LADY JUSTICE

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Women Lawyers Section Updates

WLS Membership Calls

The membership calls take place on a quarterly basis. Here is the call schedule for 2022:

- September 13th at 1:30 pm ET
- November 8th at 1:30 pm ET

WLS Listserv

- women@primerus.com

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CHAIR COLUMN

Karina B. Sterman is the current Chair of the Primerus Women Lawyers Section. She is a partner at Greenberg Glusker in Los Angeles, California. A partner in both the Litigation and Employment Law Departments, Karina counsels her clients on wage and hour and other employment law compliance, drafting employment-related documents, and participating in a business-minded employment strategy to minimize the risks of litigation and costly long-term mistakes. She regularly provides employment law training, performs HR legal audits, and builds trade secret protection plans to maximize the value of her clients' investment in their intellectual property.

l just found out that I'm the new Chair of the Women Lawyers Section (WLS) of Primerus.

Then I found out that I'm supposed to write the introduction to the Summer 2022 edition of the *Lady Justice*. The theme of this edition focuses on Diversity and Inclusion. I am an educated, middle class, white, cis-gendered woman. What do I know about diversity and inclusion?

Well, I am also an immigrant who arrived in this country when I was nine years old not speaking a word of English. My parents didn't either. We came here as refugees because apparently we were Jewish and someone in the city where we lived found out and outed us. I got beat up by a little boy. I didn't even know we were Jewish before then.

Coming to this country alone meant that we did everything on our own, depending only on ourselves. So it went. My parents got jobs. I finished high school. And then I finished college. Then law school. We finally "made it", and we were so proud because we thought we did this on our own. But did we?

I recently found out three weeks before our first post-Covid international vacation that the US Postal Office lost my son's passport. I called. I emailed. I went to the Post Office. No help at all. I didn't tell anyone at work what I was going through and finally reached my wits' end because the stress was distracting me even at work. I finally went to my partner's office and unburdened to her. Her first question was, "Why didn't you send an email around the firm to see who can help?" I stared at her. But, I do everything on my own….Then I went to my desk and sent a desperate "can anyone help me" email to everyone at my firm. While many people responded and offered different suggestions, a brand new lawyer who hadn't even met me reached out and said, "Let's call my brother, he works in Congress, maybe he can help." So we did. And he did. And my son got a replacement passport issued the day before our flight!

Why am I telling you this? Because, the stress and drama notwithstanding, I learned that I do not do anything on my own. None of us do. We persevere and we overcome because we have networks, people who can and do help. To people who have been historically marginalized, those networks can feel exclusive, privileged, and inaccessible. It is our job to lead by example and show our colleagues, our clients, and our profession that we are there to help and support.

WLS will be hosting networking calls in September and November, as well as a meeting at the Global Conference in San Diego in October. Join. Invite someone who could use some support to join with you. Speak up and step up.

Help us grow, garner interest in attending our meetings, provide networking opportunities, and simply highlight the excellent women attorneys in the Primerus Membership.

I welcome you and look forward to knowing you. Please reach out to me anytime. My email is ksterman@ggfirm.com and, like most lawyers, I check it all the time!

MEET A MEMBER

One of the benefits of being a member of a large organization, or even a small group of similar attorneys, is the ability to learn from others' experience. In this section we will be highlighting members by asking them questions about their practice in different areas of the law.

As an equity partner at Zupkus & Angell, P.C., a WBENC-certified women and minority owned law firm, Muliha Khan is dedicated to representing clients in Denver, its surrounding areas and throughout the state of Colorado. Her commercial and civil litigation practice encompasses a broad range, including defending both insurance companies and insureds in bad faith, personal and bodily injury claims, and construction defect. Muliha also practices in the area of employment law, providing both pre-litigation and litigation services. Additionally, Muliha has significant appellate experience at all levels and has drafted briefs for the United States Supreme Court, the Colorado Supreme Court, and Colorado Court of Appeals.

WHERE ARE YOU LICENSED TO PRACTICE?

I have license to practice in Colorado.

ABOUT HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN PRACTICING?

Approximately 14 years.

WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF YOUR PRACTICE?

Insurance defense (both first and third party), as well as employment law (employer-oriented).

