

Committee Spotlight: Diversity

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Like many of you who are reading this article, I have been a long-time member of the DRI. I joined the DRI as a young attorney in 1991 and have been an active member of the Life, Health and Disability Committee since 2001. When Sim Rapoport, Chair of the Life, Health and Disability Committee, presented me with the opportunity to Chair the Diversity Sub-Committee, I was honored to do so.

Along with the sub-committee's Vice-Chair, Bob Miller, and members, Cesar Britos and Eric Myers, we look forward to continuing the good work of our immediate past chair, Cheryl A.C. Brown. Additionally, we look forward to furthering the goals and benefits of diversity in the Life, Health and Disability Committee and the DRI as a whole.

The request to author this article was timely. Martin Luther King Day has just passed and February was Black history month. In looking back at the history of our country, who would have conceived in Dr. King's time that a Hispanic, an African American and a woman would contend for and possibly be nominated as the presidential candidate of one of the major political parties? Over this time period, our nation has accomplished a great deal with respect to diversifying all aspects of our society and the legal profession has made its strides in this area.

But there is still a long way to go until our profession has caught up with other professions and become more re-

flective of the general U.S. population. As noted by May Mon Post, Esquire, in her article, *The Next Stop "How Firms Are Taking Steps To Achieve Real Results in Increasing Diversity"*:

In law firms and law departments nationally, an average of 9.7 percent of the attorneys are minorities. By contrast other professions have far greater total minority representation: 20.8 percent among accountants and auditors, 24.6 percent among physicians and surgeons and 18.2 percent among college and university teachers.

DRI's Diversity Committee and the Life, Health and Disability Diversity Sub-Committee accept the challenge. We want to bring about true diversity at all levels of our profession, now and going into the future. However, true diversity is not just adding more minority attorneys to our roles. True diversity includes not only the minority, but also the majority; woman and men; young and old. Accordingly, diversity celebrates differences and encourages inclusion. For true diversity cannot be achieved without the inclusion of all.

This message of inclusiveness was outlined by Raymond Williams, DRI's Diversity Committee Chair. As Mr. Williams stated, the DRI Diversity Committee's goal is to make the committee synonymous with the word "inclusiveness." As Mr. Williams noted:

Today's reality is that the country is becoming more diverse and so must the legal landscape. We can either accept this change or reject it. But if we chose to accept it, we must truly embrace diversity and leverage it for all its great value. I read an interesting article written by Stacy Hawkins,

the former director of Diversity at Ballard, Spahr, in which she explains that America has become one of the most dominant political, social, and economic forces in the world, largely because of the strength of its diversity. She said its power lies not only in having diversity, but in leveraging that diversity to insure everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in the American enterprise. Ms. Hawkins believes, and I agree, that if we continue to build our diversity, but lose our ability to leverage it, we will have gained nothing and perhaps lost a great deal.

The Life, Health and Disability Diversity Sub-Committee gladly adds its voice and will assist the Diversity Committee in its efforts for inclusiveness and meaningful diversity progress. We also will assist the Diversity Committee to reach its stated goal of becoming the voice of the defense bar regarding diversity issues. Our subcommittee should and will take an active role in this effort. We hope that you too would like to add your voice and talents.

Accordingly, to be truly representative of the defense bar on diversity issues, input from the entire defense community is required. Therefore, we of the Life, Health and Disability Diversity Sub-Committee echo Ray William's call to action. Whatever your race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or other personally defining characteristics, please join the Committee and the Life, Health and Disability Sub-Committee and include your voice for a better and stronger profession and an even more inclusive DRI.

We look forward to hearing from and working with you.