



The Proskauer Diversity Newsletter

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This publication is a service to our clients and friends. It is designed only to give general information on the developments actually covered. It is not intended to be a comprehensive summary of recent developments in the law, treat exhaustively the subjects covered, provide legal advice, or render a legal opinion.

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A Warm Welcome for Diverse 1L Students in Second Annual 'Home for Holidays' Event

In January 2016, as part of Proskauer's second annual "Home for the Holidays" celebration, our New York, Boston and Los Angeles offices welcomed diverse 1L students from a broad range of law schools across the nation to mark the completion of their fall semesters. These festive events are part of a firm-wide effort to cultivate a community of future diverse and talented Proskauer lawyers.

In the three hosting offices, many Proskauer lawyers, including members of our Diverse Lawyer Network, took part in the events to offer insight about the practice of law and Firm life in general. In Boston and Los Angeles, attending students included many incoming 2016 summer associates. Boston office head Joe Capraro and associate Kevin Nolan welcomed the Boston students, while partner Doug Frank and associate Bali Kumar welcomed the Los Angeles students. Bali and Kevin are the co-chairs of Proskauer's Black Lawyer Affinity Group.

In New York, students met and mingled with many Proskauer people, including several New York summer associates. Senior counsel Evandro Gigante, co-chair of the Firm's Hispanic and Latino Lawyer Affinity Group, told the students about his personal experience at the Firm. Chairman Joe Leccese also took part in the event, welcoming students and talking about his Proskauer experience.

Students attending the New York and Los Angeles events also had an opportunity to meet members of the Firm's Alumni Board of Directors. Ron Palmese, the general counsel of Shake Shack, joined in the New York reception, while Naseem Sagati, managing director and senior associate general counsel at Ares Management, attended in Los Angeles. Ron and Naseem met students and talked about their career paths and the influence of their Proskauer experience.

Events like this ensure that Proskauer builds a deep bench of talented diverse lawyers and helps us communicate our commitment to diversity and inclusion. Our hope is that these students will make meaningful connections that will help them envision themselves having a flourishing career here.

Mentoring Circle Program: Relationships to Sustain Greater Diversity

Proskauer's innovative Diverse Lawyer Mentoring Circle Program (MCP) is revolutionizing the way junior-level diverse associates are developed within the Firm. Through the program, which was launched in late 2014, these associates are paired with designated partner mentors, who provide one-on-one support. Additionally, six to seven mentor-mentee pairs then form a "circle," which exposes mentees to different working approaches and insights in other parts of the Firm. The resulting relationships are transformative for mentees and mentors alike, and activities encompass the rigors of the workplace, after-work social interaction and even community engagement.

While participation in MCP is voluntary, almost all junior-level diverse associates have chosen to be part of the program. Since the program's launch, 56 junior associates across the New York, Boston and LA offices have paired with partner mentors, forming six separate mentoring circles. Each circle has one or more captains who spearhead the circle's activity and engagement.

Acceleration of a great working relationship

New York partner Chip Parsons first became aware of his future mentee, associate Tiffany Kwa, in 2015 when he was part of a team reviewing potential hires related to a practice that was coming to Proskauer from another firm. "Tiffany's academic credentials were outstanding, and she'd gotten excellent feedback on her performance as a summer intern – a hard worker, intellectually curious, sense of humor," Chip says. "She seemed as if she'd be a great fit for Proskauer. So, she got my vote."

Later, after the MCP connected the two, the mentorship activities they took part in – such as informal meetings for coffee or lunch – became a foundation for working together on projects in the Corporate Department, where they both work. "Very soon, Chip was able to get me involved in the private equity space, which is broadening my experience beyond hedge funds," Tiffany says, adding that she feels fortunate to have been paired with Chip, who "encourages you to ask questions and bring issues to the forefront. He tries to put himself in your shoes."

Chip says, "The MCP introduced me to a very talented and funny individual, accelerating a working relationship that otherwise would have taken much longer to establish. At the end of the day, I was lucky to be selected as her mentor."

Mentoring Circle Program Highlights from 2015 **Gaining insights into career strategies**

In April 2015, MCP mentors including Dan Ganitsky, Glen Lim, Carlos Martinez and Jim Poindexter served as panelists for our first Diverse Partner Panel discussion. Corporate associate Mike Gallagher moderated an open and honest conversation about successful career strategies.