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER AND HAS THE LAW MET YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

I became a lawyer because I've been a nerd for most of my life. I've always enjoyed analyzing information. My favorite part is becoming intimately familiar with the nuances to advance my theory, arguments, hypothesis, etc. Bam. The nerd strikes again! Also, I have opinions which I'm not shy to voice, a trait which I believe is well-suited for the practice of law.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU HAVE RECEIVED SINCE STARTING PRACTICE?

One of my mentors, Bob Zupkus, once said to me, "Just be yourself. The clients will be drawn to that." He was right. Once I had the confidence to incorporate my personality into my practice, things changed for the better.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN YOUR FIRM AND IN YOUR PRACTICE?

I was born in the U.K. and lived in several countries before moving to the U.S. I was fortunate to grow up in an extremely diverse community. It is the environment in which I feel most comfortable, and this has carried over into how I am in the firm; from hiring employees and selecting outside vendors to accommodating team members' needs (both in and outside the firm) and integrating collaboration into the practice.

WHAT SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR FIRMS WHO ARE LOOKING TO EXPAND UPON THE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT THEIR FIRM?

The conversation has to shift from "What is the value to D&I" to "How can I implement D&I?"

HOW DOES YOUR FIRM PROMOTE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION?

By running our business, a women and minority-owned and operated firm, and practicing law in a way that is authentic to our values and who we are as people.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE TO YOUNG WOMEN LAWYERS ON THE PATH TO BECOMING A PARTNER, OR OWNER, AT THEIR FIRM?

Figure out what you really want. If you want to become an owner, ask yourself why. Is it because that's what's expected of you? Is that what you really want? Don't forget that success is subjective and can be defined in many ways. If you're primarily motivated by money, I would say that's not enough. But, once you've committed to that path of ownership, be sure you have conversations with your loved ones about your future goals, so they can support you (and vice versa) along the way. Don't be afraid to be yourself (i.e. admitting that you like *L.A. Law*). If someone makes you feel like you don't belong, well, maybe I should just keep my advice to myself on that one :).


DIVERSITY

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION: HOW DOES YOUR FIRM STACK UP?

By Rosa Feeny, Senior Counsel and Director of Client Relations and Development at Lewis Johs Avallone Aviles, LLP

Rosa M. Feeney, Esq, brings to the firm over 21 years of experience handling complex insurance coverage litigation matters, ranging from first and third-party commercial lines disputes to personal lines insurance litigation. Her experience includes homeowners, motor vehicle, supplementary uninsured/underinsured motorist litigations and arbitrations, life insurance disputes, first and third-party property damage and extra-contractual claims. She also handles general contract litigation and has drafted and orally argued appeals in the New York State Appellate Courts.

Type the phrase "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" (DEI) in a Google search and the predominant results yield diversity and inclusion efforts and education for the workplace. There are a plethora of articles addressing initiatives and programs for expanding DEI and what companies can do to achieve DEI in their business practices.

Diversity has been defined as the presence of differences such as race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, disability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective. Equity is promoting fairness by institutions and Inclusion is an effort to ensure those that are diverse feel accepted and welcome.

Workplace diversity efforts first surfaced in the 1960s following the introduction of equal employment laws and affirmative action, which stemmed from companies that had been known for racial discrimination. These laws prompted companies to start diversity training programs to help employees and begin to diversify the workplace.

The effort to increase diversity and inclusion in the workplace has progressed slowly in the private sector, but DEI has long been a practice seen in the public sector.

DEI has been a part of Public Work contracts for years. Those bidding to provide goods and services to Public Sector clients are often required to subcontract out a certain percentage of the work to "Minority Business Enterprises" (MBE), "Minority and Woman-Owned Business Enterprises" (MWBE), and "Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business" (SDVOB).

In New York State, for example, the State website provides lists of vendors that qualify for MBE, MWBE, and SDVOB status. Suppliers of goods and services to public sector clients often reach out to the listed vendors to solicit their participation in a bid or contract, to achieve the percentage requirements set forth in some of these public sector bids.

While public sector organizations are facing more and more public scrutiny regarding their DEI efforts, the private sector lags behind. There are countless programs to guide companies in achieving DEI; however, there are no set parameters in the private sector as to what endeavors should be made to increase this objective and how to achieve this goal within the multitude of diverse industries and geographical locations throughout the country.

