 percent were women, 10.23 percent of all partners in major U.S. law firms were people of color, less than four percent of all partners were women of color, and 25.05 percent of the partners in these firms were women. (1)

Diving deeper, we see that people of color remain woefully underrepresented in major U.S. law firms in relation to their presence in the total population in the U.S. While Black individuals make up 13.4 percent of the total population in the U.S., the percentage of Black associates increased above 5 percent for the first time in 2020. Comparably, Latinx individuals make up 18.5 percent of the total population in the U.S., but the percentage of Latinx associates increased to only 5.64 percent in 2020.

https://www.nalp.org/uploads/2020 NALP Diversity Report.pdf

Meanwhile. American Indian or Native Alaskan individuals made up 1.3 percent of the total population in the U.S. yet only 0.17 percent of all associates were Native American or Alaska Native in 2020. Further. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander individuals made up 0.2 percent of the total population in the U.S., but a surprising 0.08 percent of all associates were Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. (2.3)

To find out what's going on, I talked with Dr. Destiny Peery, J.D./Ph.D., a noted social psychologist, and legal scholar, about the root causes of this lack of diversity and inclusion in law firms, actionable steps that law firms can take in order to increase representation of people of color at all levels in their firms, and the broader policy changes that need to be implemented within the legal market to attract and retain people of color, women of color, and women. Below is a largely paraphrased summary of the conversation with Dr. Peery on February 24, 2021.

[1] National Association for Law Placement (NALP). (2021). 2020 Report on Diversity in U.S. Law Firms. https://www.nalp.org/uploads/2020 NALP Diversity Report.pdf [2] U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts: United States Population Estimates (2019, July 1). https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219 [3] National Association for Law Placement (NALP). (2021). 2020 Report on Diversity in U.S. Law Firms.

# Root Causes for the Slow Progress in Increasing Diversity & Inclusion in Law Firms

Despite evidence showing that businesses benefit (i.e., increased profitability, stronger talent, and greater creativity and innovation) from having a diverse and inclusive workforce, Dr. Peery stated, "Many law firms in the United States are not yet convinced that they should make diversity and inclusion a priority." (4,5) Instead, many law firms stick to their comfort zone when it comes to hiring practices and career development for people of color, women of color, and women.

Many firms continue to rely on traditional hiring practices where they seek summer associates or first-year associates from "elite" law schools rather than expanding their search to, for example, all of the law schools in a particular geographic area. Additionally, many firms continue to rely on strategies such as using status credentials like class rank instead of considering the quality of the applicant's writing, research, or negotiation skills that they have obtained from real-world experiences before or during their law school careers.

Further, law firms seem hesitant to implement structured interviews where an applicant is asked only about their job-relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities and how they would apply them to successfully perform the job of an associate.

These structured interviews would forgo the common focus on personal information, connections to the interviewer, or other non-job-related information about the applicant.

While some law firms have publicly acknowledged the importance of diversity and inclusion through diversity statements on their websites or the retention of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Officer, these efforts have resulted in, at best, incremental progress. In major law firms across the United States, associates of color increased only about 1.0 percentage point from 2019 to 2020, and associates who are Black women increased by only 0.10 percentage points from 2009 to 2020. (6) Further, NAWL has reported as recently as 2020 that firms generally "remain reluctant to engage in the processes most likely to reduce biased decision-making and prefer activities that signal a commitment to diversity but that are not guaranteed to produce it."(7) While many firms have implemented bias-interrupting practices at recruitment and hiring, those practices are not similarly implemented at other decision points such as distribution of work assignments, and/or business professional development opportunities, mentorships, and promotions. As noted by Dr. Peery, "a pattern of significant attrition between entry-level associates, nonequity partners, and equity-partners persists for every group except for white men."

<sup>[4]</sup> Atcheson, S. (2018, September 5). Embracing Diversity and Fostering Inclusion Is Good For Your Business. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/shereeatcheson/2018/09/25/embracing-diversity-and-fostering-inclusion-is-good-for-your-business/? sh=2d9f502e72b1

<sup>[5]</sup> Eswaran, V. (2019, April 29). The business case for diversity in the workplace is now overwhelming. World Economic Forum. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/04/business-case-for-diversity-in-the-workplace/

<sup>[6]</sup> National Association for Law Placement (NALP). (2021). 2020 Report on Diversity in U.S. Law Firms. https://www.nalp.org/uploads/2020 NALP Diversity Report.pdf

<sup>[7]</sup> National Association for Women Lawyers (NAWL) (2020). 2020 Survey Report on the Promotion and Retention of Women in Law Firms. www.nawl.org

Additionally, simply because a person of color has been hired at a law firm, does not mean that they are not subject to the biases and stereotypes of others in the law firm or in the broader legal market (i.e., courtrooms, client meetings, etc.). For example, a black woman, who is "immaculately," dressed in business attire and works at the law firm as an associate, is asked by her white, male associate to make photocopies for him because the black woman does not look like a lawyer. (8) When compared to white men, people of color and women seem to be held to higher standards of competence as they are "significantly penalized for marginal errors" and are less likely to recover from making those errors, which then adversely affects their potential for promotions and career development opportunities within the law firm. (9)

Further, while research demonstrates that women continue to experience gender stereotypes such as women being "less competent, ambitious, and competitive" than men, those same qualities are exactly what is required for women to succeed in the workplace.(10) Women of color have reported that they are perceived either as being too aggressive or outspoken or too docile or meek by their colleagues, opposing counsel, and judges. (11) Dr. Peery noted, "For women of color, in particular, the impact of these biases is two-fold: being a racial minority in a profession that is majority white and being women in a profession where men remain the majority." (12) Until law firms commit to operating outside of their comfort zones with regards to hiring and retention practices, we will likely continue to see only modest increases in the representation of people of color, women of color, and women in the legal market.

# **Actionable Steps Law** Firms Can Implement to Increase Diversity & Inclusion

First, law firms must genuinely decide whether they are willing to commit to more than "window dressing," (i.e., issuing a diversity statement on their website or recruiting a DEI officer or consultant). If they are, firms need to start with engaging in a comprehensive selfinquiry that requires active participation from the leaders of the firm in intentional and productive conversations about DEI. Dr. Peery explained, "Such a self-inquiry may be challenging at first because many people, law firm leaders, and firm attorneys included, do not yet appreciate and acknowledge the role biases and stereotypes play in the law firm environment and the legal profession. For example, it is easy to state the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace, but it may prove more difficult to recruit diverse candidates without an acknowledgment of the barriers that keep diverse candidates out of hiring pools and that drive them out of law firms and the legal profession." Firms need to begin their work on these issues with questions such as: "Does our acknowledge that there may be biases or stereotypes at play in our decisions? What are some of those biases or stereotypes? How or why did those biases or stereotypes develop"?

<sup>[8]</sup> Melaku, T. (2019, August 7). Why Women and People of Color in Law Still Hear "You Don't Look Like a Lawyer." Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2019/08/why-women-and-people-of-color-in-law-still-hear-you-dont-look-like-a-lawyer [9] Id

<sup>[10]</sup> Peery, D. Brown, P. Letts, E. (2020). Left Out and Left Behind. American Bar Association. https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/women/leftoutleftbehind-int-f-web-061020-003.pdf [11] Id. [12] See Id.

These conversations provide the necessary space for individuals and organizations to become aware of, acknowledge, and accept their own biases and stereotypes.

Second, after engaging in this comprehensive self-inquiry, firms can gain a deeper understanding of how biases and stereotypes negatively influence their hiring and retention practices by seeking counsel from DEI experts who can assess these practices and help them implement systemic changes that make a difference. With respect to recruitment and hiring, Dr. Peery stated, "If law firms want more diverse hiring pools, they will need to systematically expand the search for applicants beyond 'elite' law schools."

Further, law firms should move to evaluate applicants based on their legal research, writing, negotiation skills, and other real-world experience: implement structured interviews that ask all applicants the same questions to evaluate their legal knowledge, skills, and abilities and determine whether the applicant can perform the job in the firm; and move away from informal interviews that do not demonstrate that the applicant has the professional expertise and commitment to be a successful attorney at the firm. Implementing such systemic changes could increase the hiring and retention of people of color, women of color, and women at both the entry and lateral levels within law firms. Dr. Peery noted that law firms "need to understand that this is a long process" that involves frequent check-ins on whether the firm has actually made progress on increasing DEI.

Last but not least, Dr. Peery explained, "The entire law firm has to take on the responsibility and reestablish the norms for culture change. The leaders of a law firm need to be proactive in addressing these issues to reduce the burden on people of color." These norms for cultural change include adopting a growth mindset to learn more about each other and unlearn old behaviors and habits (i.e., biases and stereotypes) that are harmful to people of color, women of color, and women;

listening with empathy so that people of color, women of color, and women feel seen, heard, and valued; and adopting the feedback from these groups to implement additional systemic changes needed within the law firm, thereby creating and maintaining a diverse, inclusive, and equitable work environment.

# Broader Policy Changes That Need to Be Implemented in the Legal Market to Attract & Retain People of Color, Women of Color, & Women

These recent modest increases in the representation of people of color, women of color, and women at major law firms demonstrate that there is also more work to be done within the broader legal profession in the United States. Dr. Peery mentioned, "A broadly recommended policy change that has been of interest lately is encouraging more law schools to drop the LSAT as the required standardized test for law school admissions and instead allow other standardized tests such as the GRE to qualify students as well." For instance, the University of Arizona College of Law, Harvard Law, Northwestern University, Georgetown University, the University of Hawaii Law School, and Washington University in St. have voluntarily dropped requirement to provide LSAT scores in the application process.

Removing the LSAT requirement offers significant benefits such as reducing test preparation and registration costs for applicants, saving applicants time and money by taking only one standardized test rather than multiple tests, and improving fairness and equity for postgraduate students since standardized tests are often not a valid demonstration of an individual's potential or ability to succeed in law school.(13) Further, to attract a diverse student body, law schools need to reconsider their admissions criteria with regards to the minimally acceptable GPA as well as evaluate the applicant's realworld skills gained from extracurricular activities, internships, and part- or full-time employment during or after college. Dr. Peery explained, "Research has shown that there are often no significant correlations between having certain credentials like a high GPA or LSAT score and success in law school or as a practicing lawyer." Removing the LSAT as a requirement in the law school admissions process and shifting the focus from credentials to skills and abilities would diversify the applicant pool, thereby allowing more people of color, women of color, and women to enter law school and the legal profession.