Learning tips for gaining partner support

In June 2015, Werten Bellamy of Stakeholders Inc. facilitated a poignant and insightful program for the joint MCP mentor and mentee groups, discussing effective ways to inspire partners to invest in mentees' career and the importance of "Mentoring Moments."

Rallying to serve those less fortunate

In July and August 2015, two groups of MCP participants in New York, along with members of the Firm's Corporate Social Responsibility and Diversity & Inclusion teams, volunteered with The Bowery Mission, an organization focused on serving the homeless and those desperately in need of balanced meals. On two separate evenings, Proskauer volunteers served dinner to nearly 250 homeless men, women and children.

In August 2015, MCP members in Los Angeles volunteered at the SOVA West Food Pantry, sorting two-and-a-half human-size boxes of donated food. SOVA is a program of Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles, which works to alleviate hunger and poverty through food distribution and a range of supportive services.

Coming together for good times

In November 2015, MCP participants in New York, Boston and Los Angeles bonded over an evening of cooking at culinary institutes in their respective cities. Participants spent the evening creating a four-course meal and enjoying the great food that they created.

In LA, Mock Interviews Give Teens a Marketing Edge

In June, Proskauer's Los Angeles office hosted mock interviews for more than 40 teens from five Boys & Girls Club chapters, helping them practice their interview skills while receiving immediate, valuable feedback.

Partner Glen Lim helped to organize the event after asking Boys & Girls Club leadership what the firm could do to help beyond financial support. The volunteers included 64 Proskauer team members, a client from Tennenbaum Capital Partners, overtime

donated from Novitex and free parking for the students from ABM Parking Services.

“It was a total team effort,” Glen says, “Everyone participated – reception, word processing, secretaries, office managers, lawyers, summer associates and paralegals.”

Each of the participating clubs selected teens from their College Bound programs to attend the event. Proskauer created a mock job description for the participants who went through two rounds of interviews, which included feedback from their Proskauer interviewers. The interviews were followed by a pizza party for the students, during which the Firm raffled off four L.A. Dodgers game tickets.

Proskauer-HBO Team Ignites Students' Interest in Law, Career Opportunities

On December 4, 2015, Proskauer's New York office became a vibrant center for legal education and career discovery as 40 ninth-graders from the Urban Assembly Academy of Government and Law arrived to take part in the *Street Law Corporate Legal Diversity Pipeline Conference*. The day-long conference was part of a national program that draws on the talents of attorney volunteers to introduce young people from diverse communities to everyday law and the prospect of legal careers.

In the weeks leading up to the conference, 19 attorney volunteers from Proskauer and its client HBO had teamed up and taken part in a training session for teaching interactive lessons. The attorney volunteers then visited the students' school on three occasions to conduct classroom workshops on civil law and legal careers, setting the stage for the December conference.

Excitement, Intensity and Advocacy

For many students who arrived at Proskauer on December 4, it was their first time experiencing the reality of a major law firm – or really any corporate office environment. This on-site visit, heightened by the interaction with friendly, nurturing legal practitioners, helps students visualize how they might, with the right focus and determination, pursue a career in law.

“We are honored to work with Street Law,” said Katharine Parker, a partner in the Firm's Labor and Employment Department. “It is a great organization and inspiring the next generation of lawyers.”

A major reason for the success of this pipeline program is StreetLaw's ability to make the law come alive through activities and topics that engage students by reflecting their interests and passions. During the conference, students took part in three workshops, each with a different spin and set of challenges:

- **Trademarking a cool new phone** – Students began by brainstorming names for an innovative new mobile phone, then as a group narrowing their list of options based on distinctiveness – key attributes that might make certain names easier to trademark. Finally, they conducted an online trademark search to see if someone else had already trademarked their favorite names.
- **Investigating a sexual harassment claim** — Small groups of students interviewed attorney volunteers who played the roles of employees involved in a sexual harassment claim. The catch: the play-actors had been given two lists: one contained facts they *should disclose* during their interview, and the second that had facts they should share *only if probed* by their interviewers. Based on what they'd learned, the groups of interviewers then had to make their case for whether company policies had been violated and, if so, what form resulting actions should take (e.g., warning, transfer, termination).
- **Negotiating a sneaker endorsement deal** — Working in pairs, students were assigned to represent one of two parties in a negotiation: a leading footwear company or a basketball star whose endorsement the company was seeking. Students were asked to weigh any number of facts, ranging from the company's financial interests, to the player's recent on-court performance and off-court antics. After student pairs representing the company and athlete had formed their negotiation strategies, they were matched to conduct contract negotiations and strike a deal.

