

Diversity Program Showcases Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed and 6th Circuit Judge Bernice Donald

by Marian Dockery

King & Spalding hosted the 2011 Diversity Reception, featuring Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, selected by GOVERNING Magazine as a “2011 Public Official of the Year.” Hon. Kimberly Esmond Adams of the Fulton County Superior Court engaged her fellow Howard Law School alum in a 60-minute conversation regarding the successes of his administration, the challenges that lie ahead for the city and his plans to serve two terms as Atlanta’s mayor. Reed provided the audience with a wealth of information regarding his administration’s accomplishments and challenges.

A native son of Atlanta’s southside, Reed came from a family of four boys, all seeking different career paths and possessing different talents. But his father always wanted one of his sons to pursue law as a career and lead the city as mayor, and Reed was able to realize that dream.

In speaking to the group, Reed proclaimed that diverse attorneys who are recruited by law firms should commit to working for a minimum of seven years so that law firms get a return on their investments. The difficulty of retaining diverse attorneys is a two-way street, Reed said, and law firms must provide diverse attorneys



Photos by Don Morgan

Hon. Bernice Donald addresses the 19th annual State Bar of Georgia Diversity Luncheon attendees.

opportunities to grow by giving them challenging work assignments and visibility with their clients.

State Bar Annual CLE and Luncheon

The annual CLE met Sept. 28 at the Bar Center. The program opened with “The Judiciary’s Role

in Sustaining and Increasing Diversity in the Profession,” featuring a distinguished panel of jurists moderated by the first African-American woman to serve on the Court of Appeals of Georgia, Hon. M. Yvette Miller. Joining Miller on the panel were Hon. Anne Barnes, Court of Appeals, who was the first woman to be elected in a statewide judicial race without having been first appointed to the bench; Hon. Ural Glanville, Fulton County Superior Court, colonel, JAG Corps, U.S. Army Reserves; and Hon. Dax Lopez, DeKalb State Court, who is the second Hispanic on that court to serve as trial judge.

Corporate panel members discussed “Strategies to Diversify Outside Counsel,” moderated by Rick Goerss, chief privacy officer and regulatory counsel, Equifax, Inc.; Virginia Wadsworth, vice president, chief legal officer & corporate secretary, Automobile Protection Corporation; Russell S. Bonds, senior managing counsel—litigation, The Coca-Cola Company James Harris, in-house counsel, United Parcel Service and Tara Adyanthya, associate general counsel, Emory University School of Law. The panelists shared with the attendees their companies’ policies when hiring outside counsel. Hiring attorneys who can successfully interact with diverse employees, stakeholders and contractors is key when selecting outside counsel. Companies benefit from diverse outside counsel as diverse attorneys provide different perspectives on critical issues. The evidence and surveys confirm that the most competitive and profitable companies have the most diverse boards, managers, employees and contractors.

Minority-Owned Law Firms: A Historical Perspective: Past, Present and Future

Sam Woodhouse of The Woodhouse Law Firm moderated



(Left to right) State Bar President Ken Shigley, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, State Bar of Georgia Diversity Executive Director Marian Dockery and Hon. Kimberly Esmond Adams following the Conversation with Mayor Reed.

minority-owned law firm panelists William Hill of Ashe Rafuse & Hill; Jeffrey Tompkins, Thomas, Kennedy, Sampson and Tompkins; Sonjui Kumar of Kumar, Prabhu, Patel and Banerjee; and Tracey Blackwell, Gonzalez Saggio & Harlan, LLP. The panelists gave a historical perspective of the minority-owned law firm. Minority attorneys had no other practice options as majority-owned firms and other entities did not hire minority lawyers in the 1950s. Yet some minority attorneys were not deterred as a select few moved from almost exclusively serving the businesses and residents of their communities to expanding their client base to corporations. The panel agreed that the objective of attorneys working at minority-owned law firms is not only to provide legal services for their communities but to provide corporate representation and connect with in-house counsel who know that outside diverse counsel can deliver the services, not just for one project, but over the next decade. The future for minority-owned firms is that they will be viewed as diverse firms that can

serve the world we live in and not just our neighborhoods.

19th Annual State Bar of Georgia Luncheon

In his welcome address at the luncheon, State Bar President Kenneth L. Shigley shared stories of growing up in a racist Southern town and how things have changed over the years. He agreed that while much progress has been made since he was a boy, there is still much work to be done.

Hon. Bernice Donald, 6th Circuit Court of Appeals, delivered the luncheon’s keynote address. Donald was appointed by President Obama and confirmed by the Senate in September 2011. As the first African-American woman to serve on the 6th Circuit, Donald brings diversity to the Court. She was also the first African-American woman to serve as a judge for the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee. The story of her humble beginnings in a small Mississippi town reads like a movie script of a young woman who pursued dreams to practice

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(Left to right) Moderator Sam Woodhouse leads Minority-Owned Law Firm panelists Jeffrey Tompkins, Sonjui Kumar, Tracey Blackwell and William Hill.



(Left to right) Hon. M. Yvette Miller, Hon. Dax Lopez, Hon. Ural Glanville and Hon. Anne Barnes during the Judicial Panel.



(Left to right) Corporate panel members include moderator Rick Goess, Equifax; Virginia Wadsworth, APCO; Russell S. Bonds, The Coca-Cola Company; Tara Adyanthya, Emory University School of Law; and James Harris, United Parcel Service.

law and become a judge. Donald is now on the short list for the U.S. Supreme Court. 



Marian Cover Dockery is an attorney with a background in employment discrimination and the executive director of

the State Bar of Georgia Diversity Program. For more information on the Diversity Program, go to www.gabar.org/programs.

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