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DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AWARDS



LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



The differences among humans are many. We come in different colors, shapes, origins and sexual identities, with different thoughts, preferences and convictions.

But there are core elements we all share. Call it our commonality, our sameness. We all have curiosity and the capacity to laugh, to love, to cry, to pursue freedom.

It's what makes us, well, human.

Reveling in it all — our differences and our sameness — fuels us to greater success, whether we're talking about a macro view of society or a micro view of a profession.

Slip Missouri's legal profession onto that slide, clip it under the lens and peer in. You'll find imperfection, but you also will find hard work and momentum to broaden inclusion and celebrate diversity.

The American Bar Association leads the profession nationally through its diversity and inclusion center resource, and The Missouri Bar follows suit with its committee on diversity, forums and training. Local bar associations do the same, from Springfield to St. Louis and Kansas City. A growing number of legal associations are devoted to diverse segments of attorneys doing remarkable work within the profession and the justice system.

The number of firms devoted to the work of inclusion continues to grow as their leaders recognize that excellence starts with a commitment from the top that builds from below. It's the individuals of any association or firm who make sustainable change.

When diversity is celebrated and inclusion guaranteed in any endeavor, it's surely our human essence leading the work.

And then there's this: It's the right thing to do.

The individuals we honor through the 2020 Diversity & Inclusion awards do the right thing. They are part of the bedrock that supports a growing foundation of work throughout Missouri's legal profession.

The 21 honorees we recognize on these pages were selected after considerable deliberation on many impressive nominations. Missouri Lawyers Media did so with the help of a selection committee of attorneys drawn from throughout the state's legal community — all of whom have spent much of their careers working to improve diversity and inclusion in the profession.

Our honorees represent incredible work, often conducted outside of the spotlight.

They are remarkable humans.

And we are all better for it.

Liz Irwin
Publisher
Missouri Lawyers Media

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FRANCES BARBIERI

**Chief Counsel, Litigation and Employment Law,
World Wide Technology**



Adopted from Korea by parents of Italian, German, Japanese and Irish descent, Frances Barbieri was raised with Black, white and mixed-race cousins. This diverse upbringing fuels her hope that one day law firms and organizations will look like the people they serve.

Barbieri joined World Wide Technology in April, after more than four years at U.S. Bank as vice president and senior corporate counsel, employment law. She previously worked for firms in Boston and St. Louis. She sits on the board of directors for Nurses for Newborns and is president of the Missouri Asian American Bar Association.

What motivates you most in your work as an attorney and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

My family is very diverse. I was adopted from Korea, my dad’s family was Italian and German, and my mom’s family is Japanese and Irish. I grew up eating sushi and homemade Italian bread. I have a Korean sister and a sister my parents had biologically, and my cousins are white, Black and mixed-race. So I had a very innocent view of diversity growing up — it was very harmonious. We all appreciated our differences but got along and supported each other.

My optimistic and unrealistic view of the world continued through law school, because my law school class was diverse, and I saw many of my peers of color get offered great jobs. It wasn’t until I was a practicing lawyer when the rose-colored glasses fell off, and I saw and heard about the negative experiences of women and people of color, particularly as their careers advanced.

What goal remains unfulfilled for you as an attorney and advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

I plan to continue working towards diversity, equity and inclusion for the rest of my life, and I know that when I’m gone

there will still be work to do. We can look at the law school admission rates and see they have diversified during the past 25 years, and that’s good, but then we need to look at hiring practices. When we start to feel good about hiring practices, we need to look at promotion rates. Currently, the senior leadership of most law firms and corporations is not really any more diverse than it was 25 years ago, and that needs to change. We need to fully understand and rectify the reasons why women and attorneys of color get great jobs out of law school but end up leaving before hitting the leadership level.

What must Missouri’s legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

One of the most pressing opportunities for the legal profession in Missouri is the selection and retention of judges. Judges have such a huge influence on how our laws are enforced and interpreted, which in turn affects the situations of Missouri residents. I think the Nonpartisan Court Plan is a pretty good way to select judges, but it has not been extended to most counties in Missouri. The retention procedures are also a bit of a mystery to most citizens, including most practicing lawyers. There is a single, statewide judicial review committee that reviews judges up for retention and provides “findings” on them. There are several issues with this process: Most lawyers do not know how the review committee is selected or what experiences those individuals are bringing to the table; [and] the findings of the committee (which reviews every single sitting judge up for retention) are not widely publicized to voters. We need a better system of reviewing judgment and making retention recommendations to the public.

“**I plan to continue working toward diversity, equity and inclusion for the rest of my life, and I know that when I’m gone there will still be work to do.**”



STEPHEN R. BOUGH

**U.S. District Judge,
U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri**



US. District Judge Stephen R. Bough has made diversity and inclusion a guiding principle of his life and legal practice, starting in 1999, when he researched employment discrimination and diversity issues as a law clerk for U.S. District Judge Scott O. Wright.

Those priorities have remained constant through his career as a judge pro tem and attorney practicing in Kansas City, as an instructor at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law and as a federal judge since 2014. He’s intentional about hiring diverse law clerks and interns, saying he continues to strive to make his chambers reflect the community in which they live and work.

Described as “a rabid supporter of his alma mater UMKC Law,” Bough is a longtime mentor for diverse law students and attorneys. He hosts an annual lunch for members of diverse student organizations to encourage their applications to the federal court internship program, and he connects diverse alumni with diversity and mentorship initiatives.

He also is a member of numerous diverse bar associations, and he frequently hosts events at home for causes that reflect and embrace the diversity of the Kansas City community. His nominator wrote: “Judge Bough’s mentorship has helped cultivate a new generation of diverse legal practitioners and incorporate them meaningfully into the Missouri legal community. His commitment to diversity and inclusion transcends the courtroom.”

What makes you most proud of the legal profession?

I love the legal profession. We are far from perfect, but we

continue to fight to improve. We are still experiencing firsts — the first diverse executive director of The Missouri Bar, the first diverse magistrate judge in the Western District of Missouri, the first gay wedding in the federal courthouse — and that’s just in the past five years!

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity & Inclusion, and why?

I grew up in all-white Republic, Missouri, and I knew nothing of diversity. I met my first Black friend in the U.S. Army boot camp, where we both got bad haircuts. We discovered that we were both good at playing cards and table-talking. In representing diverse members of society, my eyes were opened to the incredible privileges extended to me, even as a poor white man. Understanding my own privilege and witnessing the roadblocks others face inspired me to be an active member in numerous diverse bar organizations. Working to make sure all of my neighbors have an equal opportunity is the essence of a more perfect union.

What must Missouri’s legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

We must accept that we all have implicit bias. The legal system is based on our Constitution, which [includes] discrimination in counting slaves as 3/5 of a person right there in Article I. We can recognize that history and still continue to work for justice.

“**Working to make sure all of my neighbors have an equal opportunity is the essence of a more perfect union.**”

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SARAH CARLSON

Partner, Dentons US



Sarah Carlson recognizes the platform that Dentons has awarded her as a partner in its consumer products representation & services and litigation & dispute resolution practice groups, as well as a leader of pro bono efforts in its St. Louis office.

To that end, she strives to increase diversity within the firm, the profession and the community. She promotes an inclusive culture through pro bono efforts, support of diversity networking groups and mentorship of young and diverse lawyers.

What motivates you most in your work as an attorney and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

My passion for diversity and inclusion — and my decision to become a lawyer — were originally influenced by my grandparents. My grandparents were Holocaust concentration camp survivors. They were beaten, tortured and starved simply because they were Jewish. That they survived Auschwitz and Mauthausen was, quite frankly, a miracle. As destitute orphans after liberation, they met one another. . . . And to this day I remember the lessons I learned from them: Diversity is to be celebrated; life is a gift; freedom cannot be taken for granted; health and safety are far more important than money; and I am strong because I come from survivors.

And so today, I speak out for the oppressed. Even when it is uncomfortable, and even when it is hard. Because I wish someone had spoken out for my grandparents. And I need someone to speak out for my beautiful children. As I get older, my voice gets louder. We each only have so much time on this Earth, and I do not want my children to inherit the same social justice battles that we are currently fighting. I want this America to be

the America that my grandparents dreamed about — and to get there, we have so much more work to do.