Law schools, law firms, and bar associations could do more to engage individuals at a younger age through educational outreach programs, thereby inspiring them to pursue college and law school. For instance, Black and Latinx law students at the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law teach law-related courses to local innercity middle and high school students. Brooklyn Law School, Columbia

Law School and Fordham University of Law all participate in the M.Y.L.E program (Motivating Youth Through Legal Education) in which law students and associates from New York law firms mentor high school students in a yearlong mock debate program on constitutional issues. The year-long program offers the opportunity for these high school students to establish a mentoring relationship with, and gain one-on-one tutoring and guidance from, law students and practicing lawyers. The School for Law and Justice (SLJ) Program is an academic partnership between Brooklyn Law School and the Urban Assembly High School. This Program offers many educational activities such as hosting SLJ students from the program's constitutional law class for a day at Brooklyn's law school, SLJ students participating on college informational panels, and introducing SLJ students to legal careers at luncheons. (14)

The Cleveland Bar Association has an education initiative that has students, faculty, staff, and alumni from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law work with public high schools in Cleveland on several programs: partnering with high school teachers to "team-teach" a practical law class, Street Law; helping high school students prepare for mock trial competitions that are judged by municipal court judges and attorneys. Several other law schools such as Columbia Law School, Widener University, Vermont Law School, and University of Virginia School of Law also engage in similar efforts to have their law students team-teach constitutional law or criminal law to high students in their local areas.



# **Final Thoughts**

The promotion of DEI is more than a "check the box" exercise and requires sustained and ongoing efforts at all levels in the legal profession. (15) Individuals and organizations must continually engage in an intentional and meaningful self-inquiry of their biases and stereotypes; educate themselves on how to best correct those biases and stereotypes without placing the burden on people of color, women of color, and women; and implement systemic changes that will result in more than modest increases in the representation of people of color, women of color, and women in the legal profession. (16)

Failure to engage in these efforts will likely mean that the legal profession will continue to see fewer diverse individuals pursuing careers in the legal profession or employment at law firms, lower levels of creativity and innovation, inhospitable work environments leading to increased attrition at all levels of the law firm (which is costly to firms), loss of clients leading to lower profitability, and a decrease in competition in the national and global markets. Ultimately, the legal profession has more to lose by staying within its comfort zone and paying only lip service to DEI. Now is the time to address and resolve the lack of representation of people of color, women of color, and women in the legal profession.

[15] Runyon, N. (2021, March 1). Midsize law firm innovation moves to advance Diversity & Inclusion. Thomson Reuters. https://www.legalexecutiveinstitute.com/midsize-law-firm-advancing-diversity-inclusion/#

[16] Holliway, K. (2015, April 1). Black people are not here to teach you: What so many white Americans just can't grasp. Salon.

https://www.salon.com/2015/04/14/black\_people\_are\_not\_here\_to\_teach\_you\_what\_s o many white americans just cant grasp partner/

# Reflections from NAWL's Newest Executive Committee Member



Sandra Yamate is the CEO of the Institute for Inclusion in the Legal

NAWL Board Member. Sandra Yamate is transitioning into a new role at NAWL as she joins the NAWL Board Executive Committee. We asked Sandra her thoughts on how NAWL has impacted her career and life. This is what she had to say.

I love being part of NAWL. Had someone told me that I'd feel this way when I first got involved with NAWL, I would have been surprised. But, as they say, we don't know what we don't know: it never occurred to me that I was missing out. I didn't perceive that I was missing something by not being active in NAWL. After all, I was already active in assorted other bar associations, both general mainstream ones and specialty, minorityfocused ones. I'd even helped found several of them. I felt like whatever part of a lawyer desires, or is required, to be part of a professional organization was thoroughly satisfied. I couldn't have been more wrong.

In NAWL, I've learned that even when I've been out of law school for 30+ years, there is still much more I can learn, even in my own field. I've built a career working in the DEI space in the legal profession and am used to telling others, to being the subject matter expert. In NAWL, however, I have learned firsthand about building bridges across lines of difference with women who are not Asian American, or who are a generation or two younger than me, or (heaven forbid!) on the other side of the political spectrum. That's a huge part of what I love about NAWL: it's a big tent that brings together women in the legal profession who can differ in myriad ways, yet embraces and celebrate those differences, united by their desire to advance women in this profession and advocate for women's rights. I know that this has helped me grow both personally and professionally. It got me out of my echo chamber and, while that's not always comfortable, it is unexpectedly thrilling and liberating to challenge one's own views and values.

Moreover, as I age, there's something energizing about continuing to learn and improve. It's nice to realize that your best days aren't behind you because you are continuing to grow and become better as a lawyer and a person. I've run across too many lawyers who, as they approach and enter retirement, feel that professionally, they're in a downward trajectory with little to look forward to as a lawyer. NAWL's work - its mission, its advocacy, and the legacy it continues to build – distinguishes it from other bar associations and professional organizations. That's what makes it special. And feeling part of that dispels any feelings of losing one's relevance and currency as a lawyer.

Now that I've experienced NAWL, I wouldn't dream of leaving. Indeed, I'd like to see more women lawyers enjoy the sisterhood and camaraderie I've experienced as part of NAWL. I wasted too many years not having that experience. I'd like to see other women avoid making the same mistake I made. Join NAWL. It's an investment in yourself.

# Reflections from one of NAWL's Newest Board Members

Tamela Merriweather is transitioning into a new role at NAWL as she joins the NAWL Board. We asked Tamela her thoughts on how NAWL has impacted her career and life. This is what she had to say.



**President & Assistant General Counse** at Northern Trust Corporation.

My parents instilled in me and my two sisters that all people are fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God. Those powerful beliefs allowed me to imagine boundless possibilities for my role in the world, possibilities that would not be hindered by my gender. As an adult, these beliefs empower me to continue to find ways to make that world a reality. It also means that I have to acknowledge that while I know my full value and worth, the world around me discounts my value because I am a woman, a wife, a mother, and a Black descendant of enslaved Africans in America.

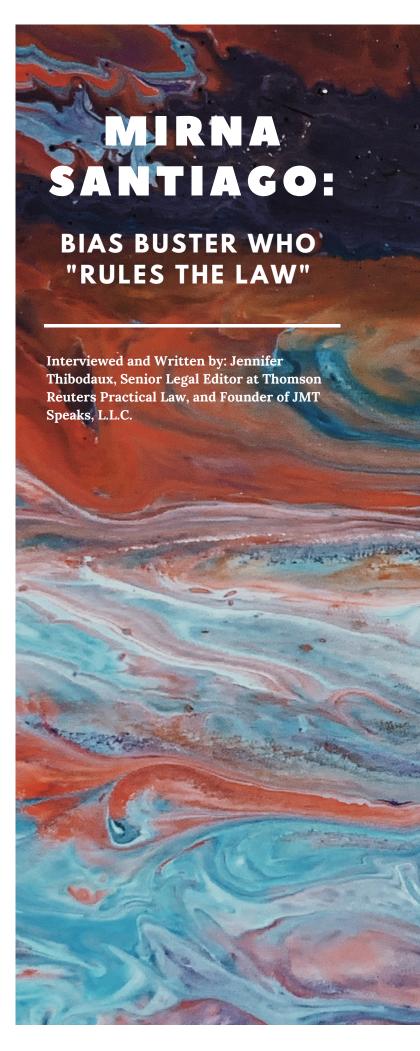
At NAWL I discovered an environment that adds back those deductions. NAWL creates a collaborative space for relationship building, knowledge sharing, and mutual advocacy among women lawyers. Our common threads transcend barriers. We are united in our passion for the law, our commitment to the advancement of women lawyers, and equal rights for women under the law.

When my tenure on the Board eventually comes to an end, I want to have left a legacy of widening NAWL's reach across generations and geographies to meet the needs of women lawyers in a way that sustains and advances our profession.

"When I'm sometimes asked 'When will there be enough [women on the Supreme Court]?' and I say 'When there are nine,' people are shocked. But there'd been nine men, and nobody's ever raised a question about that." - the Honorable Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg



Mirna Santiago is the founder. President, and Chief Executive Officer of Girls Rule the Law, Inc., a Member of Hurwitz & Fine, and the Co-Chair of the Committee on Diversity & Inclusion for the New York State Bar Association (NYSBA). As a diversity, equity, and inclusion professional and consultant, has completed workshops, presentations, and training for the New York State Judicial Institute. the New York State Legislature, numerous law firms, the City Bar, NYSBA, the Hispanic National Bar, Syracuse Law School, St. John's Law School, Albany Law School, the Franklin H. Williams Commission, New York City's Economic Development Corporation, the Legal Aid Society, the Queens County Bar, and many others. She earned her B.A. from New York University and her J.D. from the State University of New York at Buffalo.





# You describe yourself as a "bias buster." How do you fulfill that role?

I am a bias buster because I show up authentically. I am Black, Latinx, an immigrant, and a woman.

By showing up as myself, I bust the biases that Black women are angry, that natural hair is not professional, that immigrants look or sound a certain way or other misconceptions that people have been socialized to believe. If we normalize who we are in the workplace, in our profession, and daily lives, we will not have any biases left to bust because people will live and let live.

# You have spoken about the difference between equality and equality. What is the distinction and why does it matter?

Equality means giving everyone the same tools regardless of their need for them, and equity means giving people the tools they need to not only survive but also thrive. In the US, centuries of inequity created an inequitable society. Recognizing that we have eliminated disparate treatment laws and segregation does not mean that people can thrive. People are still living in crowded neighborhoods without any green spaces, suffering from food and financial deserts, and sending their children to failing schools. We cannot expect them to succeed without both equality and equity.

# What are some examples of anti-racism work that needs to be done in the law - and why?

I work in the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) space and often speak with partners at law firms about the lack of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPoC) in their upper ranks commonly hear one of the following explanations: (1) we cannot find the caliber of candidate we need when hiring diverse candidates (for example, there are not many diverse students at the top of Ivy League law schools);. (2) we hire diverse candidates, but they sometimes lack the requisite soft skills for networking and client development; and (3) we hire diverse candidates, but they "always" leave to work in the government or non-profit sector.

Law firms need to create race-neutral criteria. They are unlikely to find BIPoC candidates at the top of their class at Ivy League law schools because decades of segregation, redlining, and other policies stripped them of the opportunity to acculturate into society, attend properly funded schools, and accumulate wealth. Law firms should recruit from a wide range of law schools because there are plenty of intelligent, hardworking, and ambitious BIPoC candidates at other law schools. It's about expanding criteria, not lowering standards.

