

Focus on Diversity

For more information on items in this special section, contact Louisiana State Bar Association Director of Member Outreach and Diversity Kelly McNeil Legier, (504)619-0129, (800)421-5722, ext. 129, or email kelly.legier@lsba.org.

Sixth Annual Diversity Conclave a success!



Morris Dees presents his keynote speech at the Diversity Conclave. Photo by Adrejia Boutté.

Make sure to read the next issue of the *Louisiana Bar Journal* for a full wrap-up of the Sixth Annual Diversity Conclave on the Legal Profession.

“Suit Up for the Future” program application deadline is April 15

Rising high school juniors and seniors interested in participating in the third “Suit Up for the Future” High School Summer Legal Institute and Internship Program must submit applications by April 15. The program, presented by the LSBA and the Just the Beginning Foundation, is aimed at high school students interested in the legal profession.

Students will participate in the three-week program from June 10-28 at various venues, including the Louisiana Bar Center (601 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans) and at participating New Orleans area firms. The program consists of one week of lectures with law school professors, practicing lawyers and law students, as well as several days of shadowing with attorneys and judges. Students also will have the opportunity to meet attorneys and judges during field trips to New Orleans area courts and other legal venues and during lunchtime lectures and panel discussions. The program will culminate in oral arguments by the student participants to sitting federal and state judges.

Applications and all supporting docu-

ments must be postmarked by April 15 and mailed to: Louisiana State Bar Association, Attn: Diversity Committee, 601 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, LA 70130. All decisions will be mailed by May 1.

To download an application form and other information, go to: www.lsba.org/diversity.

“Guardians of Diversity”

The LSBA’s Diversity Committee will recognize bar associations that continued to implement diversity/inclusion programming after the diversity mini conclaves were discontinued in 2011. Bar associations recognized as “Guardians of Diversity” will receive two registrations and mileage for one vehicle to the 2014 statewide Conclave on Diversity. The Diversity Committee will notify bar association recipients at least a month before the 2014 Conclave.

Representatives of local/specialty bar associations that have continued diversity/inclusion programming should contact LSBA Member Outreach and Diversity Director Kelly McNeil Legier, email kelly.legier@lsba.org, call (504)619-0129. Local/specialty bar associations that may need ideas and/or assistance in organizing such programming also may contact Legier.

Superwomen CLEs scheduled in Shreveport and New Orleans

The LSBA, in partnership with local and specialty bar associations, is hosting Superwomen CLEs on April 2 in Shreveport and on May 2 in New Orleans. The seminars will address the unique challenges women face in the legal profession. A networking reception with complimentary hand and neck massages will immediately follow the programs and attendees will have the opportunity to win several door prizes from area businesses. More details will be provided in future print and online publications.

Minority Involvement Section hosting Virtual Internship Fair

The Louisiana State Bar Association’s (LSBA) Minority Involvement Section has converted its fifth annual Minority Legal Internship Fair to a “virtual” fair rather than hosting an “in person” event. Participating in the virtual fair will still give employers access to a large pool of talented students with diverse backgrounds who are seeking free or modestly-paid internships during all or part of the summer. To register, call (504)619-0115.

Professionalism facilitator training workshop

The LSBA’s Institute of Inclusion is presenting a Specialized Professionalism Facilitator Training Workshop from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. on Wednesday, May 22, at the Louisiana Bar Center. (601 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans) Organizers have applied for CLE credit. Cathy Harris, with C. Harris Companies, Inc., and Theodore A. Quant, director of the Twomey Center for Peace through Justice at Loyola University in New Orleans, will deliver the full-day workshop, “Train the LSBA Diversity Facilitator.” For more information or to register, go to: www.lsba.org/diversity.

in the SPOTLIGHT

U.S. Attorney's Office / Western District of Louisiana

The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Western District of Louisiana recognizes that it is better able to serve the United States by embracing all perspectives and by understanding the diverse backgrounds of our employees, as well as the communities that it serves. Thus, it promotes respect for all people, regardless of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age, or socioeconomic status. The USAO values and encourages a diverse and inclusive work environment by endorsing diversity in its hiring practices and in the retention and promotion of its employees. In effect, it believes that this approach establishes an environment founded upon fair and equal treatment of all who come in contact with it.