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity & Inclusion, and why?

This goes back to my grandparents. And then I look at my children. And I wonder how will they fare? Will history repeat itself? Will they be persecuted for their religion; what if it is something else? And so I see it as my job to do whatever I can to eradicate all forms of bigotry, including anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny and other prejudices. We cannot just say “Never again.” We have to work for it.

What must Missouri’s legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

More and more, companies are starting to see that diversity is important — that diversity makes us stronger. And we are also seeing that our clients want diversity reflected on their legal teams. But in order to promote meaningful and long-term diversity, we still have to work on inclusion. And that means allowing those who are “diverse” to be themselves, bringing all of our differences proudly to the table. And it certainly means adopting a mind frame of cultural humility. Listening. And owning our part in the narrative and how we move forward. And it means thinking beyond ourselves. I do not just stand for Jewish women — even though those are my particular minority groups. I am an ally wherever allyship is necessary. Hillel, a Jewish scholar and rabbi, said: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?” Now is as good a time as any.

“We cannot just say ‘Never again.’ We have to work for it.



CHUCK HENSON

Trial Practice Professor of Law,
University of Missouri School of Law



After 19 years practicing law in business and with firms around the Denver area, Chuck Henson moved to Missouri in 2009 and worked as an assistant attorney general for the state. He transitioned to academia full time in 2015 and promptly began leaving a mark, serving as the University of Missouri’s interim Vice Chancellor for Inclusion, Diversity and Equity for most of the 2015-16 academic year.

It wasn’t a simple task, either: Henson designed and staffed the division and implemented programs for students as well as diversity training for hiring supervisors. He serves as the Senior Fellow for the Center for the Study of Dispute Resolution at the law school and on the state Supreme Court Commission on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Law.

What motivates you most in your work as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

I am motivated most in my work by the goal of service, particularly the articulation of the goal in the first sentence of the preamble to our Rules of Professional Conduct: A lawyer is a citizen with a special responsibility for the quality of justice. To me, the quality of justice is intimately and primarily concerned with diversity and inclusion. And to accept the special responsibility to which our profession aspires necessarily requires me to make diversity and inclusion the centerpiece of my efforts.

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity & Inclusion, and why?

My inspiration to improve the quality of justice comes from people: my current and former students (D’Juan Neal, Henry Tanner, Melesa Johnson, Julius King, Kayla Jackson Williams, David Rogers, Lacy Cansler, Joel Ritchie, Ben Marble, Landon Miller, Don Quinn, Jacqueline Ledezma-Ruelas, Tamar Hodges, Arsenio Mims, Trevor Woodland, Brionna Pratt and Phel-

an Simpkins to name just a few); my wife, Renee E. Henson, Esq., Mizzou ’18; and all those who I consider to be part of my family, some of whom are — the Hon. Mary Russell, the Hon. Willie Epps Jr., the Hon. Kenny Garrett, Peggy Whipple, Esq., Joel Poole, Esq., Faye and Masood Hedari, my colleagues at Douglass High School, Jonette Ford, Denise Parker and Dr. Eryca Neville, and particularly the civil rights hero Percy Green. These people inspire me by their uniform and heroic efforts to encourage our society to meet its aspirations. Their existence, their successes, their challenges and their essential goodness is the reason I do what I can.

What goal remains unfulfilled for you as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

It seems to me that our profession pays too little attention to its aspirations. If we claim the special responsibility for the quality of justice, how do we manage that responsibility? My goal is to elevate that aspiration from obscurity to the clear beacon it ought to be in the daily life of all lawyers.

What must Missouri’s legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

Missouri must follow through on the excellent start the Missouri Supreme Court has given our legal community through the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Fairness chartered by then-Chief Justice [Patricia] Breckenridge, and through making cultural competency an annual requirement for members of our Bar. I see both events as signposts marking a new focus on the quality of justice. . . . Finally, take concerted action to eliminate from the legal system any opportunity for implicit bias to play a role. We should not only acknowledge the existence of implicit bias but the impact of implicit bias.

“To me, the quality of justice is intimately and primarily concerned with diversity and inclusion.



NORMA JACKSON

**Director of Diversity, Inclusion & Professional Development,
Thompson Coburn**

Growing up in rural northeast Missouri, Norma Jackson was the only African American female student in her class from first through 12th grade. That experience informed her ongoing work to create pipelines and provide access and opportunities for underserved and underrepresented people.

Under her direction as Thompson Coburn’s director of diversity, inclusion & professional development, the firm has hired a staff diversity manager and implemented firmwide implicit bias awareness workshops in which attendees explore how biases play a role in their perception of others and affect the formation of inclusive spaces. Other workshops have aimed to end biases in hiring and evaluations.

Thompson Coburn also has signed on to Diversity Lab’s Mansfield Rule 3.0 pilot, a national initiative that requires participants to ensure the candidate pool for promotions, senior-level hiring, significant leadership roles and inclusion on client proposals includes at least 30 percent women and diverse attorneys.

Jackson joined Thompson Coburn in 2018 after previously serving as director of faculty and professional staff diversity enhancement and engagement for the College of Education at the University of Missouri, where she also earned a law degree.

What motivates you most in your work as an attorney and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

I’m motivated when I see my constituents start to look at things differently than they did before. As just one example, our firm-wide implicit bias training was mandatory, and I knew there were some folks who attended for that reason. But afterward, some of those same people . . . thanked me for the program. They said it really opened their eyes to unconscious biases they held.

What makes you most proud of your law firm?

One of the main reasons I came to Thompson Coburn was be-

cause I knew the firm already had both a strong tradition of Diversity & Inclusion efforts and the total support of management in the firm’s D&I efforts. You don’t necessarily see top-down support like that everywhere you go in the corporate world. So I’ve been very pleased and proud that, in any initiative I’ve wanted to start or a program I wanted to introduce, I’ve been met with nothing but support and enthusiasm. And I think people at all levels of the firm see and feel that support in action.

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity & Inclusion, and why?

Right now I’m inspired by young people who are reacting so strongly to the current national conversation about racism and racial injustice. The recent events in our communities are difficult to witness and reconcile, but they are also causing us to rededicate ourselves to the fight for equal access to justice and opportunities for all. My 12-year-old son Jayden is part of this generation of kids that are wrestling with these difficult questions. They are our future leaders, so it’s our job to give them the education, skills and opportunities that will move them and our society forward.

What must Missouri’s legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

It’s critical for us to be willing to be vulnerable and honest about systematic racism and injustice and the role that each of us plays in those systems. After the murder of George Floyd, Thompson Coburn hosted a series of Courageous Conversations, small-group video meetings where people at all levels of our firm could gather together to share reactions and emotions, and have a candid talk about what we can all do to address racism and bias. By just listening to the personal experiences of someone different than yourself, you allow yourself to be changed.



I’m motivated when I see my constituents start to look at things differently than they did before.

MIZZOU LAW

congratulates

Chuck Henson

Missouri Lawyers Media Diversity and Inclusion Award Honoree

We also congratulate our Mizzou Law alumni honorees:

Norma Jackson, ’11, Thompson Coburn

Al W. Johnson, ’81, New Covenant Legal Services

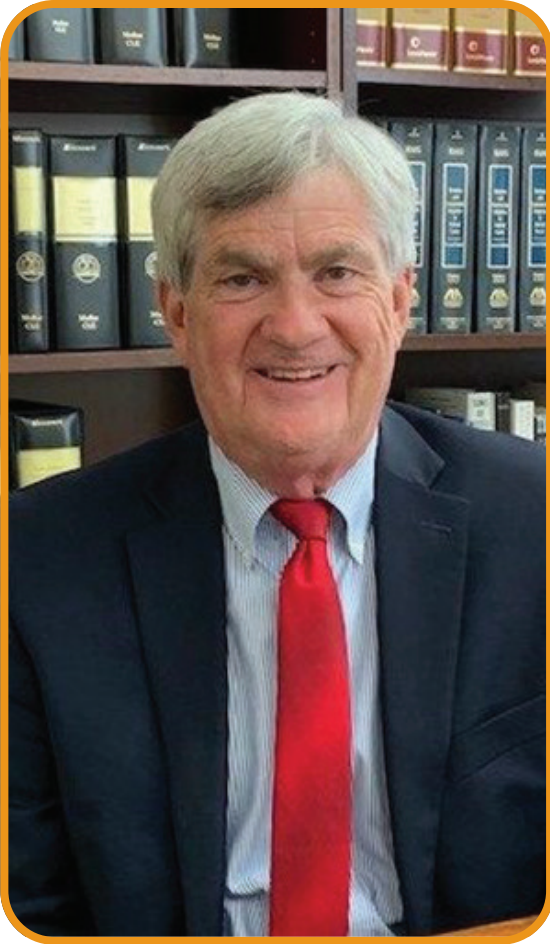
J.Y. Miller, ’96, Husch Blackwell

Kimberly J. Norwood, ’85, Washington University School of Law



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AL W. JOHNSON

Executive Director, New Covenant Legal Services



Leaving private practice after more than 20 years on his own, Al W. Johnson moved in 2016 to a new ministry — overseeing New Covenant Legal Services, for which he served as part-time director for the previous 19 months.