What may be achievable in certain industries or locations, may not be achievable in others and what efforts, if any, are taken is up to the individual companies and one size does not fit all. As a result, the levels of DEI vary greatly from company to company and industry to industry.

I applaud my firm for hiring a Hispanic woman in the role of the Director of Client Services and Development to spearhead a new initiative for business development. Part of this role involves an analysis of the diversity within the firm. As part of that role, I am tasked with preparing many responses to requests for legal services proposals for private and public sector clients which gives us an opportunity to promote the diverse employees within the firm.

An increasing number of municipal and private clients now request specific details about the firm's diversity by asking the proposer of services to break down employees by gender, race, ethnicity, and position held within the company. It also permits us to propose a diverse group of attorneys to provide the requested legal services.

As part of the proposal for legal services, we are often required to complete organizational charts that are broken down by these categories and while they don't specifically ask for the names of the employees and what categories they fall under, they often ask for the number of employees in each category.

This information, however, is not readily available. Employees are not required to report race or ethnicity as a condition of employment, and some employees do not want to disclose that information or be characterized as a certain gender, race, or ethnicity. Therefore, the process of gathering and reporting that information may not be completely accurate.

That being said, there is value to the exercise of preparing these organizational charts and evaluating the diversity within a company. Completing a chart of the number of employees broken down by these categories can be very informative and provides an opportunity to see where the company stands and where improvement can be made.

I highly recommend that every firm take the time to prepare such a breakdown and evaluate the composition of their company. It paints a picture of diversity within the firm which can be very enlightening.

So, how does your firm stack up?

#METOO IN THE NETHERLANDS AND THE UNITED STATES - HAS ANYTHING CHANGED?

By Mary Edenfield, shareholder and attorney at Mateer Harbert, P.A., and Priscilla C.X. de Leede, attorney at Russell Advocaten.

Mary Edenfield is a shareholder at Mateer Harbert, P.A. in Orlando, Florida. Her practice areas include healthcare and labor and employment.

Priscilla de Leede advises both Dutch and foreign companies on all aspects of employment law. She litigates and negotiates for companies in issues regarding dismissal, restructuring, non-compete disputes, contracts, and the position of directors. Her special focus is on work councils for whom she regularly provides training courses. Priscilla publishes on a wide variety of topics within the field of employment and corporate law, such as employee illness, corporate immigration, and the posting of workers.

#MeToo was initially used in 2006 by activist and survivor Tarana Burke. The movement went viral on social media in 2017 following the allegations against movie producer Harvey Weinstein. Since that time, the movement has continued to impact employment in the United States, as well as other countries.

In the Netherlands, the #MeToo movement has only really gotten going since January 2022.

During the past few months, the potential sexual harassment at, inter alia, the talent show The Voice of Holland and football club Ajax have been in the spotlights extensively.

The question is: Has anything changed in (the organization of companies in) the United States since the start of #MeToo in 2006? What developments can the Netherlands expect that now that the #MeToo movement also gained momentum there? Will company cultures and company policies change? What can we learn from the United States? What legislation does the U.S. have to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace, and did the legislation change due to the #MeToo movement? In addition, do United States companies currently have more protocols to prevent harassment from happening?

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

A few notable developments in the United States due to the #MeToo are discussed below.

INCREASED EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION ACTIVITY

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is the federal agency charged with enforcing federal employment discrimination laws in the United States. The spotlight on the #MeToo movement in 2017 was apparently responsible for an increase in discrimination charges alleging sexual harassment filed with the EEOC in 2018. The EEOC's enforcement activity with respect to sexual harassment increased in 2018 as well. The EEOC reported increases in "reasonable cause" determinations, charges resolved through conciliation, lawsuits filed by the EEOC, and the total monetary amount recovered for victims of sexual harassment by the EEOC through administrative enforcement and litigation. In addition, hits on the EEOC's sexual harassment webpage more than doubled. (The information reported by the EEOC does not include charges filed with state and local agencies solely under state and local discrimination laws, so it is not known whether their experience mirrored that of the EEOC.)

The number of sexual harassment charges filed with the EEOC remained fairly level in 2019. However, in 2020 and 2021, the number of discrimination charges filed with the EEOC – including sexual harassment charges – dropped. It is likely that this was due to the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic. It remains to be seen whether, as workplaces return to normal operations, the number of sexual harassment charges will once again increase.