Even the lunch break dividing the workshops became an avenue for career exploration at the conference. HBO and Proskauer attorneys hosted 16 tables in a “Career Fair Lunch” where students could enjoy a meal while asking questions about life as a practicing attorney.

Alumni Spotlight: Eugene Holmes From Detroit to Disney – and the Value of the Proskauer Experience

For Proskauer alumnus Eugene Holmes, life as a lawyer has taken him from coast to coast, and from enchantment with business to the business of enchantment. Born and raised in Detroit, Michigan, he graduated Michigan State before heading east to earn his J.D. from Boston University School of Law. He then headed south to a law firm in Washington, D.C., where he joined a team of employee benefits lawyers who ultimately became part of Proskauer. A few years later, he traveled due west for a dream job – that of assistant general counsel at Walt Disney Company in Burbank, California. We asked Eugene about

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his journey, his experiences at Proskauer and his work behind the scenes at the magical world of Disney.

Why did you become a lawyer?

The idea of becoming a lawyer first came from my father while I was in high school, yet it did not fully resonate with me until college. At Michigan State University, I lived in the same residence hall where the James Madison College School of Public Policy is located. Interacting with JMC students every day helped lay the foundation towards law school and becoming a lawyer. After many, many spirited debates with these students during meal hours, I changed my major from communications to social science pre-law. And the rest is history, as the saying goes.

Why did you choose Proskauer?

I joined Proskauer with Paul Hamburger and a group of lawyers from another Washington, D.C.-based firm. We came over to help Proskauer solidify the employee benefits practice in Washington, D.C. It was a great move and truly educational.

Tell us about your Proskauer experience.

I had a great Proskauer experience. Specifically, I had the opportunity to work on a wide range of legal issues in the employee benefits area and to meet experienced folks in the field. Paul Hamburger had the biggest influence on my time at Proskauer, which was great since I had worked with him for quite a few years.

How did your experience at Proskauer help prepare you for your current job?

Because I prepared a wide range of spot issues at Proskauer, it encouraged me to take a more practical approach to my work. This has helped to shape the way I view things now.

What do you like most about your current role at Walt Disney Company?

In short, the challenge. It is a much larger organization, so I interact with a lot of clients who are in different locations – same teams, but in different places – so even basics like putting names with faces was a little challenging.

Working for a company is quite different from working in a law firm in that, when you tell people whom you work for, they automatically associate a product with the company. And this is *Disney*. So, people know exactly what you do and for whom you are working.

However, there are similarities to a law firm, too. There is a wide range of issues and you do get a lot of exposure to what's going on.

Any advice for someone thinking about going in-house?

A couple of things. Be prepared for handling a wide range of issues. Understand that in-house things move very quickly. So we don't necessarily focus in deeply on any particular issue – we're trying to answer quick, in-the-moment questions and help the business achieve its goal at the same time. If you want to turn over every rock and every kernel, it's probably not best to be in an in-house position. We still deal with legal issues, but at a higher level, and will use an outside law firm to assist with the fine detail. When making the move, be mentally and professionally ready, so this way you know what to expect.

What did you want to be when you were a kid?

A professional basketball player. I loved the Detroit Pistons!

Any mentors or role models?

I have been fortunate to have had quite a few positive influences in my life, in addition to my parents, of course. There are a whole host of teachers, professors and administrators, from grade school through law school, who have helped guide me along the way. These folks are both my mentors and real-life role models, and I talk to many of them regularly.

Any advice for junior associates?

Three things. First, think about the practice of law as a *relationship* business. It's never too early to start cultivating relationships. The first significant work that I brought to a firm came from someone whom I met at an ABA conference when I was a few years out of law school. We stayed in touch. Turns out the person became a deputy GC a few years after our first encounter and was able to hire benefits counsel.

Second, try to get out of the mode of thinking about your practice only in terms of the legal substance. In other words, continue to ask yourself: How does what I do from a legal perspective impact my client's business? This will allow you to better anticipate issues and offer more practical business solutions, because you will better understand the *big picture*.

Lastly, have fun! If you're not having fun during working hours, make every effort to have fun during non-working hours. Do something that you love.

When you're not in the office, where might people find you?

Running – out on the trail. I am an avid marathoner – I have run probably about 15 or so. My personal best is 2:51 in the California International. My best advice to other runners: ongoing training – be persistent in your training.

Where would your dream vacation be?