This pro bono and low-cost legal service aids the urban poor, representing people with cases involving racial or religious discrimination, financial exploitation, landlord-tenant issues, child custody and minor criminal offenses.

Johnson handles cases himself and also supervises 15 volunteer attorneys, interns and law students; in addition to representing dozens of clients at a time, they also conducted almost 300 consultations in 2019.

What makes you most proud of your law firm/legal practice?

At NCLS, we are proud of the fact that we aggressively recruit minorities as attorneys, law clerks, interns and volunteers. Currently, I have only one other attorney on my staff, Brandi Miller, who is a highly respected African American attorney with approximately 20 years of experience. Both of our interns, Kale Catchings from Harvard University and Keannah Moore from Saint Louis University, are also African Americans. One of our key volunteers, Michelle Marshall, is an African American.

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity & Inclusion, and why?

A few of the more significant influences: Pete Woods — a close friend who has always been a champion for racial reconciliation. I previously served with Pete on the Board of Reconcilers — an organization dedicated to racial reconciliation. Bruce Strom — a close friend from Chicago who is the executive director of Gospel Justice Initiative and who was the founder of

Administer Justice, an organization that provides legal counsel to low-income individuals in the Chicago area. Bruce is also the author of an inspirational book called “Gospel Justice.” Brandi Miller — whom I hired as a legal assistant approximately 25 years ago and subsequently encouraged her to attend law school. Brandi took me up on that challenge, and since graduating from law school she has been a highly successful attorney in the St. Louis area for more 20 years. She is a former board member of NCLS and has been a terrific source of encouragement and also a sounding-board for racial justice issues.

What goal remains unfulfilled for you as an attorney and advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

I would like to see NCLS expand so that we can serve more individuals. There is a tremendous need for capable legal counsel, particularly for individuals in the minority community who are the frequent targets of oppressive and abusive conduct in both the public and the private arena.

What must Missouri’s legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

There are only a few organizations in the St. Louis metropolitan area that are providing pro bono and/or low-cost legal services to individuals who cannot afford legal counsel. There are an estimated 300-350 individuals who go through the courts in St. Louis City on a weekly basis without counsel. I believe that The Missouri Bar needs to require every licensed attorney to perform a set number of hours of pro bono legal services each year and require judges to attempt to appoint counsel for individuals in need. We also need to encourage the recruitment and placement of minorities as judges.



We need to encourage the recruitment and placement of minorities as judges.



MADELINE JOHNSON

Managing Partner, Law Office of Madeline Johnson



Madeline Johnson, one of Missouri’s first openly transgender attorneys, primarily focuses on representing LGBTQ clients. Her practice covers multiple areas of law that often relate to LGBTQ rights, such as employment, education, civil rights and occasionally family law.

Johnson also represents clients in name and gender-marker changes, which she considers her favorite cases because she ultimately shares in their euphoria upon obtaining court documentation validating their identities.

“I’m in a privileged position as an attorney, and privileged to represent persons who need access to legal representation when they’ve been discriminated against or when they’re needing documentation to support their identity and support who they are,” she said. “Those are really the two most motivating factors for me in my practice of law.”

Johnson sits on the board of directors of KC LEGAL, the association for the LGBT and allied legal community in Kansas City, among other advocacy work. Before becoming an attorney, Johnson was a Germanic scholar in the 1990s, studying at the University of Augsburg, Germany, on a Fulbright Fellowship and earning a master’s in German literature. She is a U.S. Army veteran who served as a translator and intelligence analyst from 1986-90.

What motivates you most in your work as an attorney and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

I am motivated by representing others like myself who are transgender and seeking equal protection of the laws so we may simply be who we are. It is about the fundamental right to self-identification.

How do you give back to your community?

I give back by volunteering for the various boards I have served on and occasional pro bono representation of transgender minors involved with the family court who need name and gender-marker changes or document updates.

What goal remains unfulfilled for you as an attorney and advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

Complete equal protection under the law for transgender persons and the freedom to be who we are — there is much work to do. There remain a number of issues to tackle beyond the recent SCOTUS recognition of protections in employment discrimination under Title VII, such as bathroom access, participation in athletics, dress codes and particularly exclusions in health care for necessary procedures related to sex/gender transition.

Tell us something that most people don’t know about you:

I struggled with gender identity for more than four decades before finally coming out and allowing myself to express and live in the gender I feel myself to be inside. When I came out, I was terrified of being rejected by judges, court personnel, other attorneys and clients, but none of those fears came true (at least not displayed openly to me). After transition, I have been a better attorney and better advocate for my clients because I am free to be me without the cloud of confusion about my identity hanging over my head. Every year since, I have seen steady growth in my practice because I am continuing to grow as a person and advocate. I like to joke that my gender transition turned out to be a good business decision.



After transition, I have been a better attorney and better advocate for my clients because I am free to be me without the cloud of confusion about my identity hanging over my head.



LANA KNEDLIK

Counsel, University of Missouri System



As an in-house attorney for the University of Missouri system since 2013, Lana Knedlik says her day-to-day work often focuses on intellectual property issues. But she is committed to the university’s mission to advance opportunities for success and well-being for all faculty and students — and diversity and inclusion are integral parts of achieving that mission.

Knedlik’s work to support Diversity and Inclusion began in the early 2000s, when she became co-chair of the ACLU’s GLBT task force. During that period, she co-authored “The Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered People in Missouri and Kansas” handbook for the ACLU and approached the Kansas Bar Association about sponsoring a CLE on LGBT legal issues.

In 2008, that work led her to form KC LEGAL — the Kansas City Lesbian Gay and Allied Lawyers — and to serve as its president for five years before her move to Columbia and the university counsel’s office.

Academic institutions like those in the University of Missouri system understand that diversity of thought and experiences are critical to creating a robust marketplace of ideas in the classroom and in research and scholarly works. Knedlik said. She enjoys her work there because she’s attracted to and motivated by the contributions of academic institutions to the diversity and inclusion conversation.

What makes you most proud of your legal practice?

I am always amazed that our office is able to handle (with only a few exceptions) the variety of legal issues that arise on the four campuses. Our office has 16 full-time attorneys who serve institutions with 70,000+ students, 5,000+ faculty and 17,000+ staff, and also operate a hospital.

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity & Inclusion, and why?

The first person I thought of was Dick Kurtenbach, the former executive director of the ACLU of Kansas and Western Missouri. I had gotten involved in the ACLU in the early 2000s primarily to focus on LGBT legal-education issues, but my experiences with the ACLU really broadened my thinking about how the interests of people of color and other minorities were aligned — especially in the workplace.

