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# Message from the Chair

By Phil Horowitz

It is a scandal. It is perhaps the biggest scandal and outrage in our profession today. Lawyers do not look like America. California lawyers do not look like California. And something more must be done about it. Now.

Over half the population of California are people of color. Less than 16 percent of California's lawyers are people of color. Over one third of Californians are Hispanic, but less than four percent of California's lawyers. Six percent of Californians are African American, but only 1.7 percent of California's lawyers. Twelve percent of Californians are Asian-American, but only 5.3 percent of California's lawyers. Something is terribly wrong with this picture.

But that's not all. Half of California's population is female, but only 34 percent of California's lawyers are women. While the number of women continues to increase in our profession, progress is slow. The percentage of California lawyers who are women increased from 26 percent in 1991 to 34 percent in 2006. At that rate, most of us will be dead from old age before there are as many women as men in the California Bar.

Furthermore, once women and people of color do make it into the legal profession, they at times face glass ceilings above which they do not rise. The number of partners at many law firms who are women and people of color is all too few. And women who take "too much" time off after giving birth, or who want to balance work and parenthood, are all too often shuffled off to "mommy track."

As labor and employment lawyers, we in the Labor and Employment Law Section are well situated to think about how to make things better. After all, the

diversity issues we face in the California Bar are the same sorts of issues we advise our clients about, day in and day out. So what is to be done?

It begins with the school years. Today's students are tomorrow's lawyers and, the next day, tomorrow's judges.

When most of us were children, someone told us in one way or another that we could become lawyers if we wanted to. Some had lawyers in our families who served as role models. Others had teachers or career counselors who told us that becoming a lawyer was one of the things we could choose to do when we grew up.

When each of us talks with young people of either gender and any race, we can discuss what we like about being a lawyer, and let them know that they perhaps could be lawyers some day if they want. One source to refer students is to the State Bar's free online pamphlet "How Do I Become a Lawyer?"

We can also volunteer to speak in schools about law as a career. Local bar associations, as well as the State Bar's Pipeline Project, are reaching out to students from preschool through college. California school programs have included a "Junior Judges" program in grades three to five, mediation training for middle school students and high school mock trial programs.

Law schools can play a very helpful role as well. For example, UC Davis Law School has two outreach programs for college students, including a Pre-Law Boot Camp and its King Hall Outreach Program.

Also, at the college and law school levels, financial assistance can help increase the diversity of our profession. The Bay Area Minority Law Student

Scholarship Program, for example, offers \$10,000 per year scholarships. Donors who make a three-year \$10,000 per year commitment can even name the scholarship they fund. More modest donations are also welcome.

Law firms and public agencies can help increase the diversity of our profession by offering jobs and internship positions to high school and college students. For example, the San Francisco District Attorney's office has such a program for high school students, which was held up as a model by the State Bar's Diversity Pipeline Task Force.

Providing law clerk jobs for law students from diverse backgrounds is vital. Working as law clerks not only helps students make it through law school financially, but also gives them an opportunity to be mentored.

When we hire law students and lawyers to work for us, there is much we can do to increase the diversity of those we end up hiring. Good publicity of job openings is important, with outreach to a variety of diverse bar associations. Hiring decisions should be made carefully, with deliberate and conscious efforts to avoid implicit bias.

Once hired, law clerks and lawyers need nurturing. Mentoring newer lawyers is an integral part of any strategy to recruit, retain and advance lawyers of diverse backgrounds. When we first became new lawyers, most of us had more experienced lawyers mentor us.

Those of us who are now more experienced have the opportunity to give something back. Working hard to help make the next generation of California lawyers look more like California is our wonderful—and urgent—opportunity.