In furtherance of the beliefs in the benefits of a diverse USAO, it established a Diversity Management Plan and a Diversity Committee to implement the Department of Justice's Diversity Initiative and to promote its Mission Statement.

In addition to the USAO's partnership with the Department of Justice, it also coordinates with the Special Emphasis Program Managers in the recognition and celebration of the many diverse cultures through varying initiatives like: outreach to law schools; diversity programs and public events; school lectures; panelist participation and lecture presentations on diversity issues; employee involvement in Special Emphasis Programs; and employee participation in community events that focus on diversity, crime prevention and awareness.

The Department of Justice's similar dedication to the furtherance of diversity objectives is well illustrated by its Management Policy Statement:

Department of Justice Diversity Management Policy Statement

The Department of Justice employs more than 115,000 talented and diverse women and men to help meet its mission and goals. We are stronger, more credible, and more effective when our workforce includes highly qualified individuals with backgrounds, cultures and traditions that reflect our Nation's rich diversity.

We value diversity in our workforce and embrace the cultural and demographic dimensions of our country. We work diligently to attract and retain a workforce that represents the range of personal and professional backgrounds, and experiences and perspectives that arise from differences of culture and circumstances. This includes persons of varying age, ethnicity, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, political affiliation, socioeconomic and family status, and geographic region.

To further promote diversity within the Department, we have developed and implemented a Department-wide Diversity Management Plan. This plan will foster effective diversity management across the Department, sustain progress over time, and ensure accountability for results. Through respect, understanding, and open communication between and among the rich tapestry of our employees, we will enhance critical aspects of our management practices, including policy development, decision making, and problem solving.

The Justice organizational culture reflects our ongoing commitment to build and maintain a workplace environment that supports the efforts of all employees to effectively carry out the Department's mission while ensuring that all employees are encouraged to excel as public servants.

The "In the Spotlight" section highlights diversity achievements and groundbreaking diversity accomplishments, primarily of signatories of the LSBA's Statement of Diversity Principles. If you have recommendations for attorneys, judges or legal organizations that should be considered for future articles, call or email Kelly McNeil Legier; (504)619-0129, kelly.legier@lsba.org.



Reality Check: Combating Implicit Bias

By J. Dalton Courson

The article, written in December 2012, was originally published in the LGBT Litigator (Vol. 3, No. 1) and in the American Bar Association's Litigation News. Reprinted with permission from the author.

Many readers may hold an impression that law is a common profession for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. The idea may stem from popular sitcoms, because two of TV's most beloved gay characters are Will Truman from *Will & Grace* and Mitchell Pritchett from *Modern Family*, both lawyers. Yet, despite the number of LGBT attorneys on TV, recent data published by the National Association for Law Placement (NALP) suggest that, in reality, members of the LGBT community are disproportionately unlikely to become lawyers and that LGBT law school graduates appear more likely than straight peers to leave their firms and perhaps exit the profession.

About 2.8 percent of summer associates and 2.4 percent of associates identified as LGBT, but only 1.4 percent of law firm partners identified as LGBT. An analysis of the data by firm size shows that the largest law firms were the most inclusive—2.5 percent of lawyers at firms with over 700 lawyers identified as LGBT, while only 1.2 percent of lawyers at firms of 100 or fewer did so. Another interesting fact: NALP's survey indicated that about 60 percent of openly LGBT lawyers live in one of only four cities: New York, Washington, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

What explains these statistics? There are no easy answers, and considering the continuing failure of Congress to enact the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, there is no doubt that overt discrimination remains a significant hurdle. But I suspect that one factor is that even after LGBT law school graduates are hired, they continue to struggle against implicit bias... In research studies, LGBT individuals and other minorities continue to be perceived more negatively than nonminority counterparts on measures of subconscious, implicit bias—even among individuals who do not consciously discriminate.

To read the full article, go to: <http://apps.americanbar.org/litigation/committees/lgbt/articles/fall2012-1212-reality-check-combating-implicit-bias.html>.

J. Dalton Courson is a member in the law firm of Stone Pignman Walther Wittmann, L.L.C., in New Orleans and is a co-chair of the LGBT Litigator Committee.