Proskauer

Alumni Reflections: Paving New Pathways with Joe Drayton, Kawana King and Nubiaa Shabaka

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When **Kawana King**, senior counsel at Google, met **Nubiaa Shabaka**, the current global chief regulatory officer, VP at IBM and the former global chief privacy officer and chief cyber legal officer at Adobe, during a Proskauer on-campus recruiting event in 2006, Kawana saw not just a future colleague, but a glimpse into how her own career trajectory might evolve. Years later, in conversation with partner **Joe Drayton**, the two friends reflect on how visibility, mentorship and enduring connection at Proskauer helped shape their paths from the Firm to leadership roles in technology.

Where It All Began

Joe Drayton: Nubiaa and Kawana, it's great to see you both. It's interesting that I met each of you separately and didn't initially know you had a connection. How did you first meet each other?

Nubiaa Shabaka: I recruited Kawana in the sense that Proskauer sent me back to our law school, Harvard, for on-campus recruiting. I interviewed Kawana and then supported her candidacy as a summer associate.

Joe Drayton: Was there anything from that conversation, Kawana, that resonated with you and brought you to Proskauer?

Kawana King: At the time, I wanted to pursue entertainment and sports law, and there weren't many New York-based firms with that specialty. When I met Nubiaa, it was great to see someone I could relate to already doing that work at Proskauer. Later, when I joined the Firm, I felt a lot of support from my fellow associates, including other Black associates. There was a strong sense of kinship.

Joe Drayton: How would you say your relationship developed over time?

Nubiaa Shabaka: We found we had a lot of shared experiences that built over time. We had overlapping social circles in Brooklyn, and we would see each other at brunches or church.

Kawana King: She also had a wonderful dog, Fudge, at the time, who was a major part of our friendship for nearly 15 years. Looking back, it's funny how a dog became such a central part of the bond we shared.

Joe Drayton: I love that. It shows how friendships at Proskauer can extend beyond the office.

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Kawana King, Senior Counsel, Google

Charting New Paths

Joe Drayton: Tell us more about what you do now professionally and how you got there.

Kawana King: I began my career as a litigator and initially had the goal of becoming the first Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court. A few years in, however, I realized I didn't want to spend my life arguing over other people's problems. That's when I pivoted into more regulatory and transactional work, focusing on ad tech, privacy and data security. Eventually, that path led me to my current role, where I lead the global commercial legal team for Google's Ad Manager publishing platforms product. I enjoy being a business partner and deal maker, helping shape strategy all while managing legal issues.

Joe Drayton: You mentioned you were a litigator at Proskauer. Did that experience help you through that career transition?

Kawana King: Absolutely. I still think litigation is the purest form of law because it's about resolving conflict. When I first moved into product counseling at Google, I had to work with the product team and engineers to identify and address potential issues. Having that litigation training and keen ability to issue spot helped me be effective in that role.

Joe Drayton: What about you, Nubiaa?

Nubiaa Shabaka: My path was a bit different. I always knew I wanted to focus on technology and privacy, so I joined Daryn Grossman's group at Proskauer as soon as I could. After approximately five years at Proskauer, I decided to move to Morgan Stanley, which was great training ground for the complicated tech, privacy and cybersecurity work I was interested in. After 11 years there I joined AIG as Chief Cyber Legal and Privacy Officer. Now I'm at Adobe as Chief Privacy Officer and Chief Cybersecurity Legal Officer, and I co-lead our data governance, am a core member of our AI governance function and sit on the AI ethics board, which is incredibly fascinating. I've done the same job essentially for 23 years, but it doesn't feel like it. It's ever evolving and changing, which is so exciting!

"If I had to do it over again, I would nurture my network even earlier. That's what I tell younger people now. Your network is equally as important as your substantive work. Relationships are key."

Nubiaa Shabaka, Global Chief Regulatory Officer, VP, IBM

Guided by Mentors, Giving Back

Joe Drayton: How did experience at Proskauer support your careers? Who from Proskauer helped you along the way?

Nubiaa Shabaka: Daryn Grossman taught me so much in my early years about the technology transactions process. I learned a tremendous amount under her and loved every minute of it. In general, it was also a very supportive environment among the associates.

Kawana King: Absolutely. I remember Keisha-Ann Gray was there for me during some of my low points. Margaret Dale was also a great mentor and source of support for me. Even though a lot of the work was tough, I felt invested in it, and it was worth it. I remember finishing an assignment for a particular partner. After completing the work, the partner came into my office just to tell me how impressed they were with my work product. That early affirmation meant so much.

Joe Drayton: I think that's great. What resonates with me in each of your stories is that your success is not by accident. Proskauer was there to be part of that journey, along with your own hard work. I've observed that people have a lot of respect for you in the Proskauer alumni community, and it's clear that you've touched other lives in the Proskauer community. How do you pay it forward?

Nubiaa Shabaka: If I had to do it over again, I would nurture my network even earlier. That's what I tell younger people now. Your network is equally as important as your substantive work. Relationships are key. I mentor, speak at schools and stay involved in community organizations. Sharing my knowledge and insights and encouraging the next generation is important to me to lift as I climb.

Kawana King: I strive to create a sense of community, especially at Google, by promoting and hosting monthly lunches to bring people together. I also support programs like the Minority Corporate Counsel Association (MCCA) and Corporate Counsel Women of Color (CCWC) that champion inclusivity. I also encourage young lawyers of color to recognize their worth; that they deserve to be there, probably more than they even know. And I remind them not to be afraid of exploring paths outside the traditional partner track. There are many ways to build a fulfilling and rewarding career.

Joe Drayton: Fantastic. Thank you both. I'm so glad we had a chance to speak.

Related Professionals

- **Joseph Drayton**

Partner

- **Daryn A. Grossman**
  Partner
- **Keisha-Ann G. Gray**
  Partner
- **Margaret A. Dale**
  Partner