STATE LEGISLATION

Since 2017, nineteen states in the United States have enacted legislation aimed at strengthening protections against workplace harassment as a result of the #MeToo movement. Many of the laws include one, or some combination, of these types of provisions:

- Extending coverage of anti-harassment laws to all employers, regardless of size;
- Expanding harassment protection to include volunteers, interns, and/or independent contractors;
- Extending the statute of limitations;

- Increasing amounts and/or types of damages victims can recover;
- Implementing or strengthening anti-harassment training requirements;
- Requiring or encouraging anti-harassment policies;
- Limiting or prohibiting employers from requiring employees to sign non-disclosure agreements as a condition of employment or as part of a settlement;
- Limiting employers' use of forced arbitration;
- Limiting or prohibiting "no-rehire" provisions in settlement agreements.

ENDING FORCED ARBITRATION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT ACT OF 2021

Many employers in the United States require employees to sign agreements providing for employment disputes to be dealt with in arbitration, eliminating the employees' ability to file suit. The #MeToo movement highlighted that this practice often allows sexual harassment complaints to be handled out of the public eye, in a forum that tends to be more favorable to the employer and to shield the perpetrator.

In February 2022, United States House of Representatives and Senate passed the bipartisan "*Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act of 2021*", which was signed into law by President Biden on March 3, 2022. Under this law, predispute arbitration agreements and predispute joint action waivers are invalid and unenforceable with respect to sexual harassment disputes and sexual assault disputes, at the election of the alleged victim. Therefore, employees alleging employment-related sexual harassment have the option to file suit, even though they signed an arbitration agreement at the time of hire (or any other time prior to the dispute). An employee can still agree to arbitration of a dispute after the dispute arises, but the law makes it clear that the decision is the employee's alone. The law applies to any claims that arise after the law's effective date, even if the arbitration agreement pre-dates the law. Any dispute about the applicability of the law in a particular case will be determined by a court, rather than an arbitrator, regardless of the terms of the arbitration agreement. The anticipation is that the threat of litigation (including class actions) in harassment cases, with the accompanying publicity and expense, will cause employers to do a better job of protecting employees from sexual harassment.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Where first the public debate mainly revolved around the fact that alleged perpetrators can be prosecuted under criminal law, the focus is now also on the employment law perspective of #MeToo. Under Dutch law, it is the employers who must do everything in their power to prevent, inter alia, sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination from occurring within the company. This is a statutory obligation and failure to do so can mean significant damage to both the victim and the company.

DUTY TO ENSURE A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Dutch employment law has strict rules and is very employee protective. Employers need to ensure a safe work environment within their company, devoid of sexual harassment and any form of inappropriate behavior. This means there must be a clear sexual harassment policy, so that employees know exactly what behavior will and will not be tolerated. Such a policy must include a clear complaints procedure with concrete deadlines, sanctions that apply in case of violation of the rules, and, preferably, a designated confidential advisor.

It is essential that employers enforce their policy and take appropriate disciplinary measures if an employee exhibits inappropriate behavior. In addition, companies must regularly inform their employees about how they are expected to behave and bring the policy and business culture to the employees' attention.

In the Netherlands, the spotlight on the recent #MeToo incidents increased employers' awareness of their responsibility and the importance to take action. If a company does not have and enforce a clear sexual harassment policy, does not appoint a confidential advisor, or does not inform its employees regularly about how they are expected to behave, it cannot sit still anymore but will have to take action.

In addition to a sexual harassment policy, there is great attention for the corporate culture in organizations, because it plays a crucial role in every employee feeling safe and comfortable. The corporate culture of an organization either tolerates or prevents harassment from taking place. Furthermore, employers are required to treat men and women equally. This includes that the difference between men and women must be recognized and respected. Only in this way can there be a corporate culture which is safe and comfortable for both men and women. All the more reason for organizations to now organize the balance of power in their organization differently and change their culture where necessary. And this often starts at the top. Harassment is more likely to occur in highly hierarchical organizations with dependency relationships and employees in positions of power. Such top positions are still mostly held by men, as also recognized with the binding women's quota in place in the Netherlands since the beginning of this year (i.e. since January 1, 2022, at least one-third of the members of the supervisory board of a listed company must be women. Large companies must set targets to achieve a more balanced distribution of men and women in top positions.).