Allowing attorneys to show up authentically also obviates any concern about diverse candidates' lack of soft skills. Busting biases allow

candidates to be themselves, have natural hair or wear the colors they want without fear of being considered "too loud" (in every sense) in a professional setting. We can normalize BIPoC as they are by hiring more BIPoC at law firms.

As for the retention of diverse candidates at law firms, there needs to be BIPoC in visible roles within their leadership. The failure to hire, retain, and promote diverse candidates and provide them with opportunities to grow and learn means that DE&I is not ingrained in the organization's culture - regardless of how many DE&I CLEs the attorneys attend or diversity consultants the organization hires.

All of this does not even touch on how a lack of representation impacts the criminal justice system as well.

# How can lawyers do this work in a virtual environment, both during and after the pandemic?

Those of us in the DE&I space have never stopped working! Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are hosting career fairs, fireside chats, and CLEs. We are engaged in remote mentoring. I recommend reaching out to affinity bar associations. For example, I'm the co-chair of the Committee on Diversity & Inclusion for the New York State Bar Association and we hold symposiums, CLEs, and other events nearly every month.

Over the last few years, so many white people have proven to be allies to the BIPoC community, whether by marching with Black Lives Matter or speaking up at work, or being upstanders in their communities to address racial inequities.

# What is the difference between an ally and a sponsor? Why does BIPoC need allies and sponsors?

An ally supports you in whatever way they can. For example, they may be an upstander by standing up and speaking up against microaggressions or biased comments, or they may offer support and guidance for someone who is struggling.

A sponsor actively looks for and creates opportunities. For example, they may invite diverse candidates to meet firm clients or advocate for them to attend a skill-building or networking conference. A sponsor is typically in a position of power and leverages that power for someone else's benefit.

BIPoC needs allies and sponsors because BIPoC are typically not in positions of power. Allies and sponsors use their power, privilege, or position to help others. This may be as simple as repeating a person of color's suggestion when they are ignored or giving them due credit for their idea or contribution.

# How can someone be an effective ally or sponsor - and why should they?

The "why" is that most people want to live in an equitable world where there is room for everyone at the table. In my anti-bias course, I share a practical tip for interrupting bias: notice who is missing from the room and provide a voice for that group. That is being an ally! Being an ally does not require a person from the underrepresented group to attend. Sponsorship takes more work, however, because it is about providing opportunities for someone who does not have them.



# Tell us about the 503(c)(3) non-profit you founded, Girls Rule the Law, Inc. Why did you found it?

Girls Rule the Law, Inc. introduces middle and high school girls to the law, including law firms, the legislature, and the judiciary. Our in-person programming has gone virtual. For example, we have an annual youth conference to work on etiquette, engage in networking, participate in speed mentoring, and hear from judges, legislators, and lawyers. We host roundtables with women lawyers. We bring Law Day to middle and high school students, where volunteers speak about their work to students in small groups. We teach debate skills. We also host events with prominent women leaders, such as New York State Assembly members and New York Supreme Court judges. This year, volunteers are teaching a class on labor and employment law for students at a girl's high school in honor of Women's History Month.

I started this organization because I was the first lawyer in my entire family. I never had the opportunity to interact with any lawyers, never mind anyone who looked like me. This organization is a pipeline to teach girls how to be successful in a profession that largely consists of white males. Introducing these young women to accomplished women in the profession creates visibility and shows them what is possible.

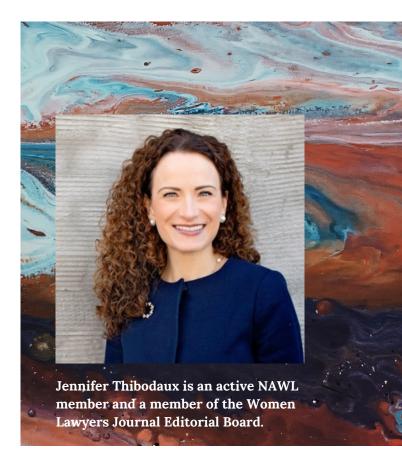
# How can others get involved in Girls Rule the Law?

We need volunteers for fireside chats. partnerships, speed mentoring, youth conferences, and other programs. If your legal office is open to hosting a lunch and learn for a small group of middle or high school girls, whether virtually or in person, we want to hear from you!

Please reach me at Mirna@girlsrulethelaw.org or Programming Director Atabex@girlsrulethelaw.org.

We also have a "Law Suits You" program, which provides new or gently used professional attire for girls to wear for debate or mock trial competitions, interviews. first jobs. internships.

We do not receive state or federal funding so we rely on the kindness of like-minded women to support our programs. Virtual and in-person programming relies on donations so we ask anyone who can to donate any amount at www.girlsrulethelaw.org.



Through [Mahala Ashley Dickerson's] independence and her longevity, she realizes that many of the pleasures she was denied as a child because of her race, she has managed to enjoy as an adult.

But just think how many people live and die without enjoying so many things that should be taken for granted by everyone.

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- From the 1995 September issue of the Women Lawyers Journal featured interview with NAWL's first Black President, Mahala Ashley Dickerson. The Inaugural **2021 NAWL Rising List** is made up of individuals advancing in their careers, helping others advance in their careers, and working to advance women under the law.



Samira Alimohammad
Vice-President & General Counsel
Specialist Staffing Group, the US division of Sthree PLC



Olesja Cormney Managing Counsel Toyota Motor North America, Inc.

"I am truly honored to be named on the 2021 NAWL Rising List. This recognition has great significance to me as I work unremittingly to advocate for the equality of women in the legal profession by raising awareness around the need for more transparency regarding law firm succession planning, origination credit, and the path to equity partnership. As an in-house counsel at Toyota, I am committed to uncovering opportunities for women outside counsel to grow and advance, and to empowering high potential women lawyers through mentorship, sponsorship, a celebration of their achievements, and visibility and leadership opportunities."

"I am delighted to be named to the 2021 NAWL Rising List. This honor is especially important to me as I work to advance women under the law by giving them a voice within my teams and externally. I promote and recognize my colleagues for their achievements and ensure others see the value they bring to the table."



**Valerie Fontenot** Associate Attorney Frilot, LLC

"I am overjoyed to be named on the 2021 NAWL Rising List. This honor is especially important to me as I work to advance women under the law by providing excellent client service while supporting the work of other women attorneys and celebrating their successes along the way. We can all succeed by lifting up each other and letting each other and the world knows the great work that women lawyers accomplish and achieve every day."



Cara Vecchione Counsel Robinson & Cole

"I am honored to be named to the 2021 NAWL Rising List. This recognition is especially meaningful given the inspiration that I draw from my fellow NAWL members. I look forward to continuing to work together to fulfill NAWL's mission."

Suzanne Levy Friedman Senior Associate Hogan Lovells LLP

"I am delighted to be named to the 2021 NAWL Rising List. It is with the sincerest gratitude to NAWL, and to the female attorneys who have helped train and shape me in my career, that I accept this honor. This honor means a great deal to me, as I work to advance women under the law in everything that I do. As a regulatory attorney, I strive to educate and empower women entrepreneurs, engineers, and specialists to be effective innovators and responsible professionals who bring new medical technologies to the U.S. market to enhance people's lives, as well as to mentor more junior female colleagues. In my pro bono practice, I am continually inspired by the women whom I have had the opportunity to represent in asylum and related immigration proceedings as they establish themselves in this country after fleeing injustice and unimaginable cruelty, which they suffered either solely because they are women, or because they sought to fight tyranny and bring about change in their native country."



**Hillary Gardner** Corporate Counsel Credigy Solutions Inc.

"I'm proud to be named to the 2021 NAWL Rising List along with my esteemed peers. Through NAWL, I was matched with a mentor at the beginning of my career and we remain in touch 10 years later. The ability to formally and informally mentor other attorneys and students is something I am passionate about, and am glad to have the opportunity to have done through NAWL."



Sylvia-Rebecca "Becky" Gutiérrez Associate Gibbons P.C.

"I am honored to be named a 2021 NAWL Rising Star. To be mentored by the extraordinary women of NAWL, our profession, and my family is a privilege for which I am and will be eternally grateful. It is in their example that I will continue to promote the full participation of women and girls across all aspects of the legal profession and our society. My sincerest thanks to NAWL's members and sponsors for this distinction."



Raychelle Tasher Riley Assistant U.S. Attorney, Civil Division U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida

"I am thrilled to be named to the 2021 NAWL Rising List. Though I never do this work to be recognized, it is humbling to be honored by NAWL in this way. As an organization, NAWL stands for advancing all women in the legal profession and I am grateful to be a part of that long-standing legacy."





**Erika Stallings**Associate General Counsel, Music Product
Facebook

"I am honored to be named to the 2021 NAWL Rising List. This honor is meaningful to me as I work to advance women under the law as a board member of The Black BigLaw Pipeline, a nonprofit organization that provides training and mentoring to junior Black attorneys. Black women are the least represented demographic in large law firms, representing less than 3% of associates. The work that I do as both a board member and instructor for the annual boot camp is aimed at changing that number."



**Jennifer Trowbridge**Junior Partner
Jacko Law Group, PC

"I am honored to be selected for inclusion to the 2021 NAWL Rising List and see my name listed amongst so many strong women in the legal industry. This recognition is especially important to me as I work to advance women under the law by bringing strategic service and counsel within a traditionally male-dominated industry. It is through aligning my knowledge, affinity, and experience in the male-dominated securities industry that I am able to give women a stronger voice. I hope to forge a path for further female representation in the legal field."



**Jennifer Marino Thibodaux**Founder
JMT Speaks, LLC

"I am thrilled to be named to the 2021 NAWL Rising List and in the company of such esteemed women. This honor is especially meaningful to me because as a former law firm partner, I am devoted to the professional and personal advancement of women in all stages of their careers. I am proud to be a NAWL member and to help serve its mission as a volunteer for the Editorial Board of the Women Lawyers Journal. I am grateful for NAWL and its support. Thank you for this recognition."



