

The Changing Face of the Legal Profession

Diversity Resources

By Laura Mancini

In a conference room in the Adams-Pratt Law Library hangs a photograph of the members of the Oakland County Bar Association in 1960. Individual portraits of 209 attorneys are captured for posterity. Fifty-one years ago, all but one of the members of this bar association were white males; the exception was one white female. There were no minorities. This was typical of bar association membership throughout the United States at that time.

The demographic makeup of the United States has changed dramatically since that photo was taken. Today, one in four Americans is a member of a minority population.¹ The legal profession lags behind this trend, with only 12 percent of attorneys coming from a minority group.² While women comprise 50.7 percent of the population,³ only 27 percent of attorneys are women.⁴ Clearly, more work is needed to diversify the profession. For those interested in learning about diversity, there are numerous resources to consult. This article spotlights a few of them.

Books

Law professor Sarah E. Redfield discusses ways in which lawyers can better mentor and recruit minority students in her book, *Diversity Realized: Putting the Walk with the Talk for Diversity in the Legal Profession*.⁵ In *Moving Diversity Forward: How to Go from Well-Meaning to Well-Doing*, diversity consultant Vernā Myers examines how law firms can create positive experiences for minority employees.⁶ The barriers women lawyers have faced are covered in Mona Harrington's *Women Lawyers: Rewriting the Rules*.⁷

Journal Articles and Reports

Diversity in law school enrollment is tackled in *The Road to Law School and Beyond:*

Examining Challenges to Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Legal Profession, published by the Law School Admission Council,⁸ and in an *Iowa Law Review* article, "The Importance of Student and Faculty Diversity in Law Schools: One Dean's Perspective."⁹ Two articles published this summer address minority attorney employment statistics: "Start of a Trend? Our Latest Law Firm Diversity Scorecard Shows that the Number of Minority Lawyers is Again Increasing" in the July issue of *Corporate Counsel*¹⁰ and "Back on Track? The Percentage of Minority Lawyers at Large Firms Has Edged Up Erasing the Decline Reported by Last Year's Diversity Scorecard" in the June issue of *American Lawyer*.¹¹

Bar Associations

The American Bar Association has extensive diversity information on its website.¹² It would be among the first stops any researcher would want to make for diversity sources for the legal profession. The ABA established the Center for Racial and Ethnic Diversity and the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession. Both groups have their own web pages on the ABA site, featuring a plethora of resources on diversity. The Office of the ABA President's Special Initiative on Diversity recently published *Diversity in the Legal Pro-*

fession: The Next Steps.¹³ The ABA has also published several other reports on diversity, with *Miles to Go: Progress of Minorities in the Legal Profession*¹⁴ by law professor Elizabeth Chambliss being among the most noteworthy. Additionally, the ABA site features portals for lawyers of color; lawyers with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender lawyers; and women lawyers, which direct attorneys to resources for these specialized groups.

The State Bar of Michigan is a wonderful place to find information on diversity. The Diversity and Inclusion section of its website features reports, articles, tools, models, blogs, and links to other sources.¹⁵ The Michigan Pledge to Achieve Diversity and Inclusion includes some useful demographic information on the profession, both in Michigan and nationwide.

Local bar associations can be another source of information on diversity. For example, the Oakland County Bar Association's publication, *LACHES*, dedicates an issue every year to diversity. Publications by local associations can not only augment national and state data, but can include useful demographic information about a particular region.

In addition to state and national bar associations, there are also several specialty bar associations centered on the needs of

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women and minority lawyers. These organizations can be valuable sources of information on diversity. Among these groups are:

National

- Hispanic National Bar Association
- National Asian Pacific American Bar Association
- National Bar Association
- National Conference of Women's Bar Associations

Michigan

- Hispanic Bar Association of Michigan
- Michigan Asian Pacific American Bar Association
- Stonewall Bar Association
- D. Augustus Straker Bar Association
- Women Lawyers Association of Michigan

Professional Organizations

Several other national organizations work to increase diversity in the legal profession. The National Association for Legal Career Professionals (NALP) is involved in a number of diversity initiatives including the NALP/Street Law Legal Diversity Pipeline Program, which works to recruit minority high-school students into legal careers. The NALP website also contains a *Diversity Best Practices Guide*, which details how law firms can do a better job hiring and retaining minority employees.¹⁶ The Center for Diversity in the Legal Profession at CUNY School of Law serves as a research and data center on people of color in the legal profession. It is believed to be the first such center at a law school.¹⁷ The Leadership Council on Legal Diversity is a new organization that formed in 2009. Comprised of chief corporate legal officers and law firm managing partners, the organization works to increase diversity. Its website features a listing of readings on diversity.¹⁸

Diversity continues to be an important issue in the legal profession, and much work needs to be done to ensure that attorneys reflect the America of the twenty-first century. Fortunately, there is no shortage of resources to consult on this ever-important topic to help make this goal a reality. ■

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FOOTNOTES

1. United States Census, 2010 Census Data <<http://www.2010census.gov/2010census/data/>>. All websites cited in this article were accessed December 15, 2011.
2. American Bar Association, Lawyer Demographics Table <http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/marketresearch/PublicDocuments/lawyer_demographics_2011.authcheckdam.pdf>.
3. United States Census, USA QuickFacts <<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>>.
4. Lawyer Demographics Table, n 2 *supra*.
5. Redfield, *Diversity Realized: Putting the Walk with the Talk for Diversity in the Legal Profession* (Lake Mary, FL: Vandeplas Pub, 2009).
6. Myers, *Moving Diversity Forward: How to Go from Well-Meaning to Well-Doing* (Chicago: American Bar Association, 2011).
7. Harrington, *Women Lawyers: Rewriting the Rules* (New York: AA Knopf, 1994).
8. Wilder, *The Road to Law School and Beyond: Examining Challenges to Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Legal Profession*, Law School Admission Council Research Report 02-01 (2003).
9. Johnson, *The importance of student and faculty diversity in law schools: One dean's perspective*, 96 Iowa L R 1549 (2011).
10. Law.com, Zabcik, *Diversity Scorecard: Start of a Trend?*, 18 Corp Couns 65 (July 2011).
11. Law.com, Zillman, *Diversity Scorecard 2011: Back on Track?*, 33 Am Law 45 (June 2011).
12. American Bar Association <<http://www.americanbar.org/aba.html>>.
13. American Bar Association, *Diversity in the Legal Profession: The Next Steps* (Chicago: ABA Center for Racial and Ethnic Diversity, 2010).
14. Chambliss, *Miles to Go: Progress of Minorities in the Legal Profession* (Chicago, ABA Comm on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession, 2004).
15. State Bar of Michigan, Diversity and Inclusion <<http://www.michbar.org/diversity/>>.
16. National Association for Legal Career Professionals, Diversity Initiatives <<http://www.nalp.org/diversity>>.
17. CUNY School of Law, Center for Diversity in the Legal Profession <<http://www.law.cuny.edu/clinics/justice/initiatives/CDLP.html>>.
18. Leadership Council on Legal Diversity, Readings in Diversity <http://www.lcldnet.org/perspectives_readings_in_diversity.html>.