The Aulani (Disney resort) in Hawaii!

High-powered “After Obergefell” Panel Explores Impact of Supreme Court’s Marriage-Rights Decision

Within weeks of last summer’s landmark Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which held that same-sex couples have a constitutional right to get married and have their marriages recognized, Proskauer’s LGBT Affinity Group and the LGBT Bar Association of Greater New York (LeGaL) came together to host a poignant panel discussion in Proskauer’s New York office.

The panel, “After *Obergefell*: A Conversation About the Supreme Court’s Ruling on Same-Sex Marriage,” featured an impressive group of experts: Evan Wolfson, founder and president of Freedom to Marry; Tobias Barrington Wolff, professor of law at the University of Pennsylvania Law School; Dahlia Lithwick, senior editor and Supreme Court correspondent for Slate; and Matt Skinner, executive director of LeGaL, and a Proskauer alumnus, who moderated.

The Supreme Court’s decision elicited strong emotions from all of the panelists, who described where they were when they heard about the ruling. They discussed the implications of the ruling and its potential impact on the fight for federal non-discrimination laws – the next frontier for LGBT rights.

This panel discussion continues a tradition of bringing expert viewpoints to bear in the immediate aftermath of major civil rights court decisions. Proskauer hosted a similar session following the 2013 *United States v. Windsor* decision, in which the Supreme Court held that it was not Constitutional for federal interpretation of “marriage” and “spouse” to apply only to heterosexual unions.

Black Lawyer Affinity Group: Exploring Society’s Most Complex Challenges

In February 2016, Proskauer lawyers, staff and friends of the Firm gathered at our New York office for a thought-provoking panel discussion entitled, “Closing the Achievement Gap: How Do We Lead the Charge?” The achievement gap refers to disparities in academic performance among student groups, especially those defined by socioeconomic status, race and gender.

Hosted by the Black Lawyer Affinity Group (BLAG) as part of the Firm’s celebration of Black History Month, the discussion was led by BLAG members and the event co-chair, Krista Whitaker.

Attendees heard from two prominent community leaders, Diahann Billings-Burford, executive director, cultural investments for Time Warner Inc.; and James O’Neal, co-founder and executive director of Legal Outreach, an early-intervention, college preparatory organization that uses instruction in law to inspire and prepare low-income minority youth to strive for academic excellence and higher education.

This dynamic event echoed the intensity of BLAG’s February 2015 panel discussion, “Now What? The Aftermath of Ferguson and Eric Garner,” which explored the implications of nationwide protests sparked by the decisions not to indict in the Michael Brown and Eric Garner cases. Moderated by BLAG co-chair Kevin Nolan, that panel featured: Janai Nelson, associate director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., and a former director of LDF’s Political Participation Group, and Charles Blow, visual op-ed columnist for The New York Times.

Proskauer Women’s Alliance: Spreading the Message of Malala Yousafzai

In March 2016, the Proskauer Women’s Alliance (PWA) hosted their marquee event in celebration of Women’s History Month: a screening and discussion of the documentary film, *He Named Me Malala*. The screening is the latest of many social and professional development events hosted by PWA, which aims to strengthen relationships among lawyers within the firm, increase the visibility of women lawyers to firm leaders, and foster leadership and development opportunities for women lawyers.

He Named Me Malala is an intimate portrait of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai, who was targeted by the Taliban in Pakistan and severely wounded by gunshot when returning home on her school bus. The then 15-year-old (who turned 18 this past July) was singled out, along with her father, for advocating for girls’ education. The attack sparked an outcry around the world. She miraculously survived and co-founded the Malala Fund, a not-for-profit organization that empowers girls globally through education to achieve their potential and be agents of change in their communities.

The film presentation echoed a similar event held during Women’s History Month in 2015, when the PWA hosted a screening of *Girl Rising*, a documentary about girls in developing countries who have overcome nearly impossible odds to pursue their dreams of an education.

Such events are part of a broad range of activities and development opportunities organized by the PWA. For example, each month in offices across the country the PWA hosts “Third Thursdays” events, which focus on cultivating relationships, networking and sharing suggestions and advice. Third Thursday themes have ranged from photography exhibits featuring images of women immigrants, to creating care packages for Proskauer-bound law school graduates preparing for the bar exam, to holding receptions to welcome summer associates.

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Every quarter, the PWA also hosts a speaker series called “Building Blocks for Success,” at which participants explore professional and business development topics such as how women can develop authentic executive presence and the essentials of client origination.