Meredith C. Slawe

Partner, Co-Chair Class Actions Practice Group, Co-Chair Retail Industry Group Cozen O'Connor

"It is a true honor to be named to the 2021 NAWL Rising List. Several years ago, as an associate and working mother, I questioned whether there was a meaningful path forward for me in private practice. I could have fallen through the cracks of a large law firm many times over absent great mentorship, sponsorship, and encouragement from colleagues and clients. At that time, NAWL's "Pipeline to Equity Partnership" program was eye-opening and inspiring. The content and guidance shared by leaders in the profession had a profound impact on me. At this stage of my career as a partner and co-leader of my practice group, I am energized to continue to look for opportunities to pay it forward for more junior women attorneys within and outside of my organization and to add my perspectives as a member of the NAWL Advocacy Committee and through other forms of engagement. Thank you very much for this recognition."

Ty Kayam Attorney Microsoft

"I am delighted to be named to the 2021 NAWL Rising List. This honor is especially important to me as I work to help women advance in their education and their profession through mentorship and role-modeling. Through my own incredible mentors, I have learned valuable skills, including navigating roadblocks and overcoming limiting beliefs, that have helped me set audacious goals and achieve them. I am working to do the same for other young women and law students. I am still in the early stages of all that I want to do to empower women - particularly women of color - in the law, and I am grateful to NAWL for this recognition."



**Ebony S. Morris** Associate Attorney Garrison, Yount, Forte & Mulcahy, LLC

"I would like to thank the National Association of Women Lawyers for naming me to the 2021 NAWL Rising List and thank you to Troy Nathan Bell, the very first attorney to serve as my mentor and sponsor, for nominating me for this tremendous honor. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank God for this honor and for his favor, and my role model, my mother, Patricia Morris, who taught me tenacity, boldness, faith, and work ethic. As women attorneys, it is our responsibility to serve as mentors and sponsors in the legal profession and consistently strive to achieve greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession. It is refreshing to know that the National Association of Women Lawyers is committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession and empowering young minority attorneys such as myself and my fellow recipients. It is a pleasure to accept this prestigious honor, and it is comforting to know that my efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession are not in vain."



**Anu Prasad** Counsel Cozen O'Connor

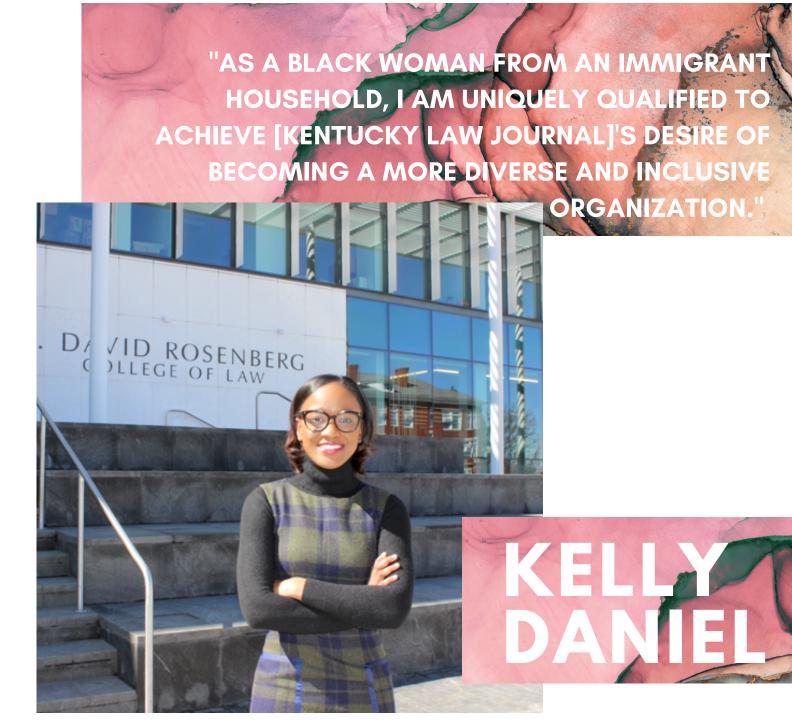
"I am honored and thrilled to be named to the 2021 NAWL Rising List. This recognition is especially important to me as I have been devoted to women's advancement in the legal profession throughout my career. I work to help the advancement of women by volunteering with NAWL, spearheading diversity and inclusion initiatives within my firm, and providing mentorship to women law students and junior attorneys. I look forward to continued inclusion and empowerment efforts in the future!"



# **Emily Rodriguez-Sanchirico** Litigation Associate Miller Barondess, LLP

"I am honored to be named to the 2021 NAWL Rising List. I am committed to getting more women in the rooms where their voices need to be heard. Whether it's in the csuite or on a firm's executive committee, women provide the strong and focused leadership our industry needs. My mentor has always encouraged me to speak up. I'm looking forward to a career of empowering other women to do the same."





University of Kentucky J. David Rosenberg College of Law secondyear law student Kelly Daniel will serve as the first Black editor-inchief of the college's Kentucky Law Journal (KLJ) for the 2021-2022 academic year.

We reached out to the new Editor-In-Chief to commemorate her accomplishment and hear her thoughts on being editor, being a leader, and advice for law students seeking leadership positions.

# RE YOUR PLANS FOR THE EAD AS EDITOR? DO YOU HAVE A PARTICULAR FOCUS OR SPECIFIC ISSUES YOU WANT TO WRITE ON AND DISCUSS IN THE KENTUCKY LAW JOURNAL **DURING YOUR TERM AS EDITOR IN CHIEF?**

I intend to uphold the high standard of excellence that the Kentucky Law Journal bestows upon its members while cultivating lasting connections with the KLJ contributors and members.

As Editor, a significant part of the job is selecting scholarly articles for publication. Authors submit articles, and we determine which pieces will get published. My area of law and the articles that I find the most captivating tend to be on criminal justice reform. However, they also tend to be the ones that are highly sought after by other journals, so they are challenging to land. I truly admire law review because it requires me to analyze various areas of law, and in turn, it has helped expand my interests in different fields.

Although I ultimately determine which articles receive offers, my goal is to strive to have my team members' individual interests reflected in the pieces selected for publication. We are going to spend months working on these articles and preparing them for publication, and my team will play an integral role in making Volume 110 a success.

Law review is known for its prestige, and that, unfortunately, comes with the notion that it is exclusive to privileged students. I hope to dispel this view. By the end of my term as Editor, I would like the KLJ to be representative of the UK Rosenberg College of Law. We are a diverse group, and with variety comes varying opinions and views that deserve to be heard. I endeavor to convey the academically enriching and supportive climate that the KLJ has provided me to diverse, prospective members by collaborating with affinity groups to increase engagement and spark interest among underrepresented groups. As a Black woman from an immigrant household, I am uniquely qualified to achieve KLJ's desire of becoming a more diverse and inclusive organization.

# WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON BEING AN EFFECTIVE AND IMPACTFUL LEADER?

I think what makes an effective and impactful leader is an individual who deftly understands the needs of the individuals on her team. It is also vital to be personable and possess a genuine desire to improve the organization you are running because it will enable you to represent your organization admirably while encouraging your team members to do the same.

In addition, it is important to be accessible to all of the members of your team. A leader will make an effort to get to know every team member and remind them that their contributions to the organization are valued.

Lastly, if the pandemic has taught us anything, it is about the importance of adapting to changing environments while remaining focused and levelheaded.

# DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR LAW STUDENTS SEEKING LEADERSHIP POSITIONS?

My advice for law students seeking leadership positions is to go for it, but remember to remain true to yourself in the process. Understand that imposture syndrome is something that most law students experience at some point during their time in law school--but know that you are probably your biggest critic. Do not overcommit to activities in law school! Learn your limits, or else you will burn out before you even get a chance to sit for the bar exam.

Be kind to your peers because your reputation matters, and it is something that people take into consideration when determining whether you are qualified to run a student organization.

In the event that you find yourself attempting to lead an organization that has been historically underrepresented, recognize that you can be the face of change.

# EFFECTS OF COVID ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (D.E.I.) EFFORTS

WRITTEN BY DR. SHARON MEIT ABRAHAMS

When the pandemic hit in 2020, DEI professionals immediately thought about what happened during the 2008 recession. Law firm diversity initiatives ground to a standstill and budgets were cut. Kori Carew, Seyfarth's Chief Inclusion & Diversity Officer, explains that DEI leaders across the profession immediately mobilized discussing, "What can we do so that what happened in 2008 doesn't happen again?"

"Bonnie Lau, the partner at Morrison Foerster and alumni chair of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD), reported "LCLD members that have staved committed to maintaining the status quo or even adding DEI resources." To underscore that, a recent survey conducted by Legal Talent Advisors, LLC showed that nearly 50% of respondents stated their firms' commitment to DEI efforts stayed the same, while 42.5% reported that their firms expanded their efforts in 2020.

#### IN 2020, MY FIRM'S COMMITMENT TO D.E.I.

Remained the Same: **50%** 

Expanded their Efforts: **42.5**%

Data collected from a recent survey conducted by Legal Talent Advisors, LLC

The survey also found that 55% of respondents reported that their firms' DEI budgets remained the same, with 30% saying they increased. Less than 3% had their budgets frozen and only 2.5% saw a reduction in their DEI budgets. The summer of 2020 saw many racial events transpire across the nation, so, it is unclear if the budgets were affected due to these events or COVID. or both.

#### IN 2020. MY FIRM'S D.E.I. BUDGET

Stayed the Same: 55%

Increased: 30%

3% Was Frozen:

Was Reduced: 2.5%

Data collected from a recent survey conducted by Legal Talent Advisors, LLC

Once everyone began working from home, diversity budgets were reallocated because more funds were available due to in-person events being canceled. Jenner & Block used their diversity dollars to have "more speakers, more events and everyone could be invited because there were no conference room space constraints," shared Courtney Carter, Jenner's Director of Diversity & Inclusion. Michelle Weber, COO of Bilzin Sumberg, noted that "To our great satisfaction, the virtual nature of these [DEI] initiatives invited more participation than in-person events would have." Across the country, firms noted that attendance is higher at virtual events as compared to in-person events.

Another diversity-focused benefit of working in a virtual world is, "it is far easier to work across geographical lines when we are all remote, which means more and better opportunities for all", as observed by Yusuf Z. Zakir, Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer at Davis Wright Tremaine LLP. Oftentimes, the lack of challenging work with quality clients is cited as a reason for the failure of women and diverse attorneys to grow and develop in their roles. This wall has now been torn down as attorneys can work across offices and departments with ease.

