



Mosaic The Proskauer diversity newsletter

June 2014
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2013: A strong year for diversity

2013 was a strong year for diversity at Proskauer. In addition to forging ahead with diversity initiatives within the firm, we hosted or sponsored a number of diversity-focused events.

This issue of *Mosaic* highlights the most noteworthy of these events: our first Diversity Retreat; conversations with engaging guests; an internship program for students of color; a discussion of two significant Supreme Court decisions; sponsorship of conferences for diverse bar associations; and a presentation that examined the challenges faced by a minority lawyer in his pursuit of partnership.

A well-rounded retreat

Proskauer held its first Diverse Lawyer Retreat on March 17–18 in New York. The event, which was primarily aimed at associates, brought together 80+ lawyers of diverse backgrounds from nearly all of our offices around the world.

Most of the lawyers belonged to one of our diversity affinity groups, including the Asian Lawyer Affinity Group; Black Lawyer Affinity Group; Hispanic/Latino Lawyer Affinity Group; and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Affinity Group.

The featured presenter was Werten Bellamy, the founder and president of Stakeholders, Inc., which provides training for active career management at professional service firms and corporations. Bellamy spoke on a number of topics focused on how lawyers can advance their careers both within their firms and with clients. His presentations were engaging and interactive, and he challenged attendees to think differently about their careers and adjust their actions accordingly.

Two lively panel discussions followed Bellamy: "Success Strategies: Winning the Game at Proskauer" and "Why Clients Choose: Best Practices for Building and Maintaining Client Relationships."

The retreat was capped off by a multicultural art exhibition and reception. Twenty paintings — painted by diverse artists and selected by members of the four affinity groups represented — were presented for viewing and attracted considerable attention.

To create the exhibition, we worked closely with Artists of the Americas (AOTA), an organization that produces cultural art exhibits to connect audiences with promising artists. AOTA provided both its expertise and the artists, who hailed from a variety of countries: Argentina, China, Colombia, Cuba, Haiti, India, Korea, Thailand and the U.S.



From left to right:
Margaret Dale, Courtney Taylor, Kevin Nolan and Praveena Swanson

diversity at Proskauer



Faces of diversity



Judy Smith
President and CEO
Smith & Company

A “Scandal”-ous conversation

The Black Lawyer Affinity Group hosted Judy Smith at our New York office on February 6. A top strategic and crisis communications advisor, she is best known as the inspiration for the character of political fixer Olivia Pope on the hit TV show, “Scandal.”

Smith’s remarks focused on her professional evolution from lawyer to fire-snuffer for celebrities, politicians, governments and companies. After finishing law school, she was hired by Lawrence Walsh, the independent prosecutor in the Iran-Contra affair, as Associate Counsel and Deputy Director of Public Information. From there, she advanced to high-level communications roles with the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, President George H.W. Bush and NBC, and partnerships at several public relations firms. She then founded her own firm, Washington, D.C.-based Smith & Company.

The success of “Scandal” has drawn considerable attention to Smith. Viewers often assume that she is the real-life Olivia Pope, but that is not the case. Pope, she told the audience, is a “highly dramatized” version of her experience, spiced up for the cameras. As to why the show is such a hit, she felt that “People like to see a strong, tough woman at the top of her game.”

A lively Q&A session followed Smith’s prepared remarks. Her intelligence, ease of communication and sense of humor shone through.



Erika Vera
2013 Summer intern
Sponsors for Educational Opportunity

Getting a jump on law school

During June and July, Proskauer welcomed two interns brought to us by Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (SEO). It was the sixth consecutive summer in which we participated in SEO, a program that places talented students of color in paid internships focused on careers in several specific areas. SEO’s Corporate Law program is the only one of its kind to offer newly admitted 1L students (those in their first year of law school) an opportunity to intern at top law firms before they start their 1L classes.

Our 2013 SEO interns were Erika Vera, who graduated from Smith College and would attend Columbia University Law School, and Leland Shelton, who was entering Harvard Law School after graduating from Morehouse College.

Erika and Leland worked in New York side by side with our lawyers on actual matters, took part in the summer associate legal workshops and training sessions, and participated in our Mergers & Acquisitions Workshop along with our summer associates and lawyers. They also enjoyed a healthy slice of recreational activities: lunches and dinners, cocktail parties, a private screening of “Man of Steel” and — courtesy of our Sports Law Group — the National Basketball Association player draft.

We asked Erika and Leland to summarize their experiences at Proskauer. Excerpts from their heartfelt comments:

“Proskauer was a great fit — everyone who I met was enthusiastic to teach me something new and to make sure I had a comfortable time. My summer internship was a good balance between learning, hard work, and having a good time, especially with the help of associates who were keen to show me around the city. I am very grateful for the time I got to spend at Proskauer this summer.”

– Erika Vera

“The attorneys and staff at Proskauer created a welcoming atmosphere. I appreciated the attorneys who stopped by daily, sharing advice and interesting stories. I enjoyed the many lunches I spent talking to attorneys and partners about the firm and about the legal profession in general. In addition, members of the firm’s Black Lawyer Affinity Group were particularly welcoming, taking time out of their schedules to get to know me and offer advice for law school and beyond.”

– Leland Shelton

She wrote the book

Author Helen Wan came to the New York office on October 8 to discuss her first novel, *The Partner Track*, at the invitation of our Asian Law Affinity Group and the Proskauer Women’s Alliance.

It felt as if Wan was a guest in our living room, as she was seated in one of two comfortable chairs facing each other across a small table. She read excerpts from the book, was interviewed about it by associate Praveena Swanson, and chatted with the audience.

