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DIVERSITY INITIATIVE FINALIST: Adam Banks, Weil, Gotshal & Manges



What are your proudest accomplishments in the area of diversity and inclusion in law?

Helping to lead the Firm's efforts in response to the events of the summer of 2020 and the murder of George Floyd. We rose to the need to support our attorneys and staff through that difficult time, as well as understand those events as galvanizing forces to inspire real progress and change throughout the Firm. As a diversity committee, we developed dozens of action items intended to strengthen our commitments

to diversity internally and recognize the contributions we could make to the profession more broadly. In addition to more robust programming on diversity and inclusion with speakers and events, we pioneered initiatives like the Jumpstart program for our new attorneys, and our racial justice fellowship to give our lawyers an opportunity to partner with organizations dedicated to racial justice.

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I am also proud to be part of our work in bringing together Black professionals in the legal community in New York through a series of engagements we call Evolve. Hosted by the Firm's Black partners, the idea is to generate a durable network of senior and accomplished Black lawyers around the city who can serve as resources for each other. The programs have been anchored around fireside chats with prominent Black professionals, together with networking and serious conversations. I think it is important work in solidifying the sense of community among our Black legal professional colleagues.

What are the greatest diversity and inclusion-related challenges today for New York lawyers and firms?

I think among the biggest challenges is remembering that our work is not done. We have made tremendous progress as a profession in recent years, and are now facing certain headwinds as the political climate evolves. But we have to remember that we made progress only because we were intentional about it: programs, initiatives, conferences, mentoring, speakers, trainings and so forth have all been instrumental in getting us

to where we are. The answer is not to cease doing these things, but to recommit to them and recognize how important they have been, and continue to be, in helping us realize our diversity and inclusion goals. We have to resist the idea that progress will happen simply because we "like" or "tolerate" everyone. If we want actual progress, we have to continue to be intentional about it.

Who have you found to be particularly inspirational in implementing successful diversity initiatives?

Meredith Moore, our Chief DEI officer here at Weil, continues to be an inspiration for me. She has the gift of being a visionary about what is possible and also is savvy enough and has the experience to know how to execute on that vision strategically. She understands what initiatives will make a difference, who the stakeholders are that can provide valuable input and feedback into the process, and how to leverage the resources of the Firm to make powerful impacts for both our attorneys and the legal community. We are lucky to have her on our team.