Newly-built attorney communities are another positive outcome from the effects of COVID. Carew said that Seyfarth went immediately into a communications mode to reach out to diversity attorneys. Her team educated the firm on barriers that exist for diverse attorneys and how COVID has exacerbated those obstacles. Similarly, Carter commented, "from the moment COVID started we were very focused on the communities in the firm." Uniquely, they started with their Care-Giver Affinity group, which consists of attorneys and staff. It is common knowledge that women have endured the brunt of COVID-related caregiving, so Jenner's efforts were appreciated.

While there is no doubt the pandemic upended many businesses, some law firms used the disruption as an opportunity to focus more energy on their DEI department, while other firms simply became busier than usual. Clearly, the pandemic affected DEI efforts across the board. Fortunately, these efforts were and are continuing to move in a positive direction. It is safe to say that history has not repeated itself.



development expert with 25+ years of experience coaching lawyers and helping firms increase engagement, retention, and productivity. She can be reached at Sharon@legaltalentadvisors.com.

# ON MARCH 19TH, 2021 NAWL ISSUED A STATEMENT CONDEMNING RECENT ACTS OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED AGAINST THE ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

ON TUESDAY, MARCH 16TH EIGHT PEOPLE WERE KILLED IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA, INCLUDING SIX ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN. THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS (NAWL) DENOUNCES THESE ACTS OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED AGAINST THE ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY. THESE TRAGIC EVENTS FURTHER REMIND US THAT VIOLENT ACTS AND RACIAL AND HATEFUL CRIMES COMMITTED AGAINST THE ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY HAVE ONLY INCREASED DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. NAWL DENOUNCES THESE ATTACKS AND STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH OUR ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNER. THE NATIONAL ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION (NAPABA). FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HATE CRIMES, THE HISTORY OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED AGAINST ASIAN AMERICANS. AND HOW TO STOP AND WORK AGAINST ANTI-ASIAN VIOLENCE AND HATE CRIMES, SEE NAPABA'S HATE CRIME RESOURCE CENTER.

#### **#STOPASIANHATE #STOPAAPIHATE**

# Erica Lai: Remaining Howeful

For many of us, the last year and a half has been a roller-coaster. For Erica Lai, it was a time filled with joy (she and her husband welcomed their daughter into the world) and accomplishment, as in August 2020, she assumed the presidency of Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Greater Washington DC ("APABA-DC"), the oldest and largest association of Asian American and Pacific Islander ("AAPI") attorneys in the DC area. It has also been a time of sadness and fear as hate crimes and acts of discrimination against the AAPI community continue to rise to record levels during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. Erica spoke to WLJ about her decision to pursue a legal career, leading an affinity bar association in these challenging times, and why, despite everything, she remains hopeful.



#### Path to Being an Attorney

It was not a huge surprise that Erica ended up being an attorney. Growing up, she always thought that it was a possibility as she began honing her advocacy skills early on as the captain of her high school debate team. She confessed to being fascinated by the legal system and believed that the legal system could help bring about social justice and change, something she was interested in from an early age. When she enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School, right after graduating college, she admitted that she thought, "probably like everyone else in law school" that she would pursue a career in the public interest sector. To her surprise, she discovered that she really enjoyed private practice and the ability to bring a law firm's considerable resources to bear through a robust pro bono practice, while also devoting her free time to organizations like APABA-DC to not only give back but to work to bring about change.

#### Involvement with APABA-DC

Erica's involvement with APABA-DC dates back over a decade, beginning when she first moved to the DC area. She has had a variety of roles, including serving as a member of the nominating committee, which evaluates and recommends candidates seeking judicial appointments, political appointments, or bar leadership positions; as a member of the bar's policy and advocacy committee; and as Vice President of Education. Despite the time commitment involved, Erica has never regretted it as her involvement has enabled her to connect with and help build a vibrant and supportive AAPI legal community.

APABA-DC was perhaps positioned better than many organizations when it was forced to go remote in 2020. The organization had, just prior to the commencement of the pandemic, upgraded its website and technological capabilities, which Erica observed made the transition to all remote activities "strangely smooth." The pandemic also proved an unexpected boon to APABA-DC by presenting the bar with the opportunity to think creatively about expanding its offerings to members who might otherwise feel isolated and were looking for ways to connect, leading not only to an increase in membership but also increased attendance at various virtual events hosted by APABA-DC.

Initially, when the pandemic first started, Erica APABA-DC's explained that immediate concern, after seeing the effects of the 2008 recession, was that women and minority would once again be attorneys disproportionately impacted and that it would take considerable time to undo such damage. In contrast, hate crimes against the AAPI community were not "front of mind" at the beginning of the pandemic, as reported hate crimes against the AAPI community had been decreasing. Erica explained that for many, particularly those in the legal community, "we thought we were safe, and our parents and families were safe."

# Rise of Hate Crimes Against the AAPI Community

That feeling of safety changed soon after the start of the pandemic. According to Stop AAPI

Hate, from March 19, 2020, to February 2021, there were 3,795 hate incidents reported to its reporting center, with 650 acts being reported in just a two-week period in March of 2020.1 In the face of the dramatic rise in reported incidents, which are generally believed to represent only a fraction of actual incidents, Erica and APABA-DC worked to find ways to support its members.

Erica noted that first and foremost, APABA-DC wanted to make sure that its members had a way to stay connected and the organization worked to provide a safe space for its members, as many were struggling to process what was happening to the AAPI community. Recognizing that APABA-DC was a voluntary bar association without expertise in responding to hate crimes, Erica and APABA-DC also worked to identify how they could make a substantive contribution to the effort to combat AAPI hate.

Erica explained that there was a "lot of soul searching" to identify ways to do more to support its members and the AAPI community generally during these times.

The attacks against the AAPI community did provide an opportunity for APABA-DC to build its alliances with other community on organizations. For example, in April 2020, APABA-DC led twenty minority bar associations and legal organizations in denouncing hateful acts of discrimination and calling for local and national leaders to take action to combat AAPI hate. It has also hosted several programs featuring former U.S. Attorneys, U.S. Department of Justice senior officials, States Attorney General, and district attorneys focused on how the

government can combat AAPI hate and extremism and offered opportunities for the AAPI community to come together to grieve, reflect, and process the concerning tide of AAPI hate. In addition, in May 2021 Erica was the keynote speaker at the Department of Justice's AAPI Heritage Month Program, providing her yet another opportunity to continue the discussion on how the government can work to combat AAPI hate.

#### Ways to Support the AAPI Community

Erica noted that there are a variety of ways that bar organizations or individuals can support the AAPI community.

First. statements from organizations the AAPI community and supporting condemning hateful acts are very much appreciated, noticed and their impact should not be underestimated.

Second, it is critical to share existing resources on reporting and combating AAPI hate. For example, APABA-DC has added a Hate Crime Resources section to its website to highlight where victims can report hate crimes and incidents, where victims can seek pro bono legal assistance, and toolkits in English and 23 AAPI languages with critical information for victims of hate crimes, community-based organizations. and community leaders prepared by the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association and the Asian & Pacific Islander Health Forum.2 Other organizations offer bystander training that teaches ways to intervene effectively and safely when witnessing a hate or bias incident. 3

Third, in Erica's view, continuing to educate oneself about the current and past struggles of the AAPI community is "really important." For example, despite being active in several Asian American associations in college and law school, it was not until Erica was an associate at Covington & Burling that she learned the full scope of the United States' series of laws expressly discriminating against persons of Chinese descent.

Although the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 is most well-known, the laws prohibited all persons of Chinese descent from immigrating to the United States, and even those already on our shores from becoming U.S. citizens, for over 60 years. The laws were repealed during World War II only to counter anti-U.S. propaganda that was depressing support of the Allies within China and without any expression of regret. Erica was part of the team at Covington & Burling that led a coalition of Chinese American community organizations in securing historic resolutions from Congress addressing the injustice of the Chinese exclusion laws in 2011 and 2012.

#### **Remaining Hopeful**

Despite the challenges of the past eighteen months, Erica remains hopeful.

She notes that she "has never seen this level of engagement" in social and racial justice initiatives, not to mention the Senate's overwhelmingly bipartisan passage of a bill to expand hate crimes resources for AAPI victims, and the Administration and Attorney General's announcement of actions to respond to anti-AAPI violence, xenophobia, and bias.

Because of that, she finds hope in seeing so many people joining together to bring about change. This leads her to believe that we will see change, not only in the national consciousness but also in the legal profession.

#### Reflections on NAWL Board Service



NAWL Board Member, Elizabeth Levy is transitioning into a new role at NAWL as she leaves the NAWL Board. We asked Liz her thoughts on how NAWL has impacted her career and life. This is what she had to say.

abeth Levy (pictured above) is the co-director of the ESL program at the Wayland Public Library. Elizabeth also served as the Executive Editor for the Women Lawyers Journal for two years.

It was an inauspicious start to a most significant relationship. As an in-house attorney, I needed to fulfill a diversity "requirement" before the end of my performance year. A colleague had seen a flier for NAWL's General Counsel Institute and suggested I attend. Neither of us had heard of NAWL, but the agenda looked interesting, I could take the train to New York, and my boss approved the trip. Done.

This chance decision some 15 years ago led to a sustaining and enormously important connection with NAWL. I never expected to meet and become friends and colleagues with so many accomplished women lawyers. I had never experienced the camaraderie, mutual respect, and professional bonds that developed. And - no surprise - the content of that first GCI was outstanding. Before it ended, I had joined the organization and volunteered to help with the next year's GCI. It was that simple. I became, and have remained, an enthusiastic NAWL member and devotee.

It didn't stop there. Five years later, I was invited to chair the GCI event. I had been sponsored - something that I had heard about but never experienced - by a NAWL leader whom I'd met at that first conference. She saw my potential and pushed me forward. I'll never forget my pride at running the very conference I had first attended.

I used to wonder: how we could possibly improve an already outstanding program, and find yet more extraordinary women to speak, year after year?

But we always did. And because this is something NAWL does so very well, and of whom NAWL attracts, I believe we always will.

The organization provided me with opportunities to work with and lead teams and fundraise for our programs and initiatives. All of these activities significantly extended my professional network and "next-work". I was always recognized and thanked for my efforts, which I deeply appreciated. And I made friends and influenced people - Dale Carnegie would be proud.

Six years ago, I joined the NAWL board of directors. Since then, I have worked to increase the impact of NAWL's Women Lawyers Journal and the reach of NAWL's Practice Affinity Groups. I participated in several initiatives designed to help women and marginalized groups in and out of our profession.

