



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

2020 Winter Newsletter

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LAWYERS FROM AROUND THE FIRM GET INVOLVED IN “SHE BUILDS” — A NATIONWIDE PROGRAM DESIGNED TO CREATE REAL CHANGE FOR WOMEN

[She Builds](#) is a nationwide event series, led by real estate industry leaders and sponsored by the nonprofit Rebuilding Together. The series provides critical home repairs to women in need as well as training to give them the confidence and skills needed to maintain safe and healthy homes. The firm’s relationship with Rebuilding Together is not new. A number of real estate partners have assisted with local Rebuilding Together efforts, including **Laurie Grasso** and **Rori Malech**, who have led She Builds events in their local communities.

New York

In September, a team of Hunton Andrews Kurth lawyers from our New York office stepped away from their computers and picked up their paint brushes for the fourth annual She Builds in New York, a full-day renovation project at the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center in the Bronx. Laurie Grasso, who co-chairs the NY She Builds Planning Committee, partnered with Rebuilding Together NYC and several of our clients such as Savanna, Invesco, L+M and Emmes to make the event a success. They found a location that needed our help, organized a team of nearly 100 volunteers and then raised more than \$100,000 in record time in order to make the project a reality. Over the course of the day, the women worked on renovations and improvements that will revitalize the century-old facility that continues to house early childhood, youth and adult services for families in the Bronx.

Washington, DC

In November, volunteers from our Washington, DC office took part in a She Builds project. Rori Malech took the lead on this project and, along with volunteers from JLL, Gensler and HITT, spent the day helping a very grateful homeowner, “Ms. S”, make much-needed repairs to her home. A senior citizen who suffers from Parkinson’s Disease, “Ms. S” has a strong desire to remain in her own home rather than move to an assisted living facility. Thanks in part to the hard work of volunteers from our Washington, DC office, she is better prepared to meet her goal.

Both events were wonderful opportunities to empower women and give back to the community. We look forward to our continued relationship with Rebuilding Together and partnering on future She Builds events.



WOMEN IN CAPITAL MARKETS HUNTON ANDREWS KURTH

SEC COMMISSIONER HESTER M. PEIRCE SPEAKS AT HUNTON ANDREWS KURTH'S INAUGURAL WOMEN IN CAPITAL MARKETS FORUM EVENT

On November 4, the New York office of Hunton Andrews Kurth hosted more than 50 clients and guests at our inaugural Women in Capital Markets Forum event. Hunton Andrews Kurth partner **Rudene Haynes** and associate **Mayme Donohue** moderated the event, which featured a fireside chat with SEC Commissioner Hester M. Peirce. The lively discussion focused on the Commissioner's career path, her mentors and sponsors along the way, how she deals with criticism and how she continually turns obstacles into opportunities. She also touched on substantive issues like crypto currency and other digital assets as well as on the recent Dodd-Frank whistleblower protections.

WCM Hosts Lively Panel Discussion on LIBOR Transition

On March 5, the New York office hosted a remarkable group of women in finance for the firm's second Women in Capital Markets Forum event. The event featured a lively panel discussion about LIBOR transition. Partner Amy Williams moderated the discussion and was joined by female speakers from relevant agencies who are familiar with the state of play and regulatory oversight, including Ann Battle, Head of Benchmark Reform at ISDA; Shalei Choi, Director, Transactions Management at Ginnie Mae; Meredith Coffey, Executive Vice President of Research and Public Policy at LSTA; and Ang Middleton, Bank Examiner (Risk Specialist) at OCC. Following the panel, guests had an opportunity to network and mingle.

*Partners **Susan Failla**, **Janet McCrae** and **Christina Kwon** created the Women in Capital Markets Forum last year, in response to the realization that there are limited opportunities for women in the industry to learn, be inspired and network together in a meaningful way. They wanted to establish a group that focused on providing sophisticated programming that is innovative and educational, but also provides a venue for like-minded finance-focused women to network and advance their careers together. If you have clients that you think would be interested in future WCM events, please contact Polly Hamilton.*



FIRM CONTINUES INVOLVEMENT WITH PROJECT DESTINED IN LOS ANGELES

This past fall, the firm continued its involvement with Project Destined in a few signature events.

