

A View from the Chair

The *Torts, Insurance and Compensation Law Section Journal* is the Section's flagship publication. The *Journal* serves as an important resource to our members on cutting-edge legal issues affecting our areas of practice. This issue is no exception. Congratulations and thanks to the talented authors who contributed articles to this issue, and to our indefatigable Editor, David Glazer.



The issue's authors, like TICL Section members generally, practice law in a variety of settings throughout the State and represent diverse points of view. Through their active involvement in the work of the Section, they enliven the experience of Section membership for all of us. Their contributions are many. To list just a few examples, Hon. Thomas Dickerson (Appellate Division, Second Department), currently serves as Chair of the Class Action Committee of the Section, Eileen Buholtz, Esq. (Connors & Corcoran, PLLC, Rochester) currently chairs the Future Sites Committee, and John Snyder, Esq. (Gitto & Niefer LLP, New Hartford) is Co-Chair of the Section's Committee on Continuing Legal Education.

Diversity of legal perspective enriches the Section; so too does diversity of individual background. On behalf of the Section's Diversity Team, I am pleased to present the TICL Section's 2012 Diversity Plan, which builds on last year's award-winning Strength by Association initiative.

The Torts, Insurance and Compensation Law (TICL) Section has long been at the forefront of the diversity movement in the NSYBA and continues to foster an atmosphere of collegiality and inclusion this year.

At our award-winning "Strength by Association" diversity seminars held in November, 2011 and January, 2012, our diverse panels of minority attorneys and jurists brought home to us a key fact: That active *mentoring* is critical to an individual's professional success, particularly in the case of a minority or woman attorney. He or she needs to have senior attorneys to turn to for guidance and for access to needed professional resources—a "personal board of directors," as one of our panelists put it. This year, the TICL Section makes mentoring the centerpiece of our diversity challenge plan.

A bar association section is uniquely placed to furnish mentoring opportunities, as it naturally attracts lawyers who share a common practice area and intellectual inter-

est. But it is not enough simply to recruit a minority or woman attorney (which we do) and hope that he or she will find some benefit. Rather, the Section must also:

- (1) Actively introduce that individual to a prospective mentor, and
- (2) give both parties the skills on which to build a beneficial relationship.

The TICL Section's 2012-2013 diversity challenge plan aims to do both.

Interactive Mentoring-for-Diversity Workshops

At last year's "Strength by Association: Mentoring and the Power of Diversity" programs, TICL's diverse panels of jurists and attorneys movingly related their personal experiences with the mentoring process. This year, our panels are hopping off the podium to interact directly with attendees.

August, 2012 Section Meeting. The Section's Summer Meeting held in Montréal, Québec (an accessible and inexpensive location) featured an interactive workshop, in which panelists modeled good mentoring skills by guiding small teams of attendees through hypothetical ethical scenarios faced by litigators. Diversity was approached at multiple levels:

- (1) The hypotheticals were specifically designed to foster meaningful discussion of tough workplace and courtroom dilemmas faced by women and minority professionals.
- (2) The workshop leaders were themselves diverse, including two prominent minority jurists and representatives of the Black Women's Bar Association and Nigerian Lawyers Association, Latino Lawyers Association of Queens County and Minority Bar Association of Western New York.
- (3) The foregoing minority bar associations served as event co-sponsors, an arrangement that enabled the TICL Section to reach and invite a broader and more diverse group of participants to the event, at half price.

November, 2012 Open Executive Committee Meeting, Workshop and Reception. The Montréal workshop was thoroughly engaging and very well received. Based on its success, the Section determined to take the show on the road, and scheduled another such workshop in Queens, New York, on November 8, 2012.

- (1) This program, billed as “Strength by Association II,” was co-sponsored by the Latino Lawyers Association of Queens, County and will feature a full two-hour ethics/mentoring workshop guided by minority jurists, minority litigators and a minority educator.
- (2) The program, offered for only \$20 for two hours of MCLE ethics credits, was intended to be attractive and accessible to a broad spectrum of young and newly admitted attorneys in Downstate New York. The event announcement was sent to (among others) NYSBA members in the Downstate region who practice in our Section’s practice areas and self-report as minorities, admitted to practice ten years or less, or both.
- (3) To encourage active engagement by Section members, the event afforded a glimpse at the inner workings of the Section, with an open meeting of the Section’s Executive Committee.
- (4) The evening concluded with informal networking, at a free reception to celebrate diversity in the bar and judiciary.
- (5) To encourage attendees to join our Section on the spot, we offered Section membership dues-free through the end of 2013 to any NYSBA member who enrolled in TICL at the event.

For 2013, the Section plans to continue to schedule mentoring workshops, in collaboration with a broader array of minority and women’s bar associations.

Informal Networking and Team-Building to Develop Mentoring Relationships

Mentoring has an informal, social dimension as well, and the TICL Section has considered that dimension in organizing its events. The Summer, 2012 meeting in Montréal included social events attended by the President and Immediate Past President of the NYSBA and their counterparts from the Montréal and Province of Québec Bar Associations, as well as by our diverse panel of workshop leaders.

