



South Asian Bar Association of Greater Boston

May 14, 2008, Boston

LET'S GET REAL ABOUT DIVERSITY

To commemorate diversity month, on April 24, 2008, the affinity bar associations in Massachusetts hosted "Lets Get Real About Diversity" - an event designed to allow participants of all minority organizations to candidly discuss diversity issues in the Massachusetts legal community and ways we can work together to improve it. Over seventy-five people were in attendance for the event, spearheaded by the South Asian Bar Association of Greater Boston ("SABA GB"), and organized by the Asian American Lawyers Association of Massachusetts ("AALAM"), the Massachusetts Lesbian and Gay Bar Association ("MLGBA"), the Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association ("MBLA"), and the Massachusetts Association of Hispanic Attorneys ("MAHA"). In addition, the Boston Bar Association Diversity Leadership Task Force co-hosted the event. This event marked the first time that SABAGB, AALAM, MAHA, MBLA and MLGBA all gathered together to discuss an issue of significance for each organization, and the legal community in Massachusetts.

Panelists included Edward Cheng, partner at Sherin & Lodgin; Carlos Perez-Albuerne, partner at Choate Hall & Stewart; Robert Cooper, Senior Counsel at OneUnited Bank; Annapoorni Sankaran, shareholder at Greenberg Traurig; and Vickie Henry, partner at Foley Hoag. The discussion was moderated by Christina E. Miller, Chief of District Courts and Community Prosecutions at the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office. Ms. Miller invited the audience and panelists to weigh in on scenarios often encountered by diverse attorneys, including instances of overt and subtle discrimination, pressures upon diverse associates to participate in firm diversity committees and how diverse attorneys can best fit in with law firm culture. The panelists openly discussed their past experiences and provided their perspectives on handling difficult issues in the workplace.

Panelists and guests attended a reception following the panel discussion. Attendees noted the importance of the event and how it will serve as a stepping stone for future events and helping the legal community to evolve. More importantly, attendees commented on how the event and the reception allowed minority attorneys to discuss important issues in a familiar and safe environment, and allowed them to meet and develop important relationships with minority members of the bar. Taruna Garg, Esq., Clerk of SABA GB commented, "I was pleased by how long people stayed at the event. With members of so many of the minority bars present, it was amazing to listen to the excitement and brainstorming for future events, and ways we can all better serve our communities. In addition, as both majority and minority bar members, we all realized that we are working towards the same goal and collaboration is the most effective way to achieve it." Bar leaders hope that this panel discussion was the start of an important dialogue in the Massachusetts legal community and will be presenting future events to take the discussion to the next level.

SABA GB is a chapter of the North American South Asian Bar Association and is an organization dedicated to supporting and promoting the advancement of attorneys and law students of South Asian heritage and serving the legal needs of the South Asian community at large. For additional information please visit www.sabagb.org or contact Samia Kirmani, President, South Asian Bar Association of Greater Boston, at kirmanis@jacksonlewis.com.