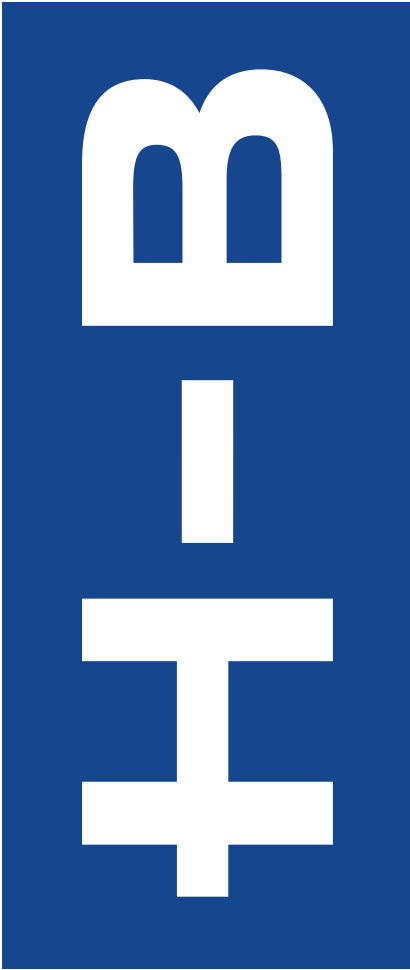
What goal remains unfulfilled for you as an attorney and advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

Until the legal workplace (at every level, especially management and boards) reflects the diversity of the general population, there will always be work to do and goals to achieve.

What must Missouri’s legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

I’ve always believed that formalized education on the topic does wonders. I think that the new Missouri CLE requirement for explicit or implicit bias, diversity, inclusion or cultural competency is a good first step. I would encourage managing partners at firms to have diversity and inclusion efforts be tied to their evaluations and/or compensation. For example, many firms (and the university) help to promote diversity and inclusion through wellness programs. Employees can earn wellness points by doing something as simple as reading a book on another culture or attending a Gay Pride event. In general, I think attorneys are goal-oriented and respond to action items like that. The more we give attorneys real, tangible ways to learn about diversity and inclusion, the better off we will be.

“The more we give attorneys real, tangible ways to learn about diversity and inclusion, the better off we will be.”



J.Y. Miller
Partner

HUSCH BLACKWELL

Making a difference.

At Husch Blackwell, we believe that the talent, knowledge and perspectives of our people move clients forward. We proudly congratulate J.Y. Miller as a 2020 Missouri Lawyers Media Diversity & Inclusion Award winner and celebrate all of this year’s honorees for their tireless work to support diversity and inclusion in the legal profession.



PATRICIA A. KONOPKA

Partner, Co-chair of Diversity & Inclusion committee, Stinson



When Patricia Konopka began practicing law, she saw few people of color in big law firms, and even fewer women of color. Since then, she has worked to create and increase opportunities for women and people of color in the practice of law, both at Stinson and in the Kansas City community.

At Stinson, she's led the Diversity and Inclusion committee since 2004, and she pushed the firm to create a chief diversity and inclusion officer position to advance its strategic plan. She works closely with Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer Ann Jenrette-Thomas and meets regularly with practice leaders to discuss diversity and mentorship efforts. She also advises on recruitment, retention and advancement, participates in recruiting minority fellowship and 1L candidates, reviews sponsorships with affinity and community organizations, and encourages firm participation in D&I events.

Konopka's nominator said her work has been critical to securing the firm's top score of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index for the past two years, and she helped the firm to obtain gold standard certification from the Women In Law Empowerment Forum every year since 2011. She's also an active member of Stinson's allies network, which works to advance understanding and communication around unconscious bias, and she mentors early career attorneys to ensure their access to tools they need to succeed personally and professionally.

Konopka is a long-time member of the Asian American Bar Association of Kansas City, which in 2018 honored her with its Vanguard Award for her work to further opportunities for Asian Americans in the legal community. She also is a founder of the Heartland Diversity Legal Job Fair in Kansas City, which aims to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in law.

What motivates you most in your work as an attorney and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

I really like being a lawyer at my firm. But I know our profession hasn't always allowed all people to thrive, and that has made me frustrated, and at times angry. That has motivated me to do what I can.

What makes you most proud of your law firm/legal practice?

I have been with the same firm for almost 25 years, and I am proud of its immense progress. We've moved from simply being non-discriminatory to actively pursuing a more diverse workforce to being leaders in diversity and inclusion efforts. As the co-chair of Stinson's diversity committee, I am proud of the role our committee played in integrating diversity and inclusion as an integral part of the firm's strategic plan. I'm especially proud that we're one of the first midwestern firms to adopt a Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer role.

What goal remains unfulfilled for you as an attorney and advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

I look at this work as an ongoing process. Our goals should be to continue to bring more diverse people into the profession and ensure that they have the support and freedom to be as successful as they can be. But more than that, our profession should lead our country's efforts to combat systemic biases and racism that continue to plague our society.

What must Missouri's legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

We need to continue to look at our organizations to identify and correct systemic barriers to diverse individuals. As individuals, we all should look at ourselves to identify and correct our own assumptions and unconscious bias.

Tell us something that most people don't know about you:

I make a great sangria. It's simple but delicious in the summer.



Our profession should lead our country's efforts to combat systemic biases and racism that continue to plague our society.



J.Y. MILLER

Partner, Husch Blackwell



As a member of the executive board at Husch Blackwell, J.Y. Miller makes diversity, equality and inclusion a priority in all of his business dealings.

During his early years in the U.S. Army JAG Corp, where he spent five years stationed in Texas, Saudi Arabia, Georgia and Bosnia, Miller learned that when you bring diverse minds together in an atmosphere of trust, good things happen. Now, as a partner, he feels a responsibility to help others succeed.

Some of his colleagues set serious career goals, such as becoming a firm leader or partner, "and I'm committed to those people in the partners that I work with on our team," he said. "We are invested in these people. And until we do everything possible to get each one of those people to where they want to be and accomplish those goals, my mission will be incomplete."

What motivates you most in your work as an attorney and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

I'm motivated to build and lead teams that make a difference in people's lives. The large litigation teams I help to lead bring diverse minds together to collaborate in a highly dynamic environment. Our team members push and pull with, and against, one another daily in a combined effort to challenge every assumption, think creatively and listen empathetically as we work together to get to the best solution for our clients. As a result, our team has helped our clients achieve unparalleled success while building a service model that is disrupting our industry. This could not happen without developing a diverse and inclu-

sive team that operates freely and confidently in a setting based on trust, loyalty, commitment and respect.

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity & Inclusion, and why?

I continue to be inspired by the group of people I worked with at my first job in the Army JAG Corps more than 20 years ago. Our prosecuting attorney team included a very diverse group in terms of race, gender, geography, religion, education and life experiences. Long days working on challenging cases were filled with honest conversation and genuine effort to listen to and understand different points of view. As much as I learned about trying cases to verdict in that first job, the most valuable lessons I learned were centered around being part of a highly effective, exceptionally diverse team that challenged and supported one another to grow professionally and personally.

What makes you most proud of your law firm?

I am most proud of the deep commitment our firm has to our culture. Dedication to our core values — teamwork, collaboration, diversity, service, citizenship and innovation — drives everything we do. This commitment is demonstrated by our shift a few years ago to change our attorney performance evaluation system to more directly link compensation to the positive behaviors supporting these core values. The commitment to our core values is the foundation of our strategic plan and serves as a constant touchstone for every team, office, committee and initiative in our firm.



[Success] could not happen without developing a diverse and inclusive team that operates freely and confidently in a setting based on trust, loyalty, commitment and respect.



JEHAN KAMIL MOORE

Partner, Lathrop GPM



As co-chair of Lathrop GPM’s Culture, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Jehan Kamil Moore is driven to open doors for others in the same way people did for her earlier in her career.

Her nominator noted: “Jehan helped to create the firm’s Diverse Professionals Network and served as its chair for three years. The DPN serves the professional and personal goals of underrepresented attorneys by encouraging connections, networking, professional development and engagement to build and grow impactful business, cultural and social relationships. Jehan also assisted the firm in developing its Diversity Fellowship program.”

Moore also participates in a businesswomen’s network in Kansas City, the Black Female Attorneys Network, the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity and an alumni diversity advisory council at the University of Kansas School of Law, where she also mentors.