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE WORKING CONDITIONS ACT IN CONNECTION WITH THE OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE A CONFIDENTIAL ADVISOR

Due to the recent sexual harassment complaints in the Netherlands, the question also arose whether stricter legislation must be implemented in

order to prevent harassment at the workplace and to support victims of harassment (i.e. by an amendment of the Working Conditions Acts). There are currently no statutory rules that prescribe the requirements of a sexual harassment company policy. It is up to the employer to draft a policy, without the policy having to comply with specific requirements. For example, Dutch law does not prescribe that employers are obliged to appoint a confidential advisor to which the victim can go to ask for help/guidance and does not prescribe a specific (complaints) procedure to handle complaints about sexual harassment. Therefore, a legislative proposal has been drafted to come up with clear legislation about the obligation to appoint an independent and confidential advisor and how employers need to handle complaints and reports of sexual harassment.

PRACTICE CHANGES

Practice and case law show some notable developments. Firstly, in former legal proceedings in which the employer requested a court to dissolve the employment contract of the perpetrator due to sexual harassment, the judge might have declined this request because it was of the opinion that the alleged harassment could not be qualified as unacceptable because a “cuddly company culture” or ”amicable atmosphere” existed within the organization. However, recent case law shows that a judge will most likely not come to such a judgment again soon.

Secondary, formerly it was the victim of sexual harassment at the workplace who was forced to leave the company, while currently it is more often the perpetrator who has to leave the company. Previously a perpetrator would quite often only receive a reprimand, while currently a reprimand will, in most cases, not suffice anymore and the employment contract of the perpetrator will be terminated. Of course, it always depends on the circumstances of the case. Also, it must not be forgotten that there are still victims who leave their jobs because they no longer want to work for a company where such behavior can take place.

CONCLUSION

In the United States, the #MeToo movement has brought changes in federal and state laws. Employers must be aware of any changes in their states’ laws and make adjustments as needed to comply. Employers with arbitration agreements will need to prepare due to the *Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act of 2021*. All employers should review their sexual harassment policies and procedures and continue to educate management and employees.

Regarding the Netherlands, we also see that #MeToo has an impact on employment. All in all, there is now more awareness for preventing sexual harassment at the workplace and ensuring a safe work environment. What is more, even a legislative proposal has been drafted. In any case, no matter how the #MeToo movement will evolve in the Netherlands and whether new #MeToo incidents will get out in the open, it is good to focus on this important subject. Let us all make sure that there is a safe work environment in every company, devoid of any form of inappropriate behavior, so that there will be no new incidents and all employees can work with pleasure and confidence.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WITHIN THE LEGAL PROFESSION: WHAT COULD WE BE DOING BETTER?

By Melody Lins, attorney at Mandelbaum Barrett

Melody M. Lins is an associate in Mandelbaum Barrett's Corporate Law Practice Group. Melody focuses her practice on business entity formation, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, commercial transactions and corporate governance concerns, frequently for start-ups, family-owned businesses and closely-held businesses. She also advises dental groups, veterinary groups, and physicians across the country in the acquisition and sale of professional practices. Having previously worked as a commercial litigator, Melody is well-equipped to advise on contract and employment law concerns, with an eye towards avoiding potential litigation.

History has taught us that simple and courageous acts, no matter their size, can lead to change or inspire another to bring about even greater results. Change is often brought about by significant effort, risk, and cost, but as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, we are not flotsam and jetsam floating in the river of life, unable to influence the events that unfold around us. Rather, we are lawyers, educated in a system where change and new opportunity means everything, and thus, we are uniquely positioned to influence everything that surrounds us. Despite this leverage and opportunity to become catalysts of change, we must acknowledge that many barriers still exist which prevent the advancement of diverse lawyers in our profession. As such, we must act (in large or small ways) and be forward looking, understanding that the less diverse our law firms are today, the harder it may be to foster diversity within our firms in the future.

We need lawyers of diverse color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, physical abilities and disabilities, language, military service, ethnicity, culture, etc. We need a bar of attorneys that represents a wide range of experiences and backgrounds because advocating for diversity in the profession can lead to many positive results including greater cultural/social competency and our ability to offer legal services that meet the needs of diverse clients; higher workplace morale and retention because diversity fosters feelings of community and inclusion; better attorney recruitment because new talent will appreciate a commitment to diversity that is reflected in the attorneys and staff that work at the law firm; stronger work ethic and motivation when diverse attorneys feel that their unique talents and personality traits are embraced and promoted, and not stifled by the pressure to "fit in" and assimilate; and creative problem solving where new ideas and diverse perspectives may lead to alternate and better results. In summary, encouraging and actively pursuing diversity will allow law firms to both cultivate a better work environment and achieve better results for our clients.