Now my board term is ending. But I'll remain a part of this organization wherever I can be helpful, with the same passion and commitment I've always felt for NAWL. I owe a debt of gratitude to the many women I've worked closely with and come to know, to those women who have helped me along and taught me so much about leadership and allyship. I am so proud of the organization NAWL is today, not so many years after I first learned of it and found my professional home within it.

#### Reflections on NAWL Board Service



Kristin D. Sostowski is transitioning into a new role at NAWL as she leaves the NAWL Board after ten years of service. We asked Kristin her thoughts on how NAWL has impacted her career and life. This is what she had to say.

It has been the honor and privilege of my career to serve on NAWL's Board for the last decade. As I prepare to step off the Board this July, I've spent some time contemplating what this powerful network of sisters-in-law has meant to me and to my career. Since I am known within NAWL's Board as our informal historian and by my Gibbons colleagues for my passion for chronologies – I've (naturally) mined my calendar and some of the thousands of carefully archived NAWL emails for highlights and lessons learned over the last 14 years that I have been a member of NAWL.

#### 2007

In late August, NAWL President Holly English (2007-08) - my fellow New Jerseyan - kindly agreed to meet me for lunch. I was 32 years old, a sixth-year associate at Gibbons P.C., the mom of 2-year-old Catherine, and 7 months pregnant with Madeline. I had my hands full but wanted to get involved in NAWL. Holly - a fellow mother of girls - was infectious in her energy for NAWL and immediately connected me with several projects. By September, I had joined the Program Committee, then chaired by Heather Giordanella (President 2011-12). Our daughter Madeline was born on October 9, 2007. I recall spending time during my maternity leave on Program Committee calls from our family room, holding newborn Madeline - the adult conversation was very welcome.

#### 2008

In January, Holly invited me to join the Annual Meeting planning committee and I was soon enlisted to chair the Logistics Subcommittee, assembling a team of mostly New Jersey and New York members to manage the minute details that go into the Annual luncheon. It was like planning a wedding for 800 - dessert tasting at the Waldorf-Astoria included. Our Logistics team included Nancy Lottinville and Maureen Reid, who soon became dear friends and mentors. At Annual in July, I connected in person with many of the women I'd "met" on conference calls, including Angela Brandt (President 2017-18) and Sarretta McDonough (President 2018-19). Over the next decade, the three of us would "grow up" together on NAWL's Board. At dinner the night before Annual, I met Pat Gillette and Karen Kahn for the first time.

They were among the first at NAWL to ask me the hard questions - how I was progressing in my career development, whether I was on track for partnership, and about my plans to get there. I left dinner energized.

Photos: Top Left - Kristin Sostowski pictured above speaking at NAWL's GCl15 in 2019. Photo by Pablo Corradi/corradifoto.com



In March, I co-chaired NAWL's first New Jersey Night of Giving - the brainchild of Lisa Horowitz (President 2008-2009) - at the Community FoodBank of New Jersey. In July, Maureen Reid and I co-chaired Logistics for Annual Meeting. At lunch at the DB Bistro soon after Annual, Maureen and I celebrated our logistics triumphs and dreamed up a new NAWL program - one targeted to up-and-coming women in law firms and the skills for them to achieve equity partnership. The vision that started over lunch would eventually become NAWL's Pipeline to Equity Partnership program - and Maureen became one of my most important guides on the skills I would need to ultimately become an equity partner.

#### *2010*

At Annual Meeting in July, I received the Virginia Mueller Outstanding Member Award - nearly 6 months pregnant. Our daughter Sophie was born on November 5, 2010. Six weeks later, while on maternity leave, my Gibbons colleagues called to congratulate me on my promotion to Income Director at Gibbons.

#### 2011

I was now 35 and a brand new Gibbons Director, with three daughters, ages 3 months, 3, and 6. On a weekend in February, soon after I had returned to work, Dorian Denburg (President 2010-2011) called to let me know that I had been elected to NAWL's Board at the Mid-Year Meeting in Miami - a complete and incredible surprise to me. And appropriately, I would be filling the Board seat soon to be vacated by Holly English. In hindsight, the timing of me joining the Board seems crazy, but at the moment, it seemed like there wasn't a second to waste. At my first Board meeting in July, I was the one new Board member and felt like the baby lawyer in a room filled with the women who had become my mentors.

I remember my initial years on the NAWL Board as a blur of activity, as a mom to three young daughters, a law firm partner, and a Board member. When I look back, I wonder how it all got done. Soon after I joined the Board, the founders of the P2P program - a group that now included Maureen Reid, Nancy Lottinville, Kristin Bauer, and me - began to lay the groundwork for our first P2P program in September 2012 in Dallas. Over the next several years, NAWL hosted P2P programs in Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, and Atlanta.

During these years, my NAWL sisters became dear friends and great supporters in every area of my life with conversations about family, career paths, and our visions for changing the legal profession to make it more diverse and inclusive. They were there for the good and the bad, including holding me up when my father was diagnosed with cancer and passed away in the span of six weeks in 2017. I look back fondly on our in-person events, three to five times a year when we shared Board meetings, conferences, dinners, late-night drinks, and Shake Shack in Times Square.

#### 2018

On July 16, 2018, I was elected an Equity Director at Gibbons - and it will come as no surprise that after my husband, daughters, and immediate family members, I next shared the happy news with the members of the NAWL Board. Three days later, I was inducted as NAWL's President-Elect during our Annual Meeting.

Photos: Top Left - Kristin Sostowski with Maureen Reid at NAWL's Annual Meeting in 2010, NY; Top Right - Kristin Sostowski and Maureen Reid at NAWL P2P in 2014.



The following weekend, my family and I traveled to Seneca Falls, New York, in what would be the first of several trips leading up to my NAWL presidency, as I sought to better understand the women who founded NAWL in 1899, and particularly their involvement in the suffrage movement. In Seneca Falls, we visited the Wesleyan Chapel, where 170 years earlier, in July 1848, 300 women and men convened for the first Women's Rights Convention in the United States. In their Declaration of Sentiments, attendees asserted that "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal," and resolved that women should have the right to vote and to equality in politics, family, education, and the professions.

#### 2019

2019 began with the news that NAWL's Executive Director of 5 years, Jenny Waters, would be retiring. I had long envisioned working side by side with Jenny during my NAWL Presidency, and it was difficult to imagine the year without her. We soon launched a nationwide Executive Director search, and after extended discussions about our vision for NAWL's future and multiple rounds of interviews, were unbelievably fortunate to welcome as our new Executive Director a longtime friend – Karen Richardson, who had previously served as NAWL's program director.



Photos: Top Lett - Sostowski pictured with her three daughters, Madeline, Catherine, and Sophie in the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, NY; Top Right - Sostowski's daughter, Sophie, placing her hand on the Declaration of Sentiments; Middle Right - Sostowski's daughters, Madeline, Sophie, and Catherine, at the National Women's Historic Park; Bottom Right - Sostowski, and her three daughters, Sophie, Madeline, and Catherine in front of Susan B. Anthony's house.

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WOMEN LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION At 309 Park St., Richmond Hill, N. Y.

#### EDITORS:

ISABEL GILES
AGNES GRAHAM PARSONS
JEAN H. NORMS
EDITH J. GRISWOLD
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far reaching results. The well being of many thousands of men and women is, in the last analysis, dependent upon the commission's make-up.

Citizens and others in New York State are heavily taxed in order that such human betterment schemes may be successfully carried out; so that even the callous taxpayer, with only a mild interest in questions of industrial justice, is casting an inquiring eye upon the proposed distribution of the three hundred thousand appropriated for this purpose.

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#### WOMEN LAWYERS' JOURNAL

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#### SUFFRAGE ISSUE

"Shall the Proposed Amendment to the Constitution, Conferring Equal Suffrag on Women, Be Approved?"

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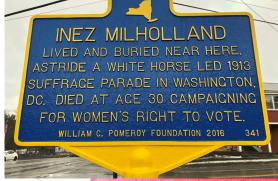
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In March 2019, my daughters Catherine and Madeline spent part of their Spring break with me in the Schlesinger Library at Harvard, where NAWL's archives are located. Together, we dug through back issues of the Women Lawyers Journal ("WLJ"), starting in 1911. At a time when American women could not vote, attend most law schools, or join the American Bar Association, NAWL's earliest members forged a sisterhood to support one another's professional advancement and the rights of all women under the law including seeking the passage of the 19th Amendment. Through our research in the archives, we learned that Inez Milholland, a major figure in the suffrage movement who died tragically at the age of 30, was an early member of NAWL and editor of the WLJ.

On July 18, 2019, I was inducted as NAWL's President for 2019-2020 - the year that also marks the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment. Inez Milholland - and my family's travels to understand NAWL's connection to voting rights became the inspiration for my Annual Meeting speech. In the moments prior to the Annual Meeting, my husband, daughters, and I gathered downstairs at the Grand Hyatt for a few minutes of pep talk and music before I took the stage. Although not heard in the ballroom upstairs, my unofficial walk-up was to Dolly Parton's "9 to 5" and the words that always make me think of my NAWL sisters: "You're in the same boat with a lotta your friends, Waiting for the day your ship'll come in, And the tide's gonna turn and it's all gonna roll your way..." Later that evening, I attended Heidi Schreck's "What the Constitution Means to Me" with a group of NAWL members, the perfect start to a year as NAWL President that challenged, surprised, and inspired me in unanticipated ways.









Photos: Top Left - Sostowski's photo of the Suffrage issue of the Women Lawyers Journal from the Schlesinger Library archives at Harvard University; Bottom Left - Sostowski and her husband, Steve Herbes, in front of Mt. Inez; Top Right - Sostowski's photo of an issue of the Women Lawyers Journal featuring Inez Milholland as one of the Editors; Second on the Right - Sostowski's photo of a sign honoring Inez Milholland in Lewis, NY; Third on the Right - The grave of Inez Milholland. Fourth on the Right - Sostowski and her daughters, Catherine, Madeline, and Sophie at the grave of Inez Milholland.



On March 2, 2020, while leaving a lunch meeting in Manhattan, I received a text message from Karen Morris (President 2020–21) with the news that her company had just suspended all travel due to COVID–19, and she would be unable to travel to Chicago for our Mid–Year Meeting the next week. For me, this is the moment when the pandemic became real. Minutes later, I returned to Newark on the last New Jersey Transit train ride I would take in 2020. Over the next 10 days, we made the difficult decision to convert NAWL's planned in–person Mid–Year into our first virtual conference – and then successfully executed that plan on March 12, 2020, while most of us were still sitting in our offices. The next day, Friday the 13th, our offices closed.