What motivates you most in your work as an attorney and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

I know that there are many extremely talented people who just need the right opportunity to succeed. When you see successful diverse attorneys, they aren’t exceptions or unique, they just had an opportunity. Sometimes opportunity is given to us, and sometimes we make it for ourselves. I am motivated to help to provide opportunities for diverse attorneys whenever I can. There should not be just one woman or BIPOC at the table — there should be many. I continue to work for diversity and inclusion because law firms and companies are better, stronger and more successful with more women and BIPOC.

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity &

Inclusion, and why?

When I was a young associate, an established partner took the time to mentor me, give me opportunities and help my career. He was always willing to answer questions, always willing to provide honest feedback, and [he] helped me to navigate a large law firm. That experience showed me the importance of mentorship and opportunity, and how those two things can change the course of someone’s career. I am grateful for each person who has mentored and advocated for me throughout my career, and it inspires me to continue helping others. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it is also very fulfilling for me to help other diverse attorneys succeed.

What must Missouri’s legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

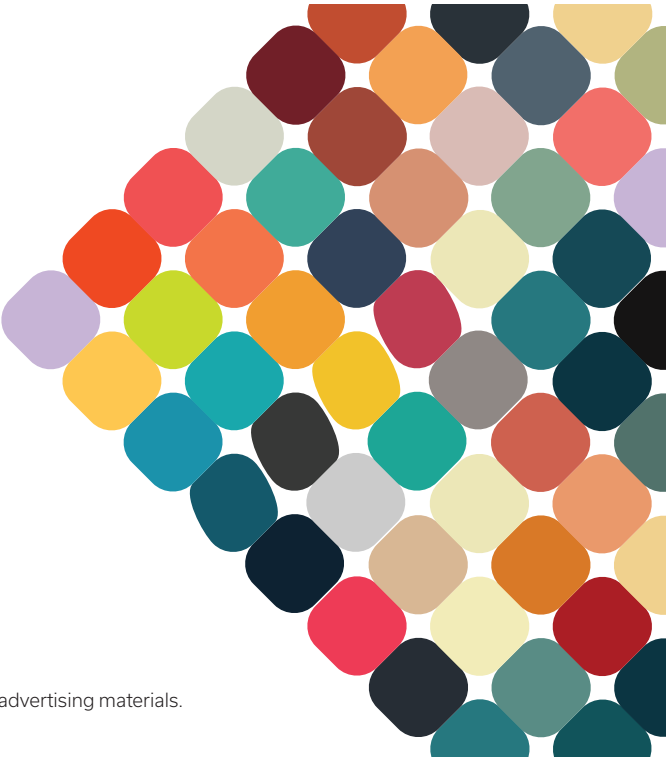
We must stop doing things the way they have always been done and expect different results. Meaningful diversity requires diverse attorneys in leadership positions. Law firms and companies should be considering diverse attorneys to lead departments, to sit on important committees and boards, and to have a voice when decisions are made. If you are not considering diverse attorneys for every important role in your organization, then you should ask yourself: Why not? We can’t have meaningful and long-term diversity if everyone in leadership positions looks the same.

Other details you wish to include?

I am married, and I have a 6-year-old daughter. Spending time with my family is my greatest joy. When I watch my daughter and her friends, it gives me so much hope for the future. It also inspires me to continue to work towards diversity, equity and inclusion.

“We can’t have meaningful and long-term diversity if everyone in leadership positions looks the same.”

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Congratulations!

Partner Jehan Kamil Moore is named a 2020 Diversity and Inclusion award recipient by Missouri Lawyers Media.
Thank you, Jehan, for your commitment to equity within the firm and community.
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Jehan Kamil Moore
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KIMBERLY JADE NORWOOD

Henry H. Oberschelp Professor of Law,
Washington University in St. Louis School of Law



Throughout her extraordinary career, Kimberly Jade Norwood has been celebrated as a mentor to countless students and young lawyers, a global scholar-expert on topics ranging from torts to implicit bias, and a leader far beyond her law classroom at Washington University in St. Louis.

Norwood, who joined the university in 1990, writes extensively and lectures on colorism, social justice, civil rights and implicit and explicit bias issues. She also conducts implicit bias workshops and lectures for CLE credit and facilitates diversity and inclusion training for law firms, corporations and other institutions.

Norwood has worked with organizations ranging from the Missouri Supreme Court to the American Bar Association to address issues in Missouri’s municipal courts and in the profession as a whole. She remains a member of the team appointed to monitor the *U.S. v. Ferguson* consent decree prompted by unrest after the fatal shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown in 2014.

Since 2017, Norwood has been a member of the American Bar Association Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession. Missouri Lawyers Media honored her in 2019 as its Woman of the Year in its annual Women’s Justice Awards.

What motivates you most in your work as an attorney and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

According to the most recent data from the Federal Reserve, it takes the net worth of 11.5 Black families to equal the net worth of one white family. This economic disparity represents a serious miscarriage of justice that has resulted from decades of racial and social inequality. At every turn, Black Americans are kept behind the 8-ball. This disparity is stark in virtually every part of the social order of our society: education, employment, the criminal justice system, housing and health care. In every

single meaningful facet of life, [Black people] are dealing with racial bias and systemic and institutional racism. A large part of why this is relates to the misrepresentations and omissions in our history books. History, particularly Black history, is not accurately taught in schools. There is no sense of the essential contributions my ancestors have made to the success of this nation. I want to be a part of righting that history. The truth has not been told about how this nation was founded. I believe that failing, and the continued distortions both represented and omitted in our nation’s history, are crucial parts of the resulting disparate legacy we see today, and this failing has sown the seeds of racial inequity and current civil unrest in this nation.

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity & Inclusion, and why?

That person, hands down, is Michael Middleton, a retired law professor at the University of Missouri School of Law, who went on to become the deputy chancellor and interim president of the University of Missouri. . . . In 1984, I was a rising 3L in law school, and he and his powerful spouse, Dr. Julie Middleton, came to the University of Missouri School of Law to interview for a position on the faculty. Michael became the first Black law professor in the University of Missouri School of Law’s history. As I eventually made my way into academia a few years later, Mike was always there to support me. He mentored me and others of my generation, and planted in us, then baby law professors, the importance of giving back and helping diversify the academy, the pedagogy of teaching and the quality and scholarship produced. I have been in academia now 35 years and still recall and rely on the guidance, support and values he instilled in me to remember my untold history and connect it to the important fight for social justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.

“History, particularly Black history, is not accurately taught in schools . . . I want to be a part of righting that history.”



MARY OLSON

Associate, Shook, Hardy & Bacon



As leader of Shook, Hardy & Bacon’s Project Affirmation — a name-change and gender-marker amendment clinic — Mary Olson is a well-known and active ally for the transgender community in and around Kansas City.

Working for the pro bono clinic, Olson has represented and counseled hundreds of adult and minor trans clients. She’s helped them to obtain accurate government-issued identification documents with work that has included litigating before hostile judges and negotiating with counsel for state vital records offices throughout the country.

Olson’s pro bono practice entails navigating often undefined — and at times nonexistent — state laws to combat discrimination against transgender people. She also trains other advocates by presenting CLEs for the Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association. Advocating for the trans community is her favorite thing to do as a lawyer, she said, and her greatest honor.

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity & Inclusion, and why?

The first is my close friend, Alex Garnick, who turned me onto advocating for the trans community . . . The second is one of my first few clients, a young transman, who stood his ground when the judge presiding over his case asked him to confirm that he was “anatomically a female” and that allowing him to change his name to one “typically associated with the male gender” would make him a danger to society. If a high school kid has the courage to stand against discrimination wherever and whenever it may be found, what’s my excuse?

What goal remains unfulfilled for you as an attorney and advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

So. Many. Goals. As it relates to my pro bono practice, we

need to see every state allowing individuals to amend the gender markers recorded on their birth certificates to accurately reflect their gender identities, through processes that are accessible to all. Persons born in Ohio and Tennessee remain unable to amend the gender markers recorded on their birth certificates, and — as to the states that do allow for gender-marker amendments — many require a surgical procedure, and most do not recognize a non-binary gender marker.