Additionally, the Section expanded its traditional one-on-one “ambassador” program to include not just attorney-registrants, but everybody. Registrants, speakers, and their respective spouses, children and guests were assigned to “teams” for the duration of the meeting. Each team was led by one of the mentoring-for-diversity workshop leaders. The teams competed for a prize to be awarded to the first team to successfully complete a quiz on Montréal’s history and famous people. The quiz was written to encourage teammates to interact and explore the city together. It did; delightfully.

Giving Diverse Section Members an Opportunity to Shine

The TICL Section’s mentoring-for-diversity initiative does not end with introducing people to prospective mentors and polishing their interaction skills. Rather, the Section recognizes the importance of engaging diverse members in meaningful work of the Section on an ongoing basis. To that end, several attorneys of diverse backgrounds who attended the Montréal workshop were immediately recruited as program Co-Chairs to help plan the Queens event for November, 2012 and one was appointed Vice-Chair of a substantive Committee of the Section. At the next mentoring workshop in November, 2012, the Executive Committee and its Diversity Team (one of NYSBA’s oldest) was on alert for additional talented people to recruit to active participation in substantive committees that address their particular areas of practice and intellectual interests.

The TICL Section also looks for opportunities to showcase the expertise of its diverse members by appointing them to its substantive CLE panels, including the Section’s signature Law School for Insurance Professionals, offered in September/October at various venues statewide. The active recruitment of diverse speakers and writers will continue throughout 2012-13.

Collaboration with Minority Bar Associations

The TICL Section has successfully partnered with minority and women’s bar associations, and will continue to seek such partnership opportunities. The partnership is many-fold:

- (1) The co-sponsoring organization agrees to promote our Section’s event to its members.
- (2) The Section offers a discount on registration to the co-sponsor’s members and an opportunity to interact with attendees.
- (3) The co-sponsor helps the Section to assemble panels that better reflect the diversity of the Bar.

Such collaboration took place in connection with the Section’s summer 2012 meeting, and continued with the planning of the “Strength by Association” event in Queens in November, 2012.

Cultivating Monetary Sponsorship of Diversity Efforts

The Diversity Team has commenced work on a Diversity Partner Sponsorship initiative to project the worthy goals of this year’s Challenge and support the Section’s diversity efforts monetarily on an ongoing basis. The program is still very much in the development

stage, but if the details are approved by the Section's Executive Committee, the Diversity Team expects to begin implementation in January. The general concept is that sponsoring firms and vendors that are willing to partner with the TICL Section on an agreed set of principles would be given permission to identify themselves publicly as "TICL Diversity Partner" under an agreed set of parameters, for example, by referring to that brand name on their websites. TICL Diversity Partners' donations (realized as annual fees) would be dedicated to TICL diversity/mentoring programs and events. Further, a TICL Diversity Partner would be encouraged to share valuable insights into its own efforts to embrace diversity in the workplace, for example, by providing a panelist to speak at a Section meeting or workshop. As vendors and firms recognize the value of the partnership, we would expect them to renew their participation annually and additional TICL Diversity Partners to join them.

Law Student Outreach

Current law students are our future colleagues, and the Section works both to recruit and engage them early. On the recruitment side, the TICL Section is sending representatives to the NSYBA "Meet the Sections" events held at law schools across the State. To maximize law student recruitment, the TICL Section has voted to extend Section membership to law student members of the Association dues-free through the end of 2013, provided that the law students enroll at the law school events. A number of students have already joined TICL this year, thanks to sign-ups at the Meet the Sections event held in September at Albany Law School.

Mentoring of law students occurs in different contexts:

- (1) "Speed mentoring" affords students the benefit of many attorneys' advice on legal education and careers in five-minute bursts. To that end, the Section participated in Albany Law School's speed-mentoring event on October 18, 2012, and is actively seeking other such events to join.

- (2) Ongoing mentoring includes putting students to work under attorney direction on the editorial boards of the Section's publications. Two law students were recruited to the Section's e-Newsletter staff in 2011 to work on case notes and member surveys; several more came on board this fall.
- (3) Student recruits were also invited to attend the Open Executive Committee meeting, workshop and reception on November 8 in Queens, as a way to link the students up with a broader group of Section members.

Other Support for Diversity

The TICL Section strongly supports the diversity efforts of other NSYBA sections. TICL has co-sponsored the Young Lawyers Section's Trial Academy at Cornell University for a number of years. It did so again in 2012, sending two deserving minority attorneys to the Trial Academy on full scholarships and sending speakers to serve on the Academy's panels. The Section also co-sponsored the Smooth Moves event of the Commercial and Federal Litigation Section this spring, and will continue to look for similar opportunities in 2013.

Finally, TICL gives the leaders of its diversity initiative due recognition. The Section's Diversity Committee Co-Chairs, Mirna Martinez Santiago and Joanna Young, and their Diversity Team members, Tom Maroney, Jean Gerbini, Lawton Squires, Carlos Calderón, Hon. George Silver, Roderick Coyne and JP Delaney, were honored at the Section's Annual Meeting in January 2012 for their valuable contributions to the vitality of the Section. We fully expect to be able to celebrate the Section's diversity achievements this coming January as well.

Very truly yours,

Jean F. Gerbini

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