In November, Project Destined culminated its intensive West Coast real estate financing program for underserved youth with its Fall Championship at Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield in Century City. Partner **Jane Hinton** served on the panel of judges in the “Shark Tank” style competition, where teams of youth presented their ideas for a chance to win up to \$10,000 in scholarship awards. Judges composed of business leaders in the Los Angeles real estate market included John Semcken, SVP, Majestic Realty; Patrick Rhodes, Vice President, Development, Brookfield Properties; Christopher Montes, Vice President, Walker & Dunlop; Dominic Lowe, EVP, Design, Development & Construction US, Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield; John Fleming, CFO, US, Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield; Bo Okoroji, VP, Investment & Divestment, Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield; and Perica Bell, Managing Director, MUFG Union Bank. Coached by fellows from MUFG Union Bank and the USC Real Estate program, student teams presented their ideas to the panel of judges for a chance to win scholarship prizes. “Team Mambo” was victorious with their mixed use value added solution for a property located in Koreatown. In addition to Jane, Los Angeles associates **Christopher Hasbrouck, Ryan Nolan, Mack Watson, Rebecca Hoffman, and Shane Wilson** all attended the event.

In October and November, Project Destined scholars participated in training in real estate financing and financial literacy at our Los Angeles office, where some of our lawyers guided them on the legal aspects of real estate, entitlements and financing.

Project Destined scholars gain exposure to all aspects of the real estate investment life cycle while interacting with real industry professionals, analyzing real opportunities and helping to invest real capital into real estate within their own communities.

PARTNER SYED AHMAD ASSUMES ABA MINORITY TRIAL LAWYER COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP ROLE

Firm partner **Syed Ahmad** has assumed a leadership role with the ABA Section of Litigation’s Minority Trial Lawyer Committee. The committee provides litigation and business development strategy resources as well as a career network for minority litigators, in-house counsel and law students. It fosters professional development, legal scholarship, advocacy and community involvement while also facilitating discussion about diversity and the law.



I am excited to take on this leadership role and drive diversity efforts for minority litigators forward. I’m proud to be part of this organization and to represent Hunton Andrews Kurth.



HUNTON ANDREWS KURTH LAWYER SHARON GOODWYN TAKES ON LEADERSHIP ROLE WITH HAMPTON ROADS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Hampton Roads Community Foundation recently elected **Sharon Goodwyn** vice chair of its Board of Directors. Sharon is the first woman and first African American to serve in a top leadership role with this organization, which is dedicated to making life better in Hampton Roads through leadership, philanthropy and civic engagement. In addition to this volunteer commitment, Sharon is also a member of the Eastern Virginia Medical School Board of Visitors, UVA Law School Foundation Board of Trustees, Virginia Wesleyan University Board of Trustees and St. Mary’s Home Board of Trustees.



I’m proud to serve in a leadership role for the Hampton Roads Community Foundation. The Foundation is doing amazing work in the community and throughout Southeastern Virginia, and I am committed to its mission to make life better through leadership, philanthropy and civic engagement.



THE NATIONAL BLACK LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL HONORARY ASSOCIATION HONORS TWO HUNTON ANDREWS KURTH LAWYERS

Washington, DC Associate **Latosha Ellis** and New York Pro Bono Fellow **Pradine Saint-Fort** were recently named to *The National Black Lawyers* Top 40 Under 40 Class of 2019. The professional honorary association recognizes attorneys under 40 years of age from each US state or region who demonstrate superior leadership, reputation, influence, stature and profile as black lawyers. Selection is by invitation only following a multi-phase review process that includes peer nominations and third-party research.

We are proud of Latosha and Pradine's achievements and congratulate them on this honor!



Latosha Ellis



Pradine Saint-Fort



FIRM RECEIVES NATIONAL DIVERSITY COUNCIL HONORS

Hunton Andrews Kurth was recognized among Houston's Top Five Law Firms for Diversity by the National Diversity Council, a non-profit organization dedicated to being both a resource and an advocate for the value of diversity and inclusion. The firm received the award on October 30, 2019, at the Marriot Marquis in Houston as part of Legal Diversity Week, during which the National Diversity Council brought together extraordinary leaders in the legal field to celebrate and advance diversity.

Tammy Brennig, managing partner of the firm's Houston office, also received recognition from the National Diversity Council during Legal Diversity Week for her continued commitment to diversity in the legal arena. On October 29, 2019, Tammy was, once again, named one of the Council's "Top 50 Women in Law." This award honors women whose trailblazing has made it possible for others to more easily follow in their footsteps.