What must Missouri’s legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

The legal community must be proactive. In this moment, firms, businesses and individuals are showing up for the Black Lives Matter movement. The legal community is reacting to George Floyd’s murder, firms are rethinking their diversity and inclusion efforts, and lawyers on both sides of the “v.” are calling for more sunshine on the justice system as a whole. Imagine a world with a proactive legal community, one that kept the conversation front and center as opposed to picking it up every so often when police killings of BIPOC and instances of gross oppression and injustice in the legal system gain publicity. A few things those of us in law firms could focus on include not only hiring diverse employees, but retaining and promoting them to ensure a diverse leadership through which all are represented; fostering honest and critical discussion regarding where firm diversity & inclusion metrics are at — and why — and what must be done to get them where they need to be; implementing mandatory and meaningful diversity, inclusion and bias training; and making sure that formal diversity & inclusion efforts are accompanied by informal inclusion, because a lack of organic inclusion is tantamount to exclusion.

“If a high school kid has the courage to stand against discrimination wherever and whenever it may be found, what’s my excuse?”



BHAVIK R. PATEL

**CEO and Chairman of the Executive Committee,
Sandberg Phoenix & von Gontard**

In addition to leading the firm he joined in 2004, Bhavik R. Patel chairs Sandberg Phoenix & von Gontard’s wealth planning and special needs planning group.

Widely recognized as an expert in special needs planning, he helps families to plan for the future and ensure the best possible quality of life for their dependents with special needs.

Patel often makes presentations to families, school districts, foundations and organizations that care for people with special needs. He also is an emeritus board member of the Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition, which assists in placing foster children and training foster parents.

Under his direction, the firm has rebranded to better reflect its values, culture and commitment to service while growing to nearly 350 employees in the past three years.

What motivates you most in your work as an attorney and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

Having the ability to educate families, help them plan for the future and allow them to better navigate around the things that keep them up at night regarding their assets and their families is the most rewarding and motivating aspect of the work I do. When it comes to diversity and inclusion, I think greatness comes from the discussion, understanding and input of many views. The more perspectives and views I can get, the better human I become . . . Additionally, the more well-rounded the firm can be allows us to better provide the help our clients need and deserve. As an advocate, I know it’s my responsibility to create an opportunity for discussion, listening, learning and action among my peers and within my firm.

How do you give back to your community?

I work with the Urban League, offering education presentations and services to the organization, and serve on the board of direc-

tors for the St. Louis Zoo and St. Louis ARC. I also co-chair the yearly St. Louis ARC Superheroes for Kids event to support St. Louis ARC’s programs for children with developmental disabilities. To support my estate planning clients, I founded and manage two of my own charities — Families at Ease and BSpecial Foundation. Families at Ease, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, serves as a funding source to provide educational opportunities to families who have a loved one with special needs. BSpecial works with children with disabilities in our area to send them to camps without financial worry.

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity & Inclusion, and why?

Gandhi has always been influential to me. Not only was he a well-respected lawyer, he was an advocate for nonviolent resistance in seeking civil rights. His ability to inspire and motivate peasants, farmers and laborers to protest discrimination has always inspired my belief that one person can make a difference, and people working together for change can be powerful.

What must Missouri’s legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

The legal community needs to commit more time and resources to actively recruit and retain minority talent. This goes beyond showing up at a recruiting event or hosting on-campus interviews. As an industry, we need to be speaking with attorneys, students and leaders in antiracism to understand how to create truly diverse and inclusive cultures within our firms and make the necessary changes to make these cultures a reality. As practicing attorneys and leaders in our industry, we all must start speaking out against racism and micro-aggressions as we see them — even if it means parting ways with clients or colleagues.

“When it comes to diversity and inclusion, I think greatness comes from the discussion, understanding and input of many views.”



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KHEVNA PATEL

Recruiter, Brown & Crouppen

Khevna Patel works toward equal access to opportunity and maintaining diverse viewpoints that are critical to a law firm's success.

In her two years at Brown & Crouppen, Patel has introduced new initiatives and partnerships, expanded the firm's online presence and increased its number of women attorneys by 33 percent and minority hires overall by 65 percent. The changes included partnering with Webster University's Diversity & Inclusion Conference and diverse bar organizations, building relationships across law firms, local law schools and career fairs, and more.

She has been selected to serve on the board of directors of the National Human Resources Association for the 2020-21 term. She also participates in the Society for Human Resources Management, the South Asian Bar Association, the Hispanic Bar Association and the NAACP.

"I learned very quickly that as a diverse candidate myself, you had to work twice as hard to achieve your goals or had to fight for getting what you deserved," she said.

Added her nominator: "Khevna is key in holding space for important and sometimes difficult conversations regarding diversity and inclusion. She is a wealth of resources and ideas on ways to grow and improve, both externally and within the firm"

What makes you most proud of your law firm?

Their genuine commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace. They welcome and often implement new ideas. They seek to be a leader in our community. For example, Brown & Crouppen honored Juneteenth as a holiday by closing the office beginning this year and each year moving forward, and it encouraged other businesses to join in the celebration.

What motivates you most in your work and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

#Blacklivesmatter — we have an opportunity to have deeper conversations around racial injustice. We need to converse and collaborate to reflect on the impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives and responsibilities to ensure racial equality. We have one chance to help to shape someone's future, to be able to educate someone on diversity and to take action — it's one thing to have the conversations, and it's another to take actions to make those conversations a reality.

What goal remains unfulfilled for you as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

Build structure and accountability around Brown & Crouppen's D&I Initiatives. Increase staff and community participation in the firm's D&I efforts. Creating a page on our website dedicated to D&I. Creating a career growth plan at B&C. Continue to build an inclusive environment

What must Missouri's legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

Consistency and having open conversations are the key. Educate. Respect. Participate. Celebrate.

Tell us something that most people don't know about you:

I speak four languages: English, Spanish, Hindi and Gujarati. I was born in India and moved to the United States when I was 9 — and I did not speak any English. I lived in California for one year and then moved to St. Louis, and I have lived in the area ever since.



We have one chance to help to shape someone's future, to be able to educate someone on diversity and to take action.



KEVIN K. PEEK

Associate, Sandberg Phoenix & von Gontard

When he looks around, Kevin Kohei-Uchida Peek sees a lack of representation of Asian attorneys among his peers. That helps to drive the Sandberg Phoenix & von Gontard medical malpractice attorney.

"A goal that remains unfulfilled for me is increasing the diversity in the legal field," he said. "I have a unique perspective in that I'm half-Japanese and half-white. And so I've seen both sides of the coin, not just in the legal field, but in the world in general. I do believe that the legal field can have a greater range of diversity in terms of race, gender, all kinds of aspects."

Peek started out in life as a concert cellist, playing since age 4. He has been an associate with three different St. Louis firms since 2014, earning an honor as a 2016 Missouri Bar Pro Bono Wall of Fame member and serving as a board member of the Missouri Asian American Bar Association.

What motivates you most in your work as an attorney and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

As an advocate for diversity and inclusion, the legal field has the room and ability to make great strides in such areas. I am motivated by this fact and the willingness for growth in diversity and inclusion by many leaders in the legal field today. The Asian community is grossly underrepresented in the practice of law. In my nearly six years of practice, I can count on one hand the number of times I've encountered attorneys of Asian descent in litigation.

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity & Inclusion, and why?

My inspiration comes from co-workers, attorneys I meet in my work and the leaders of local and national affinity bar

associations. In addition to promoting the needs of their own members, they do not shy away from supporting fellow organizations. This increases visibility of marginalized groups in the legal field. From co-workers to individuals I encounter through normal means, their open minds and willingness to support efforts for diversity and inclusion fill me with hope for the continued improvement of these areas in the legal profession.

What goal remains unfulfilled for you as an attorney and advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

Representation of Asians in the legal field is minimal. On my path to practicing law and even after the start of my career, I've experienced comments and questions as to the reason I entered the legal field, especially because the math and science fields are "more Asian." Such comments are unacceptable and are the result of the belief in negative stereotypes. There is plenty of work to still be done.

What must Missouri's legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

The recent requirement for those practicing law in Missouri to obtain one hour of CLE credit devoted to cultural competency, diversity, inclusion and implicit bias was an incredible step forward. With that said, the resulting backlash from a large number of attorneys was disheartening and emphasizes how far behind the legal field is from other professions with diversity and inclusion. In order to catch up to the higher standards in our country and world, we in the legal community need to take significant and accelerated steps on a regular basis. We need to be mindful of the journey required of our diverse co-workers to get to where they are today, as all journeys are different.