While in many ways the world shut down, NAWL did not. Although we have not been physically together for over a year, I will look back on this period as one of tremendous productivity and innovation for NAWL and the development of even closer relationships. On weekly Friday morning calls with Karen Richardson, Karen Morris, and Jenny Champlin (President 2021-22) that sometimes stretched for hours, we shared our day-to-day stories of quarantine, homeschooling, and remote work, and our worries for the legal profession, our nation, and world, while simultaneously looking for the silver linings. Despite the unanticipated and challenging circumstances, NAWL's Board, staff, and members made great strides, with virtual events and programming to meet the moment. In particular, I am proud of the resurgence of NAWL's advocacy efforts - a major commitment building from our 120-year+ legacy of work for women's rights under the law. With our renewed focus on issues including voting rights, the Equal Rights Amendment, and racial equity and justice, as I "off-board" from NAWL's Board in July 2021, I am excited to continue to be engaged in these efforts.

Thank you to my NAWL sisters-in-law for being there for me at every juncture in my professional and personal life, always lifting me up and pushing me forward. Fourteen years as a member of NAWL and ten on the Board have come and gone in what feels like the blink of an eye - but so much has changed. My daughters are now 16, 13, and 10 - and the oldest, Catherine, is already talking about a career in the law and when she can join NAWL. I will be here to pay it forward and hope that NAWL will be an essential part of all of your stories, as it has been for me.

Photos: Top Left - The 2019-2020 NAWL Board; Top Right - Sostowski and family at NAWL's 2019 Annual Meeting, NY. Photos by Pablo Corradi/corradifoto.com

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# NAWL WELCOMES NEW **BOARD MEMBERS-AT-LARGE**



Carol Anderson, Assistant Vice President - Senior Legal Counsel brings more than two decades of experience as a legal advisor and policy strategist in the technology and communications sector. Carol is the chief counsel for Legislative & Regulatory Affairs for the Mountain States Region and manages social justice and racial equity policy nationwide. In prior roles, Carol directed domestic and global regulatory policy, trade, and compliance strategies, managed international M&A, and counseled product development teams from concept through launch in support of the distribution of digital and communications services in every major global market. Carol's dedication and interest in policy extends to her volunteer commitments as well. In addition to joining the NAWL Board, Carol serves as co-chair of the NAWL's Advocacy Committee and was awarded with the 2020 Virginia S. Mueller Outstanding Member Award. She received her J.D. at Hastings College of Law in San Francisco and her B.A. from the University of California at Berkeley. Carol and her family are based in Seattle, WA, where she also volunteers at the Seattle Aquarium in support of its mission to Inspire Conservation in Our Marine Environment.



Tamela Merriweather is a respected legal and regulatory advisor in the financial services industry. In her role as Senior Vice President and Assistant General Counsel for The Northern Trust Company, Tamela represents Northern Trust's various Capital Markets businesses and global regulatory change. As an alumna of Spelman College, Tamela has a passion for ensuring that women have equal rights and representation in all aspects of their lives. Consistent with that passion, Tamela has been an active member of NAWL for the majority of her legal career including serving as co-chair of two Mid-Year Meetings and co-chair of the Diversity Committee. In 2019 Tamela received NAWL's Virginia S. Mueller Outstanding Member Award in honor of her commitment to NAWL and the community it serves.



 ${f Su}$   ${f Suh}$  is the Pro Bono Racial Justice Counsel for the Intel Legal Department. Su Suh is an experienced business leader and commercial attorney with a passion for building inclusive workplaces. Knowledgeable about D&I, antitrust, sales, contracting, M&A, deal negotiations, and organizational health. Enjoys writing and speaking about the power of allyship and inclusive cultures to fuel innovation. Su Suh also serves as the co-chair for the NAWL Survey Committee.

You can find their full bios at NAWL.org.

# ELECTION RESULTS ARE IN



#### NAWL CONGRATULATES RETURNING BOARD MEMBERS-AT-LARGE ON THEIR RE-ELECTION



Sima F. Sarrafan is Senior Corporate Counsel in the Corporate, External, and Legal Affairs ("CELA") department at Microsoft. She provides legal guidance to Marketing and Consumer Business clients and previously worked in Microsoft's Office of Legal Compliance. In addition to her experience at Microsoft, Ms. Sarrafan has worked in private practice, served as an assistant U.S. attorney in Washington, D.C., and served as an adjunct professor of law, having taught courses in Corporate Compliance and Investigations at Seattle University School of Law and Trial Advocacy and Advanced Appellate Advocacy at Roger Williams School of Law.



Mary-Christine (M.C.) Sungaila is the leader of Buchalter's Appellate practice group and a Shareholder in the Firm's Orange County office. Ms. Sungaila has repeatedly been named a "Notable Appellate Practitioner" by Chambers USA, Chambers & Partners (2013–2018), as one of "California's Top 100 Women Lawyers" by the Daily Journal (2005, 2010–2018), and twice named a "California Lawyer Attorney of the Year" (2015, 2016) for victories before the California Supreme Court and U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.



**Elizabeth (Beth) Pagel Serebransky** is of counsel in Debevoise & Plimpton LLP's New York office. Her practice focuses on a broad range of executive compensation and employee benefits and corporate governance matters, including advising boards and their compensation committees with respect to compensation and disclosure matters, addressing tax and benefits issues that arise in mergers and acquisitions and other corporate transactions and on the design, negotiation and implementation of employee agreements, equity-based incentive and other compensation programs.



**Deborah K. Wright** is responsible for providing legal advice to Prudential Financial, Inc.'s servicing subsidiary, PGIM Real Estate Loan Services, Inc ("PGIM Loan Services"). PGIM Loan Services' \$100B+ commercial real estate loan portfolio covers Prudential's General Account, CMBS, Fannie Mae, FHA, Freddie Mac, third-party investors, funds, and other loan portfolios. This includes assistance in strategic initiatives, business planning, corporate matters, insurance matters, rating agency matters, operations and development, and documentation and negotiation of the acquisition of servicing portfolios.

You can find their full bios at NAWL.org.



### NAWL THANKS BOARD MEMBERS FOR THEIR YEARS OF SERVICE



Kristin D. Sostowski is a Director (Partner) with Gibbons P.C. in Newark, New Jersey, where she is a member of the Employment & Labor Law Department. Ms. Sostowski provides strategic counsel to clients at all phases of the employment relationship, including compliance with federal and state workplace laws, pre-litigation risk avoidance, and defense of workplace-related disputes. Ms. Sostowski served as NAWL's President for the 2019-2020 term and as a member of NAWL's Board from 2011 to 2021. As President of NAWL during the centennial of the 19th Amendment and the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Sostowski led the association through its first virtual Mid-Year and Annual Meetings. During her term as President, NAWL also undertook a multi-year, strategic planning process, reinvigorated the association's focus on advocacy and public policy issues, and revitalized the Women Lawyers Journal, with the expansion of the WLJ's Editorial Board. Ms. Sostowski has served in a variety of leadership roles within NAWL, including Board Liaison to the Supreme Court, Advocacy, and Amicus Committees, and Co-Chair of NAWL's Pipeline to Equity Partnership program, numerous committees, and conferences. Ms. Sostowski received NAWL's "Virginia S. Mueller Outstanding Member" Award in 2010. Ms. Sostowski received her B.A. from Swarthmore College with High Honors, Phi Beta Kappa, and earned her J.D. from Harvard Law School.



Elizabeth A. Levy is an attorney with experience in intellectual property and corporate/regulatory in private practice and in-house law departments. Ms. Levy graduated with honors from Suffolk University Law School and the University of Texas. She was a partner at McDermott Will & Emery's Boston office before taking in-house legal positions at Bayer Corporation, Siemens Healthcare, and the Office of General Counsel at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, A NAWL member since 2007, she has been a board member since July 2016. During her board tenure, she was the executive editor of NAWL's Women Lawyers Journal and board liaison to NAWL's Practice Area Affinity Groups. She is now the board liaison for the sponsorship and development committee. She chaired NAWL's Seventh General Counsel Institute ("GCI") and its first Night of Giving in Boston. She has been a mentor in NAWL's mentoring program and received NAWL's Virginia S. Mueller Outstanding Member Award in 2013.



Leslie D. Minier is a Partner and the Chief Diversity Officer at Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP. She has extensive experience representing both private and public companies in mergers and acquisitions, venture financing, and general corporate matters.

"We have come a long way since our founding in 1911, and since that first national meeting sixty years ago but we have a long, long way to go. There must be a continuous fight to eliminate existing discrimination and to forge new frontiers."

From the Hon. Juanita Kidd Stout's address at NAWL's Regional Meeting in Anchorage, Alaska on October 9, 1983.

# **NAWL Welcomes New Members**

Membership in the National Association of Women Lawyers has many advantages, among them, opportunities for continuing legal education, a subscription to the Women Lawyers Journal, leadership development, and professional networking with other members. NAWL welcomes over nine hundred new members as of December 2020 who joined to take advantage of these and the many other member benefits.