NEW YORK OFFICE PARTICIPATES IN STREET LAW LEGAL DIVERSITY PIPELINE PROGRAM

Our New York lawyers once again participated in the annual Street Law Legal Diversity Pipeline Program, which partners law firms with diverse groups of high school students with the goal of increasing their knowledge about and interest in the law and legal careers. **Matt Scoville, Brett Gross, Anthony Bonan** and **Doug Hoffmann**, along with other members of the New York office, assisted with last year's program that took place on December 11-13, 2019. The first two days consisted of teaching two classes on Fourth Amendment constitutional and criminal procedures at The Urban Assembly School for Law & Justice in downtown Brooklyn. The classroom sessions were followed on the third day by a visit to the firm, during which the students took part in an interactive workshop that further explored Fourth Amendment law and had the opportunity to tour our facility and interact with both our lawyers and professional staff members.



Reminder: D&I Billable Hour Credit Policy

Lawyers may apply up to 25 hours of diversity & inclusion, disaster relief and community service work toward billable hours each year. To request pre-approval, please reach out to the Diversity and Inclusion Committee at DiversityCommitteeCo-Chairs@HuntonAK.com.



DIVERSITY Q&A: SHEMIN V. PROCTOR

Shemin is the former Managing Partner of the Washington, DC office of Andrews Kurth Kenyon, and currently divides her time between the Washington, DC and Houston offices. As Co-Chair of the firm's Diversity & Inclusion Committee, she plays a key role in developing and executing our mission to build a professional community that values and supports respect, collaboration, involvement and empowerment.

Recognized among the country's top lawyers by Chambers USA and The Legal 500 United States, Shemin is also the recipient of numerous awards honoring her commitment to diversity and inclusion.

A recent article in The National Law Journal focused on the African American Managing Partner and General Counsel Network, which began more than a decade ago as an informal group of DC-based African American law firm managing partners, including the founder of the Network, Benjamin F. Wilson (Chairman of Beveridge & Diamond), Shemin and a half-dozen other law-firm leaders. Today, since its official founding in 2012, the network has continued to grow and thrive, and its weekly newsletter reaches more than 6,000 lawyers across the United States.

We spoke with Shemin to learn more about her own path to becoming a leader in the legal profession, her views on mentorship and sponsorship, and the importance of organizations such as the African American Managing Partners Network.

To start (somewhat) at the beginning, did you always intend to become a lawyer?

Becoming a lawyer was always in my sights. In high school, I knew that I wanted to be involved in a profession that helped individuals protect their rights and gain control over their lives, that valued right over wrong. To be honest, I also briefly entertained the idea of being a veterinarian, but that passed quickly!

As an undergraduate at Radcliffe College, I knew that it really didn't matter what I majored in before entering law school. But I also recognized that politics and government were the two central poles around which our framework of laws and regulations was established. I concentrated in government — at the time, a very male-dominated field.

How did you choose which law school to attend and which firm to join after earning your law degree?

I knew that studying at the best schools possible would help me in my career, and Harvard Law School was definitely one such institution. After graduation, I began my federal judicial clerkship and moved to Houston. But, after my father passed away, I decided to return to the DC area. I joined Andrews Kurth on the advice of one of my mentors at the firm; he said, "You need to practice in an area of law that interests you and will keep you out of trouble!" He nailed it: the litigation work I do also involves aspects of corporate law, finance, administrative law and more... enough variety to keep me engaged.

From the perspective of diversity and inclusion, was your experience at Harvard different from what you experienced after entering the professional world?

At Harvard, there was most definitely a strong network of African American professors, colleagues and fellow students. I had the opportunity to study under Professor Charles Ogletree — well known as an "approachable icon" — and Professor David Wilkins, among many other legal scholars. Harvard provided a very nurturing environment and numerous opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds.

During the summers, I worked for several law firms, one of which was where I also received support and guidance from a number of experienced lawyers. I'll never forget one occasion, when I was staring at a blank page in frustration. One of the partners said to me, "Why are you writing this from scratch? Take some examples and adapt them to your needs." Both my law firm mentor and The Honorable Kenneth Hoyt became early mentors to me and remain important advisors today.

During my summer associate jobs, my federal clerkship and my early career in Houston and DC, it was this type of advice — ranging from the simplest to the most complex issues, and on everything from substantive legal questions to just making my way around a new city — that helped me learn more quickly.