I do believe that the legal field can have a greater range of diversity in terms of race, gender, all kinds of aspects.



KENNETH POWELL

Managing Partner, The Powell Law Firm



His grandfather led several civil rights protests. His father sang at the funeral of Dr. Martin Luther King. Kenneth Powell springs from a long line of civil rights activists.

“My great, great, great grandfather was a slave back in South Carolina. I have a picture of his children sitting at their home in South Carolina, back in 1913, and that’s hanging up in my office,” he said. “And so that helps to keep me grounded and remember where I come from and the sacrifices of my ancestors that have led me to have the opportunities that I have today. It’s in my blood.”

Powell serves as chief legal officer for the Ecumenical Leadership Counsel and participates in several organizations working with underrepresented minorities. He began his post-college career as a tennis pro and a sports agent, representing primarily baseball players.

What motivates you most in your work as an attorney and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

Systemic racism motivates me daily. I was fortunate to be born to a family who values education and hard work. My grandfather, Jerome Williams Sr., was a physician in St. Louis and a civil rights leader. My father is a dentist and was also involved in civil rights. In fact, he sang in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s funeral. Although I was born into a privileged situation, life has not been easy for me. I can only imagine the uphill battle that African American children are facing when growing up in a lower-income household in St. Louis. Every day, I am motivated to try to give back and lift up the community. I am trying to

make a difference. These kids need us.

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity & Inclusion, and why?

Dad and Granddad, Wayman Smith, Frankie Freeman, Margaret Bush Wilson . . . to name a few. I am standing on the shoulders of giants.

What goal remains unfulfilled for you as an attorney and advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

I would like for there to be more African American attorneys in St. Louis. The community needs to see more African American professionals. Urban youth need to be exposed to Black doctors and lawyers as much as they see professional athletes and entertainers. I truly want to make sure I am doing as much as I can to assist in this process.

What makes you most proud of your law firm?

We treat each and every client as we would want to be treated. I am assembling a very talented team of legal minds. We often cut our fees to put more money in our client’s pockets. I am proud of the mentality of our firm. We have a growth mindset and are always trying to improve.

Other details you wish to include?

My wife, April Powell, is my much-better half. She is a rock star. She is currently the site lead for Cash App in St. Louis. She received her MBA from [the Olin Business School at Washington University in St. Louis]. I love her tremendously. Our three daughters are all under 6 years old. We have our hands full.

“Urban youth need to be exposed to Black doctors and lawyers as much as they see professional athletes and entertainers.”

Sandberg Phoenix congratulates CEO and shareholder Bhavik Patel and attorney Kevin Peek for being recognized as two of this year’s Diversity & Inclusion honorees.

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SHAUN STALLWORTH

President, Jackson County Bar Association
Of-Counsel, Holman Schiavone



Raised around New Orleans and once an aspiring television news anchor, Shaun Stallworth has made Kansas City his home, and diversity and inclusion in law one of his causes. It started when he was president of the Black Law Students Association at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, where he helped to ultimately raise \$150,000 and launch a scholarship for students of color interested in attending law school.

In 2013, he left corporate practice with Dentons US to focus on representing people in discrimination and consumer protection matters; he's now of-counsel with Holman Schiavone, an employment law and personal injury firm in Kansas City. Stallworth long has been active in, and since 2018 the president of, the Jackson County Bar Association, composed primarily of African American attorneys from the KC area. He has overseen youth outreach programs, including national competitions, and other programming and events, such as scholarship fundraising.

"I think one of the things we have to be cognizant of is to not simply talk about goals for diversity and inclusion; we have to have action. The NAACP has a saying: 'Don't talk about it, be about it.' And so what do we mean? Well, words matter, but actions are what actually change the world," he said.

"And we need to make sure that there are people of color in these leadership positions. I think that's one of the biggest things that I'd like to continue to see, and that's going to take more than merely words."

What motivates you most in your work as an attorney and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

Throughout my educational and professional career, I often have been one of few people of color at my school or workplace. Though allowing me to stand out among my peers, the experience was frustrating and often created added anxiety in an envi-

ronment that was already at times stressful. My goal is to ensure that other individuals of color do not have to face those same pressures, or at least not to the extent that I did.

Who has most inspired you in your work for Diversity & Inclusion, and why?

My mom, a retired elementary school teacher who spent 35 years in the education system, has always been a strong influence on my life. She always had a passion for education and ensuring that all children received a proper education. Consequently, as a college student at Louisiana State University, I was active with the Children's Defense Fund's reading and writing campaigns. Through internships, I spent significant time in New York City and Washington, D.C. working on outreach educational programs for disadvantaged school children.

What goal remains unfulfilled for you as an attorney and advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

We need to ensure that there are individuals of color at leadership positions at all levels of the legal community, whether it is government or corporate, or small and large firms. Too often, individuals of color do not have a seat at the table. We have something to offer. We can share a diversity of opinions, based upon our experiences, that can contribute to the decision-making process.

What must Missouri's legal community do to promote meaningful and long-term diversity within its legal/justice system?

Actions speak louder than words. All too often, the right things are said, but there is no follow-through. There must be accountability in our deeds. We must bring resources to communities of color, thereby ensuring that students from those communities attend law school — a pipeline from college to law school, if necessary.

“All too often, the right things are said, but there is no follow-through. There must be accountability in our deeds.”



DEBORAH C. WEAVER

CEO & Owner, Alaris Litigation Services



As CEO and Owner of Alaris Litigation Services, Deborah C. Weaver has become a leader among women business owners during her 35 years in the legal industry. Her St. Louis-based firm provides court reporting, alternative dispute resolution, legal video and a range of other trial services for law firms, corporations and government agencies nationally and globally.

Alaris has earned certification from the Women's Business Enterprise National Council, and as a disadvantaged business enterprise and a women's business enterprise in both Missouri and Illinois. When her company — originally known as Midwest Litigation Services — rebranded two years ago, diversity was high among its core values, Weaver said.

"I have always been passionate about providing equal rights for all, and I've made that one of my personal missions," she said.

Part of that mission has included providing educational training to the National Association of Minority and Women-Owned Law Firms, as well as partnering with bar and professional associations in Missouri and neighboring states on other outreach efforts to advance diversity and inclusion.

What motivates you most in your work and as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

To me, nothing is more important than supporting the citizens and communities where we do business, and part of that is giving back in order to help raise others up and support those of underrepresented populations. I believe that the character of a person — and a company — is shown in how we treat those who are less fortunate than us, and all of us at Alaris strive to lift up our communities in every way possible. I have been active in educating corporate legal departments on the benefits of using not only diverse law firm suppliers but also encouraging suppliers to engage with Tier 2 diverse companies as well. In this way Tier 2 suppliers can indirectly assist large, non-diverse suppliers

in meeting their supplier diversity requirements. This allows the full beneficial effects of diversity spending to be realized more deeply throughout our economy.

How do you give back to your community?

I support those who support others. The Alaris team participates in several philanthropic and service projects, including:

- The Center for Women in Transition: The center provides comprehensive wrap-around services for women re-entering the St. Louis community from jail/prison. Alaris hosts an annual breakfast for the Women Lawyers' Association of Greater St. Louis and the Association of Legal Administrators Gateway Chapter, which spotlights a participant whose transition back to community life has been aided by CWIT.
- Motion for Kids: The Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis hosts the Motion for Kids holiday party for up to 2,500 St. Louis-area children whose lives have been severely affected by the criminal justice system. As part of that effort, Alaris has hosted MFK's Pictures with Santa station for more 30 years.
- Let's Start: This group strives to break the cycle of incarceration in families by working with formerly incarcerated women and their children to support re-entry and recovery. Every other month, Alaris buys groceries and packs 100 lunches for kids to enjoy on the bus as they travel to visit their incarcerated mothers.

What goal remains unfulfilled for you as an advocate for Diversity & Inclusion?

