



Connecticut's Inaugural Diversity & Inclusion Summit

“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.” - Martin Luther King, Jr.

On October 26, members of the Connecticut Bar Association Diversity and Inclusion Summit Committee gathered leaders in the legal profession at Quinnipiac Law School to empower them to take action toward making Connecticut a more diverse and inclusive bar.

CBA President Monte Frank stated, “Not only does the legal community lag behind other professions in diversity, but our state trails some of our neighbors as well. This must change. The legal community should have the opposite role and lead in promoting diversity.”

Through workshops and panel discussions, attendees learned how implicit bias impacts the workplace, strategies to implement diversity and inclusion within their organizations, and how to track and measure progress using best practice benchmarks.

Vallotkarp, a boutique management consulting firm that focuses on creating inclusive environments where people can



Summit attendees.

work together more effectively, led the Summit workshops. The first workshop, Increasing Awareness, taught participants the elements of successful organizational change and how to assess the current



(L to R) Justice Andrew McDonald, CBA President Monte E. Frank, Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers, CBA President-elect Karen DeMeola, Attorney General George Jepsen, Diversity & Inclusion Summit Committee member Allen Gary Palmer, Hon. Richard A. Robinson, and Diversity & Inclusion Summit Committee Chair Christine Jean-Louis.

landscape of diversity and inclusion within their firm or organization, while exploring the difference between conscious and unconscious bias and receiving the tools to help interpret it.

Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers and Supreme Court Justices Andrew J. McDonald and Justice Richard A. Robinson came together in a panel discussion to share the distinction between diversity and inclusion, the role it plays in Connecticut's legal profession, and why it is important to the profession's continued growth.

“We constantly refer back to the way the practice of law used to be. But we

must wake up to the fact that change happens whether we are ready for it or not,” said Christine Jean-Louis.

The “Take Action Workshop” taught attendees how to develop and utilize a stra-

tegic action plan. Tools were provided to help attendees manage resistance to diversity and inclusion as well as discuss best practice benchmarks used to track and measure their progress.

Vallotkarp expressed, “Don't go it alone—leverage the knowledge/resources of the CBA and its members as you move forward with your diversity and inclusion change efforts.”

President Frank informed attendees, “The association adopted a formal diversity policy and a detailed plan, which is being worked into our sections and committees.”

The Summit concluded with a collaborative pledge and plan, which introduced the planning of outlining goals that organizations can work on towards taking action in efforts to promote and increase diversity and inclusion in Connecticut's legal market and to hold them accountable in their efforts. **CL**