All of this support meant that I didn't spend my early professional years wandering in the wilderness. I had mentors who had my best interests in mind, and sponsors who helped me find opportunities to expand my legal and leadership skill sets.

“After decades, I am still in contact with attorneys and former judges who continue to serve as mentors. Of course, the issues and the needs have changed over time, particularly as I've gained experience and taken on significant leadership responsibilities here at our firm. That's where the African American Managing Partner and General Counsel Network is so valuable. The network is all about people with a certain level of influence and power helping other people who share similar concerns and challenges.



What is the difference between a mentor and a sponsor?

There is a very important distinction between mentorship and sponsorship. A mentor is someone who serves as a trusted confidante. You can go to your mentor's office and speak honestly and candidly about any topic: your fears and concerns, your dreams, and your hoped-for and actual successes. A mentor helps you think through decisions strategically and from multiple angles, without imposing his or her will. With a mentor, there is no checklist — it's a very flexible relationship, the structure of which is determined by the two individuals.

A sponsor, on the other hand, is less engaged in advice giving and is, instead, someone who uses her or his power and access to help you find opportunities to succeed. They may do this with or without your knowledge. And, while they are separate roles, an individual can serve as both a mentor and a sponsor for the same person or for different people.

It sounds as if the mentor-mentee relationship is a two-way street. What are the responsibilities of mentees?

The first thing you need to do, as a mentee, is to ask a mentor to commit to serving in that role. Of course, it's a risk to ask someone to be the person in that practice, that office, or that firm or organization to whom you can go for counsel, but it's worth taking the chance. You have to keep in mind: you don't always need to go to a mentor with a specific question. Sometimes it's simply enough to know that you will have questions at some future point and that you'll need someone who can answer those questions, frankly and with compassion.

As a young lawyer, when I asked more experienced lawyers to serve as mentors, I didn't always know what I wanted from that person or what they "should" do. I simply knew, instinctively, that this was a person from whom I could and should seek counsel.

Mentees should work with their mentors to establish ground rules for the relationship. Together, you should identify expectations, be specific about what you're hoping to achieve, and establish specific practices, including frequency of communication and methods of communicating. (If you're like me, email is the best way to get my attention — and even then you may need to be persistent!) Bottom line, a successful mentee-mentor relationship is founded on trust, encouragement and engagement from both parties.

After almost three decades as a practicing lawyer, do you still need a mentor?

Absolutely. The need for mentorship doesn't end at any stage of your career.

After decades, I am still in contact with attorneys and former judges who continue to serve as mentors. Of course, the issues and the needs have changed over time, particularly as I've gained experience and taken on significant leadership responsibilities here at our firm. That's where the African American Managing Partner and General Counsel Network is so valuable. The network is all about people with a certain level of influence and power helping other people who share similar concerns and challenges.

Under the leadership of founder Ben Wilson, the Network has maintained a somewhat loose, voluntary and informal structure that is unique as compared to more formal organizations. We have been able to grow organically. We don't have formal membership levels, and our main, in-person meeting each year is held in conjunction with the National Bar Association annual convention.

This unique structure provides a level of flexibility and nimbleness that allows us to act on issues and needs quickly and collaboratively. We have actively supported the nomination and confirmation of minority political appointees, regularly weighed in on issues of importance to African American attorneys and, more broadly, the legal profession, and worked together to increase business and leadership opportunities for lawyers of color.

From simply sending each other referrals to helping identify and recruit excellent candidates from law school or at the lateral level, the Network helps skilled attorneys push through to the next level. We are here to tell our colleagues, "You belong." This is particularly important when the numbers simply don't reflect the capabilities and potential of African American lawyers. For example, as recently as 2018, less than one percent of partners at US law firms were black women. It has been said of me more than once, "Shemin, statistically you don't exist." That needs to change.

So much of the success of the Network is due to our founder. Ben has been an amazing force for good, through this Network, at his firm, in the legal profession and for the community at large. His knowledge, enthusiasm and integrity are unparalleled. Although the network is still young enough that we aren't facing any immediate transition concerns, I think I'm safe in saying that most of us would happily clone Ben if we could!

ANY FINAL WORDS OF ADVICE?

Wherever you are in your career — whether a first-year associate or a seasoned partner considering retirement — find opportunities to get involved in mentorship. No matter your role, you will find that your horizons will broaden, your options will expand, and you will have endless occasions to celebrate success: your own, and those of others.





HUNTON ANDREWS KURTH

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