Prior to becoming a fulltime author, Wan was Associate General Counsel at Time Inc., which she joined after working for several years at large law firms. She also was Co-Chair of Time Inc.’s Asian Pacific American Affinity Group and is a frequent speaker on diversity-related topics, particularly for women.

The Partner Track partially draws on Wan’s experiences — and those of other minority lawyers she knows — to tell the story of a young Chinese-American lawyer as she climbs the ladder toward partnership at an elite law firm. Issues of race, gender, class and politics play subtle, yet crucial, roles in the character’s professional environment and self-perceptions.

Asked about the value of investing in diversity by law firms and companies, Wan responded with characteristic directness: “It means that more people are at the table and fewer are excluded from the conversation.”



Leland Shelton

2013 Summer intern
Sponsors for Educational Opportunity



Helen Wan

Author, *The Partner Track*



Decisions, decisions



On one day last June, the Supreme Court announced two landmark decisions that improved the prospects for legal same-sex marriage in the U.S. Shortly thereafter, the LGBT Affinity Group and the LGBT Bar Association of Greater New York sponsored a spirited discussion of the decisions by a panel of experts on the legal battle over same-sex marriage.

The distinguished panelists were William Eskridge, Jr., the John A. Garver Professor of Jurisprudence at Yale Law School; Linda Greenhouse, a Senior Research Scholar in Law at Yale Law School who covered the Supreme Court for *The New York Times* from 1978 to 2008; and Evan Wolfson, Founder and President of Freedom to Marry. Brad Snyder, a former Executive Director of the LGBT Bar Association of Greater New York, served as moderator.



The cases involved were *United States v. Windsor* and *Hollingsworth v. Perry*. In *Windsor*, the court declared unconstitutional the section of the federal Defense of Marriage Act that defined marriage as between a man and a woman. The ruling, however, applied only to marriages in states that allowed gay and lesbian couples to wed. In *Perry*, the court let stand a federal district court decision that invalidated California's Proposition 8, a 2009 ballot initiative that had banned same-sex marriage. As a result, same-sex marriage in California — which had been legal for several months in 2008 — was allowed to resume.

In a sign of the great interest in the decisions within Proskauer and among guests, the room was packed. Attendees were not disappointed: They were treated to an encyclopedic crossfire of legal knowledge and perspectives among people who not only lived and breathed the subject, but also knew each other well.

For example, Eskridge noted that *Perry* would've been unnecessary if the LGBT community had tried to have Proposition 8 repealed by California voters. Greenhouse responded with the view that the *Perry* trial was "a huge teachable moment, in a way that a referendum would not have been."

Wolfson made an observation about *Windsor* that stood out for its unexpectedness. He said that Edith Windsor (who initiated the *Windsor* case) was not embraced by the LGBT legal community when she originally sought representation. There was concern that her case, which technically was about a tax issue, was too dry to attract enough public support for it to become a broad rallying cry for same-sex marriage — clearly a big miscalculation.



From top to bottom:
Linda Greenhouse, Evan Wolfson,
William Eskridge, Jr.

Celebration and examination

A sweet partnership

Proskauer has long partnered with the National Bar Association (NBA) — the oldest and largest national association of predominantly African-American lawyers and judges — on a variety of levels. We strengthened this partnership even further on June 14, when we hosted the first regional conference for NBA's Region II, which includes New York, Connecticut and Vermont.

The conference drew approximately 120 Region II members and other attendees to our New York office. It featured panel discussions on issues facing the African-American bar, being a general counsel, conducting government investigations and professional development. Proskauer partner Keisha-Ann G. Gray was co-moderator of the general counsel panel.

Just a few weeks later, on July 30, we topped off the NBA's annual convention with a dessert social and soiree honoring several Region II general counsels. It was a sweet way to celebrate a strong relationship with good company, good food and networking opportunities.



From left to right:
Joseph Drayton, Director, NBA Region II; Deborah Martin, Deputy Director, NBA Region II;
James T. Breedlove, Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary,
Praxair Inc.; and Peter Wilson Jr., Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Proskauer

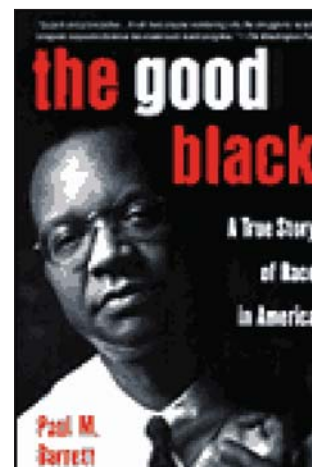
Photographer: Anna Campanelli

Digging deeper and raising questions

The Metropolitan Black Bar Association sponsored “A Case of Diversity Mismanaged — Lessons From *The Good Black: A True Story of Race in America*” on June 18. We hosted the presentation by Duane Hughes, a Managing Director at Morgan Stanley Wealth Management, at our New York office.

The Good Black: A True Story of Race in America is a book about Larry Mungin, an African-American who overcame a difficult upbringing to graduate from Harvard College and Harvard Law School. Mungin was on track for partnership at a major law firm but, ultimately, didn't achieve his goal.

Hughes used Mungin's story as a starting point for something deeper: an analysis of the psychological and sociological factors that can come into play as minority employees try to navigate a majority-oriented professional environment. The story was about more than discrimination, Hughes said — it was multi sided and raised important questions about how people act both as individuals and as part of a larger group.



Celebrating heritage in 2014



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