Candice Reed	Allison Krepel	Vivian Grigorians	Sarah Craig
Latitude	Polsinelli PC	Polsinelli PC	Kirkland and Ellis LLP
Franklin, TN	St. Louis, MO	Los Angeles, CA	Chicago, IL
Kathleen E. Troy	Alexis Angell	Marguerite Solmssen	Sara Imane Dixon
Strategic General Counseling	Polsinelli PC	Indiana Maurer School of Law	Rutgers Law School
Bethesda, MD	Dallas, TX	Bloomington, IN	Harrison, NJ
Yoonhwi Cho	Nicole Macut	Patricia A Kall	Rachael Suzanne Williamson
K&L Gates LLP	Polsinelli PC	Zebra Technologies Corporation	Purdue University &
Houston, TX	Dallas, TX	Holtsville, NY	Oakland University Shelby Township, MI
Laura Hunt	Brook Bailey	Kimberly A Olson	, , , , ,
Alston & Bird LLP	Polsinelli PC	Zebra Technologies Corporation	Kizuwanda Wyatt
Dallas, TX	Kansas City, MO	Lincolnshire, IL	DePaul University
			College of Law
Kierra Powell	Mary Bannister	Susan Howells	Chicago, IL
Georgia State	Polsinelli PC	Zebra Technologies Corporation	
College of Law	St. Louis, MO		Shivani Patel
Atlanta, GA		Shufen Wen	Dallas, TX
	Randa Barton	Zebra Technologies Corporation	
Amanda Terr	Polsinelli PC		Alison Haney Bruck
Polsinelli PC	Dallas, TX	Nina Mohseni	Miami, FL
Dallas, TX		Zebra Technologies Corporation	
	Kelsey Louise Brandes	Lincolnshire, IL	Meredith Eng
Grace Whitney Zoller	Polsinelli PC		Polsinelli PC
Polsinelli PC Atlanta, GA	Lenexa, KS	Briana Swift K&L Gates LLP	Chicago, IL
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Elizabeth Gross	Polsinelli PC	Seame, WA	Polsinelli PC
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Wilmington, DE		DePaul University	
-	Caitlin Smith	College of Law	Elizabeth Hayes
Lindsay Ryan	Polsinelli PC	Chicago, IL	Polsinelli PC
Polsinelli PC	Washington, DC		Dallas, TX
Los Angeles, CA		Keyuna Renee Evans	
	Jessica Zaiger	Microsoft	Jamie Zveitel Kwiatek
Chelsea Reinartz	Polsinelli PC	Redmond, WA	Polsinelli PC
Office of the Second Judicial	Kansas City, KS		St. Louis, MO
District Public Defender		Anne Nergaard	
New Brighton, MN	Erica Kraus	Microsoft	Cat Kozlowski
	Sheppard Mullin Richter	Redmond, WA	Polsinelli PC
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Polsinelli PC	Falls Church, VA	A. Melissa Johnson	
Washington, DC		Spencer Johnson LLP	Lori Oliver
	Rebecca Lindstrom	San Diego, CA	Polsinelli PC
Randye Soref	Polsinelli PC		Seattle, WA
Polsinelli PC	Chicago, IL	Cheryl Wang	
Los Angeles, CA		David Yurman Enterprises LLC	
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Polsinelli PC	Pashman Stein Walder	Allstate	Kutak Rock LLP	Brighton, MA
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Nashville, TN	Fisher & Phillips LLP	King of Prussia, PA	Denver, CO	New Tork, NT
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Polsinelli PC	Peggy Hunt	DLA Piper LLP	DLA Piper LLP	Washington, DC
Los Angeles, CA	Greenberg Traurig LLP	New York, NY	Jersey City, NJ	
	Salt Lake City, UT			Jean Soh
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Shelby Pruitt	Minneapons, Min	Kirsten Quinn	Miroslava Sharpe	Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath
Brown & James	Kathleen M. Allare	American University Washington	Kutak Rock LLP	Los Angeles, CA
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	Chicago, IL	Washington, DC	•	Mary Clare Bonaccorsi
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Polsinelli PC	Elizabeth Bloom	Molly Dunbar	Polsinelli PC	Chicago, IL
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Susan Gilefsky	0. 7. 1		Kate Patton	Duane Morris LLP
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Los Angeles, CA	Polsinelli PC Denver, CO	Bloom Peters LLC Horsham, PA	Seaford, NY	Anitra Goodman Royster
Miya Yusa	Deriver, CO	noishani, FA	Jenn French	USAA
Polsinelli PC	Elizabeth Becker	Diane J. Kim	Patterson Law Group APC	00/01
San Francisco, CA	Loyola University Chicago	Duane Morris LLP	San Diego, CA	Emily Stubblefield
	School of Law	San Francisco, CA		Guynn Waddell Carroll
Ellen Harris Persons	Skokie, IL		Shauna Itri	& Lockaby
Polsinelli PC		Elinor H Murarova	Seeger Weiss LLP	Roanoke, VA
Atlanta, GA	Kristin Carpenter Osteen	Duane Morris LLP	Philadelphia, PA	
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Atlanta, GA	Savanna Lee Barlow	Duane Morris LLP	San Francisco, CA	Los Angeles, CA
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Liz Liu	Dallas, TX		Andrea Theriault Holbrook	Haynes and Boone LLP
Polsinelli PC		Elizabeth Lacombe	Duane Morris LLP	Houston, TX
New York, NY	Kailie Jordan Melchior	Duane Morris LLP	Portland, ME	
	McDonnell & Associates	Hartford, CT		Julia Elizabeth Cassidy
Jessica Killeen	King of Prussia, PA		Lisa J. Connolly	Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath
The George Washington	F. W. I.	Breeana Joelle Somers	Kutak Rock LLP	Florham Park, NJ
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Washington, DC	Jackson LLP Healthcare Lawyers Evanston, IL	Philadelphia, PA	Sherian Anikie	Haug Partners LLP
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Polsinelli PC	Heidi Hockberger	Duane Morris LLP	Development Corp.	Hew Folky IVI
Denver, CO	Kirkland & Ellis LLP	Chicago, IL	Atlanta, GA	Donela Maria Qirjazi
	Chicago, IL	· ·		K&L Gates LLP
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	Victoria, TX	A.II		University of Washington
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Nicole M. Smithson	Comp Danierale	Allyssa Wall	D + C -          C -	
Michigan Indigent Defense	Sara Peacock	Kutak Rock LLP	Boston College Law School	Seattle, WA
Michigan Indigent Defense Commission	Allstate	•	Boston College Law School Merrimac, MA	·
Michigan Indigent Defense Commission		Kutak Rock LLP Omaha, NE	Merrimac, MA	Kaina Zygowicz
Michigan Indigent Defense	Allstate Tampa, FL	Kutak Rock LLP	Merrimac, MA  Heather LeighAnn Raun	·
Michigan Indigent Defense Commission Berkley, MI	Allstate	Kutak Rock LLP Omaha, NE Jasmine Paige Robinson	Merrimac, MA	Kaina Zygowicz Washington University
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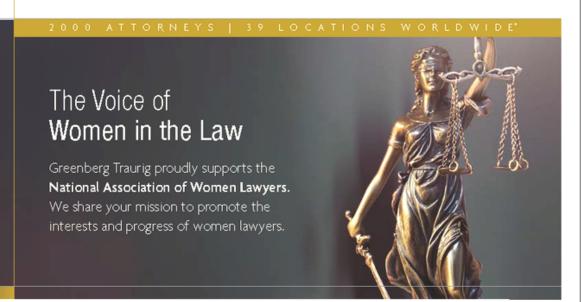
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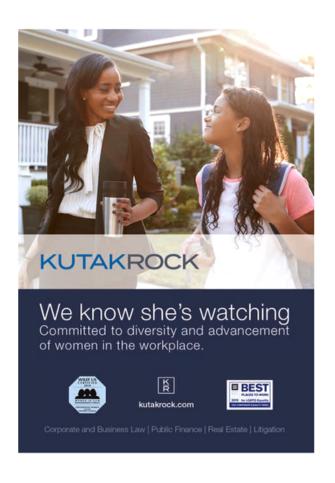
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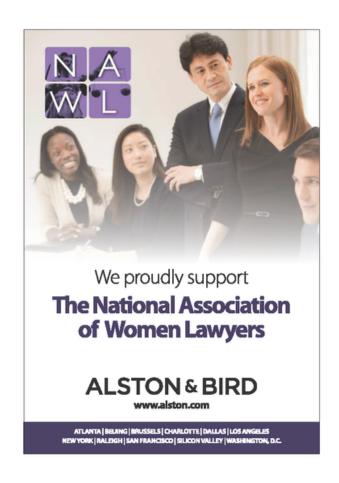




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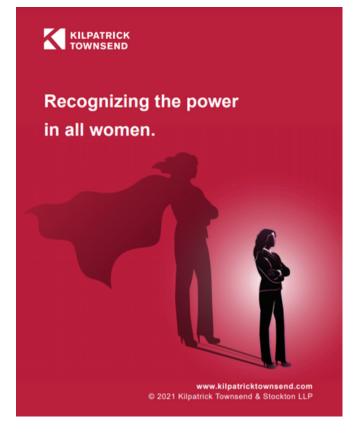


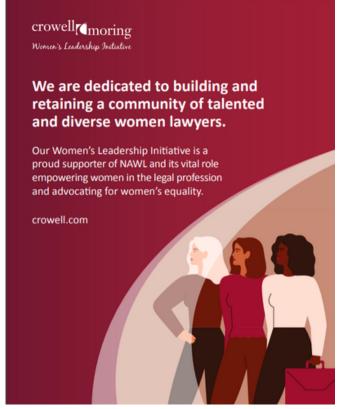
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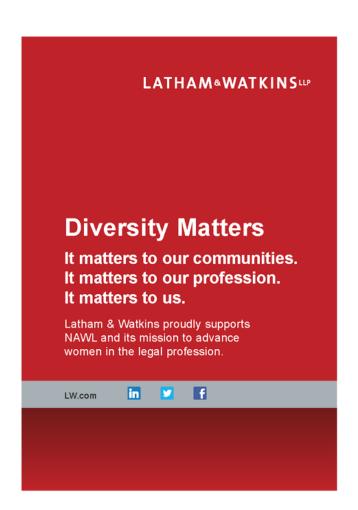
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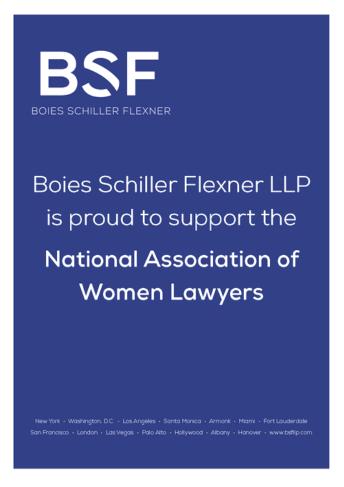
To learn more, please contact Sandra A. Jeskie at jeskie@duanemorris.com.

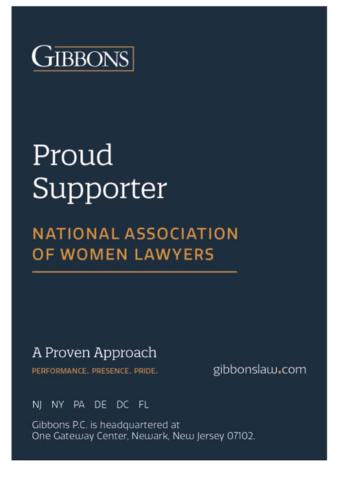
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