Therefore, the question remains – how can we achieve diversity in our profession? What could we be doing better? I will share my view on some of the answers to these questions, understanding that there are many other important and valuable perspectives.

1. Ensure your law firm brand reflects your commitment to a diverse workplace: Does your law firm website have a section dedicated to diversity? This is one way to showcase that the firm values different backgrounds and ideas. This section of the website can serve as a platform to discuss many things such as the benefits and importance of diversity within your law firm (e.g. a mission statement); the presence of committees within the firm that are dedicated solely to diversity or promoting the professional and personal growth of minority lawyers; the firm's involvement in minority hiring, retention, and diversity initiatives outside the firm; and partnerships or sponsorships the firm is involved with that aim to enhance the diversity of the profession.

2. Develop a formal internship program and recruit diverse law students: Determine how many diverse interns you can hire and commit to that number. Whether you run a summer or ongoing internship program, make sure a diverse candidate is always hired. To achieve

this, partner with law schools in your state, learn whether they have diversity programs or student groups, and begin recruiting within these networks. In line with point number one above, make sure your website advertises the opportunity to intern at your firm. If you don't have a formal summer associate program, start one and explain what it entails and how to apply on your website. Minority applicants will be looking at many law firm websites, speaking with their peers, and comparing experiences and what they see. (We all remember the dreadful rumor mill law school can be.) We want to make sure our law firms are seen and heard (and hopefully stand out) in this screening process as this is the best way to ensure we are recruiting candidates that are both diverse and competitive.

3. Make Retention A Priority: Too many law firms place all their proverbial "eggs" in the "basket" of hiring diverse attorneys, but then miss the opportunity to retain them. Work is a lot like any other relationship we have been in – it needs to be fostered and maintained. One thing you can do to retain diverse lawyers is to ensure they are being properly mentored and that they are satisfied with their growth and development at the firm. This is discussed in more detail below. However, it also will pay to embrace the strengths and weaknesses of minority attorneys. For example, maybe you see that an attorney is struggling as a corporate attorney but has the potential to be a great litigator. Inviting that attorney to pursue a change, to uncover a better fit for their skill set may be worthwhile for everyone.

4. Mentor Your Diverse Lawyers: Mentorship plays an essential role in the practice of law, and this is especially true for minority lawyers. Good lawyers always need the support of a mentor to guide them in their careers. It is also important for diverse attorneys to have a role model they can look up to and emulate. A lack of diversity in the firm makeup can already make it difficult for minority lawyers to find mentors with whom they identify and can learn from. In turn, this can hinder their professional growth which will ultimately affect the quality-of-service clients receive. Therefore, we should be thoughtful in pairing minority attorneys with the right mentor, understanding that the wrong mentor can do more harm than good.

5. Invest in Development and Training: Like anyone else, a minority lawyer also wants to see that they are gaining skills and growing in the profession. One way to ensure this is happening is by giving minority lawyers new opportunities both in and outside of the workplace. For example, ensure minority lawyers are given different opportunities to interact with clients, negotiate with counterparts, draft agreements and pleadings, participate in court appearances, and engage in extracurriculars such as bar associations, and other networking groups. These opportunities must (of course) be coupled with appropriate training and exposure, and with the setting of goals and expectations. It is through these and other opportunities that minority lawyers will showcase their talents and in turn be recognized and promoted within the firm.

6. Commit to Diversity: Understand and embrace diversity, not just for "the sake of diversity," but because law firm leadership and employees are committed to the idea that diversity provides a rich array of talent, experiences, and understanding that can enhance our clients' experiences and draw more success to the law firm and the profession. Committing to diversity also means encouraging a culture in the firm where leadership and employees (non-attorneys too) take initiative and responsibility for creating a welcoming environment that is inclusive, open to all voices being heard, and where everyone feels they can share their perspectives.

By incorporating some or all these recommendations into your law firm, you will begin to send the important message that a lawyer's diverse traits are an advantage that should be respected and celebrated.