

LSBA committee and subcommittee partnering for 3-part, disabilities-related CLE series

The Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) Diversity Committee's Pipeline Subcommittee and the LSBA Legal Services for Persons with Disabilities Committee are partnering to launch a three-part CLE series focusing on disabilities-related legal issues.

The first in the lunchtime series, titled "Long-Term Planning for the Special Needs Client," is noon-1:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 21, at the Louisiana Bar Center, 601 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, and is geared to those interested in best serving clients with special needs.

The second session, "Fit to Practice," is

Jan. 29, 2015, in Baton Rouge. The third session, "Introduction to Social Security Appeals," is April 17, 2015, in Shreveport.

For more information about the series, go to: www.lsba.org/goto/2014DisabilityCLE. 

Sponsors sought for 2015 Conclave on Diversity

The Louisiana State Bar Association is currently seeking sponsors for the eighth annual Conclave on Diversity in the Legal Profession, set for Friday, March 6, 2015, at the New Orleans Marriott, 555 Canal St. The theme is "Celebrating 50 Years of Civil Rights: Moving the Pendulum Forward." The Freedom Riders exhibition created by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History will be featured. The sponsor deadline is Dec. 15, 2014.

For more information on sponsorship levels, contact LSBA Program Coordinator/Marketing and Sections Christine A. Richard at (504)619-0105 or email crichard@lsba.org. Or access a conclave sponsor flier online at: <http://files.lsba.org/documents/Diversity/2015conclavesponsorflier.pdf>. 

Mark your calendars!

Check the LSBA's Diversity webpage for more information on the following events:

- ▶ **Friday, Nov. 21, 2014**
Disability "Lunch and Learn" CLE
- ▶ **March 6, 2015 • Diversity Conclave**
Celebrating 50 years of Civil Rights: Moving the Pendulum Forward

in the SPOTLIGHT

Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles, L.L.P.

Founded in 1926 and one of Louisiana's oldest law firms, Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles, L.L.P. (DK&S) was the first firm in Louisiana to hire a woman attorney in 1937. First in her class at Tulane (after transferring from Louisiana State University), Marian Mayer Berkett has had a stellar career, is one of four women inducted into Tulane's Hall of Fame and amazingly is still going strong at 101 years old. Other DK&S alums include Kathleen Lorio, former dean of Loyola University Law School; Judge Karen Wells Roby, a magistrate for the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Louisiana, New Orleans; and Bobby M. Harges, current professor of law at Loyola University College of Law.

Barbara Ormsby, one of the firm's newest woman lawyers, is the current co-chair of the Louisiana State Bar Association's

(LSBA) Diversity Committee (2014-15 term) and served as co-chair of the LSBA's Diversity Conclave Committee from 2010-14. DK&S has 18 women attorneys, five of whom are general partners.

The DK&S Diversity Committee meets monthly to address the needs of its multicultural community. The Diversity Committee members include African-American attorneys, working mothers, LGBT general partners and veterans of the Armed Forces.

The firm frequently contributes to New Orleans-area charitable organizations, including the New Orleans Habitat for Humanity, The Pro Bono Project, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Hogs for the Cause, the March of Dimes, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, St. Andrew's Village, YA/YA Inc., the Louisiana Children's Museum and the Contemporary Arts Center. 

The "In the Spotlight" section highlights diversity achievements and ground-breaking 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 Tricia Pierre, (504)619-0129, tricia.pierre@lsba.org.

50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act

By Valerie Gotch Garrett

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It is a milestone in the development of our country and our state.

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law on July 2, 1964. The Civil Rights Movement challenged the United States to make good on the promise — made in the Declaration of Independence — that every citizen had certain, inalienable rights, which had until then been denied to African-Americans. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the country rising to meet that challenge.

As President Johnson so eloquently stated, the civil rights problem is no “Southern problem . . . no Northern problem . . . [it is] only an American problem.” All Americans must tackle this problem with courage. For the courage of one can change a nation; the courage of one can change a culture; the courage of one can change how we live and view the world. This courage has been found — in Plessey, who challenged the Louisiana segregation statute of 1890; in Brown, who challenged the unequal and segregated public school systems; in Ruby Bridges, who challenged the segregated school systems in New Orleans; and many more throughout the Reconstruction era, the Jim Crow era, the Civil Rights era and even today.

I recently met a 93-year-old woman who grew up in the Jim Crow era and then saw the passage of the Civil Rights Act. She has a profound understanding of the importance

of the Civil Rights Act because it changed for her access to all public places and equal education for her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Today, she regularly exercises her right to vote and encourages others to do the same.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964’s passage almost a century after the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments reminds us that change does not come easily. It takes committed effort over time to bring it about.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 reshaped American life in fundamental ways. It prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. It also barred racial segregation and discrimination in schools, workplaces and public accommodations. The Act paved the way for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which eliminated discriminatory voting prohibitions and requirements.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 became law thanks to the grassroots efforts of Americans of all races who openly condemned the discriminatory Jim Crow practices of the South.

Resistance to the Civil Rights Movement was intense in Southern states. Freedom Riders were attacked multiple times across the South in 1961. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was arrested in 1961 in Albany, Ga. In 1962, two black churches used by the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) for voter registration meetings were burned in Sasser, Ga.

The year 1963 proved to be pivotal in securing the Act’s passage. In the first half of 1963, Dr. King was arrested and jailed in Bir-

mingham, Ala., for leading marches against discrimination. While in jail, Dr. King authored his famous *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, in response to public calls from some religious leaders for King and other civil rights advocates to slow down and be more patient.

The events in Selma, Ala., where a peaceful nonviolent march resulted in the deaths and injuries of many civil rights activists of all races, became known as Bloody Sunday. These events accelerated the passage of President Johnson’s Voting Rights Act.

Although it has been 50 years since the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, recent events show how important it is to continue to pursue civil equality for all Americans.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 has been used to allow equality to all — minorities, women and gay citizens. As an African-American attorney, I have seen the change, the growth and the acceptance of people who look beyond race and see qualifications and education and judge people on the content of their character.

The fight for equality and civil rights in America is not finished until every American has equal rights in all areas of life. Each generation of Americans must rise to the challenge of extending and protecting our basic freedoms to all of us. It is the fundamental test of our national character.

Valerie Gotch Garrett is an attorney in Lafayette. (valeriegarrettlaw@gmail.com; Ste. 212, 100 E. Vermilion St., Lafayette, LA 70501) 



Celebrating 50 Years of Civil Rights
8th ANNUAL CONCLAVE ON DIVERSITY IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION
MARCH 6, 2015 ★ LOUISIANA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

FOR MORE INFO, VISIT
WWW.LSBA.ORG/DIVERSITY