There is always room for improvement and growth when it comes to awareness of cultural sensitivity and opportunities for inclusion. My goal for the rest of 2020 and beyond is to become more sensitive and aware to the micro- and macro-aggressions individuals of color and other underrepresented communities face in our industry.

“There is always room for improvement and growth when it comes to awareness of cultural sensitivity and opportunities for inclusion.”

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Madeleine M. McDonough

SHOOK, HARDY & BACON



For law firms, it's not enough to focus diversity and inclusion initiatives on recruiting and hiring diverse attorneys. Firm leaders also must ensure their new hires can advance and lead, if they want those attorneys to stay.

At Shook, Hardy & Bacon, enhancing long-term advancement and retention of minority lawyers is the goal of The Honorable Jon Gray Lawyers Leadership Academy Program, an 18-month development program for senior associates that launched this month.

The leadership academy will include mentoring and will help participants to build trial practice and other skills, as well as client-facing opportunities, with the aim of developing the next generation of ethnically diverse lawyers into firm leaders who will serve key clients, Shook Chair Madeleine M. McDonough said. The inaugural class of six senior associates will be chosen through self-nomination and recommendations from firm managing partners.

Shook named the program for former Jackson County Circuit Judge Jon R. Gray, who joined the firm as a partner in 2007 after spending more than 20 years on the bench. Since joining the firm, Gray — himself an ICON Award winner in 2018 — has helped to lead professional development efforts within the firm.

Gray will serve as a mentor to attorneys participating in the program, as will Shook trial attorneys, firm alumni, clients and others who are dedicated to diversity and inclusion and improving the legal profession, McDonough said.

The leadership academy is one of multiple diversity and inclusion initiatives at Shook, which marked its 130th anniversary in 2019. Among them is its Scholars Institute, a mentorship program that identifies, develops and supports diverse students through their law school careers.

Open to all self-identified, racially and/or ethnically diverse and/or LGBTQ first-year students at accredited law schools, the three-day institute concentrates on litigation and trial skills, as well as leadership, success strategies and networking opportunities.

In its Pathways to Inclusion series, the firm brings together attorneys and professional staff to focus on such issues as race, disability, religion, gender and implicit biases, generational diversity and transgender realities in the workplace.

McDonough also notes that Shook lawyers — even in their busiest periods — make time for pro bono work that averages about 30,000 hours annually. Among their areas of pro bono focus is transgender rights, much of it through the firm's Project Affirmation, a name-change and

gender-marker amendment clinic servicing the transgender community in and around Kansas City. *[For more on the clinic, see page 12.]*

To promote meaningful and long-term diversity within the justice system, McDonough said, Shook also joined the Missouri Coalition for the Right to Counsel to support public defenders — who in recent years have sought relief from case-loads they say are too heavy to handle ethically.

“[Diversity in the justice system] has at least two main components: too few diverse attorneys in the courtroom and greater support for defendants’ right to counsel,” she said. “We are directly involved and have hosted statewide training sessions for private attorneys to gain experience in criminal law to help ease the public defenders’ difficult caseload.”

The firm and its attorneys also are active with the national Leadership Council on Legal Diversity, the Institute for Inclusion in the Legal Profession, the Center for Legal Inclusiveness, the Mid-America LGBT Chamber of Commerce, KC LEGAL, the National Center for Transgender Equality and various diverse bar associations.

Within the firm, Shook's equal opportunity policy explicitly bars discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. In its vision statement, it sets forth its goal of “a diverse environment where everyone is respected, feels appreciated and experiences fulfillment and enjoyment through meaningful contributions.”

Shook has created an LGBTQ+ employee resource group to promote and support an inclusive community and environment for LGBTQ+ employees and their allies. Domestic partner benefits for employees apply to same-sex relationships, and the firm's parental leave policy offers the same benefits regardless of gender identity.

The firm also has earned a top score of 100 percent each year since 2009 on the Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index, which rates companies and businesses nationally on corporate policies and practices related to LGBTQ employees.

Shook commits to an inclusive culture every day, said McDonough, who as its chair leads its efforts to provide an array of pro bono legal services as well as support legal organizations “dedicated to diversity, inclusion and human dignity.”

Her own extensive community involvement includes serving as vice chair of the Kansas City Civic Council, which she said aims to “make our city a globally competitive region to benefit all of our residents, with an overarching goal of inclusive economic prosperity.”



Shook's new leadership academy aims to develop the next generation of ethnically diverse lawyers into firm leaders who will serve key clients.



Peter E. Goss

STUDENT LAW ACADEMY/ KANSAS CITY METROPOLITAN BAR FOUNDATION



Several years ago, the Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Foundation evolved from a grant-making institution to one that offered programming aimed at improving the justice system in and around Kansas City.

As it sought to identify areas in which to operate, the foundation — the charitable arm of the Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association — determined that students in some city high schools had little opportunity for exposure to the legal profession, KCMBF President Peter E. Goss said.

“We identified a need for a youth program in high-risk areas of Kansas City,” Goss said.

To meet that need, KCMBF in 2019 launched the third of its Legal Connections programs: The Student Law Academy, which intends to establish a pipeline for diverse students to establish legal careers, and in the process diversify Kansas City’s legal community.

KCMBF partnered with PREP-KC, a not-for-profit organization that promotes educational opportunities for at-risk youth, to create and establish the program for high school juniors and seniors from six school districts and three charter schools.

“We want to introduce them to the profession with the hope that we will attract these bright students. [PREP-KC] didn’t have a partner to start a program in the legal profession, [so] we became a perfect fit,” Goss said.

PREP-KC coordinates the application process and other administrative work at its partner schools for the Student Law Academy. KCMBF develops the programming for the academy, which in its inaugural session in summer 2019 offered an intensive, five-week paid internship for 14 student scholars.

During that session, scholars heard a speaker every Monday on topics ranging from litigation to etiquette before dispersing to work at different law firms around the city for a week at a time. At those firms, they shadowed volunteer lawyers who mentored them and assigned them to provide administrative help or sit in on depositions, mediations and court hearings.

“They went into a profession they knew nothing about. It was about getting them exposed to the environment of a law firm,” Goss said. “And judges in town were so generous about allowing them to tag along [to court proceedings,], taking time with them and introducing them to the court.”

The academy also provided transportation to and from law firms as well as business-casual clothing for its scholars during the 2019 session, which ended with a formal graduation ceremony, Goss said. To cover its expenses, the academy raised about \$35,000 in 2019 and more this year from law firms in Kansas City, he said. “We’re also looking at grant funding eventually,” he added.

KCMBF initially planned to follow the same format for its 2020 group of 16 scholars, but the COVID-19 pandemic forced it to develop a virtual, four-week program instead, Goss said. In June and July, scholars participated in interactive sessions, discussions and special projects with legal professionals. They also made virtual visits to courts and depositions, and they learned about aspects of legal careers before graduating July 24.

“Last year’s program obviously looked different than this year’s,” Goss said. “We had an impressive list of speakers on all areas of law — some very well-respected lawyers,” as well as judges and University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law faculty.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting shift to a virtual program offered an unexpected benefit in that it helped academy organizers to schedule volunteer speakers who wanted to help but otherwise might not have been available in person, he said.

Even if an in-person session is possible in 2021, Goss envisions tweaking the academy structure yet again to a hybrid program that offers both part-time work at firms and a speaker series. Organizers also aim to eventually increase class size to about 30 scholars each year, he said.

“The biggest question there will be, are we back to normal then?” he said. “Last year, all of the families came for the graduation, and it was a fun event. It was my favorite part.”

After completing the academy, many of its scholars have expressed their interest and determination to seek a career in law, Goss said.

“I don’t think we scared them off,” he said, laughing. “After talking to these students, we really got the sense of pride and self-confidence that they maybe didn’t have going into” the academy.

“They took full advantage of this opportunity and came out with self-confidence,” he added. “Just to see the response we’ve gotten from the students, it’s been one of the greatest projects I’ve been involved in with the foundation.”



We want to introduce them to the profession with the hope that we will attract these bright students.

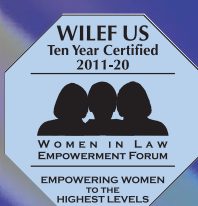
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