



Diversity and Inclusion in the Legal Profession

A FOREWORD

By W. Anthony Jenkins

I guess I am like an old penny: I keep showing up, especially when there is an opportunity or duty to say a word in support of diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. I am honored to do so for this issue of the *Bar Journal*, which may be the first ever diversity-themed edition.

The article by Judge Victoria Roberts and Dean John Nussbaumer reminds all of us of the important rationales for diversity and inclusion in our profession, the evolution of the SBM Pledge to Achieve Diversity and Inclusion, and what lies ahead in positioning the SBM to serve as a clearinghouse for best practices in diversity and inclusion. It also raises an interesting question: Can a sensible “Rooney Rule” work to make a difference in the legal profession as it did in the National Football League?

Teresa Bingman and Dan Levy’s article offers an assessment of the present effect of past court decisions regarding the admission of minority students to Michigan’s public universities and explains how failing to recognize the difference between affirmative action and diversity has engendered confusion and public discord. It makes for interesting reading.

Jay Kaplan’s article reviews Michigan law governing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) relationships and raises questions of fundamental fairness regarding the impact on same-sex couples and LGBT families.

As Chris Johnson’s article points out, pipeline programs are essential to achieving diversity in the legal profession, and collaboration among players in the legal community is a key to success. The models of collaboration Chris identifies are great examples

of what can be accomplished in virtually any community across the nation.

Marcia Goffney’s piece on new partnerships between law firms and corporate law departments resonates with me as a partner in a major Michigan-based firm. She examines the reluctance of many companies to use lawyers of color for legal work, the efforts to overcome that reluctance, and the business rationales for law firms to have diverse legal teams to meet their clients’ needs.

Law-related education is a favorite topic of mine and is always among the SBM’s top priorities. In their article, Judge Mabel Johnson Mayfield and Judge Alfred Butzbaugh remind us that important legal concepts such as equal protection, due process, individual rights, justice, and civil rights can be taught in junior high and high school, and that such teaching yields great benefits to the community at large.

I salute SBM Director of Diversity Greg Conyers and the SBM staff for bringing diversity and inclusion to the forefront in this edition of the *Bar Journal*. ■



W. Anthony Jenkins is immediate past president of the State Bar of Michigan and a member and chief diversity officer of Dickinson Wright PLLC. He represents clients in corporate and real estate transactional matters and writes and lectures on the formation and structuring of minority business enterprise joint ventures and strategic alliances. He is a graduate of Harvard University, Princeton University, and New York University School of Law.