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SOON AFTER THE ARRESTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS about the college admissions scandal, a friend posted an op-ed on Facebook entitled “The College Admissions Scandal Should Remind Grads of Color We Were Always Good Enough.” The author of the op-ed, Joi Childs, explained how her experience as a black woman at an Ivy League school impacted her feelings about the admissions scandal. Ms. Childs, who attended the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, explained:

The exposure of this cheating scheme reveals how abuse of privilege leads to lost opportunities for students of color. If you're a college graduate of color, it's likely none of this is surprising because you've lived it. But the fact that it's not a surprise doesn't make it less frustrating or hurtful. We didn't have any

Perspectives

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choice but to over-excel, because many of us have to provide for our families and repay the sacrifices they made for us. We were told that we got “special treatment” because of how we look. We were gaslighted our entire college careers, and we questioned ourselves, wondering if we were good enough to be there.¹

The op-ed, post, and related comments got me thinking a lot about perspective. Everyone has their own unique perspective. Our backgrounds, upbringing, experiences, and interactions all shape the perspective we have in dealing with any situation or formulating an opinion on a particular issue. But our own perspective is not enough.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch, perhaps the most famous fictional American lawyer, tells his daughter: “If you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you’ll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.”

As attorneys, it is particularly important to understand the perspectives of those with whom we interact—whether it is our clients, our fellow attorneys, the court, jurors, our employees, or our employers. How do you climb inside of someone else’s skin? How can you walk in someone else’s shoes?

The answer is fairly simple. Most attorneys have an innate desire to learn, question, and listen. If you want to walk in

someone else’s shoes, you need to be willing to engage that person in dialogue, ask questions, and listen to what he or she has to say. And you must be willing to accept a person’s perspective about how he or she feels.

So what does this have to do with the CBA? The promotion of diversity and inclusion has been a central piece of the CBA’s efforts since our adoption of the Diversity and Inclusion Policy in the spring of 2015. The policy provides:

The Connecticut Bar Association is committed to diversity in its membership, officers, staff, House of Delegates, Board of Governors, executive committee, sections and committees, and their respective leaders. Diversity is an inclusive concept encompassing gender, gender identity, race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, and disability. We are a richer and more effective association because of diversity, as it increases our association’s strengths, capabilities, and adaptability. Through increased diversity, our organization can more effectively address member and societal needs with the varied perspectives, experiences, knowledge, information, and understanding inherent in a diverse relationship.

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee is charged with implementing this policy. To that end, the CBA solicited signatories for a collective pledge reflecting the commitment of Connecticut legal organizations to create more diverse and inclusive en-

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vironments and for a collaborative plan to achieve this goal. More than 30 firms have signed the pledge to date.

I am proud to have been a small part of these efforts over the last four years. In June, our new diversity and inclusion and human resources director will start, which will help the continued pursuit of these initiatives. Each of you plays a vital role in creating a more diverse and inclusive legal community. Our society is better served by a profession that reflects the diverse make-up of our communities. Our preliminary surveys show we have a long way to go to make that happen. But we can do it with everyone’s help.

I have had the opportunity to hear the disturbingly familiar stories of the mistreat-

ment of young, female, and diverse lawyers based on faulty and discriminatory assumptions. For example, I have learned of situations where an attorney was questioned by another attorney about whether they were actually an attorney—and I can only think of one reason why a lawyer would ever ask that question of another lawyer. It is not acceptable to assume someone is not a lawyer because of the way they look. Again, this shows we still have a long way to go.

Diversity and inclusion is an issue about professional responsibility. Whether you are male, female, transgender, non-binary, white, black, Hispanic, Asian American, Native American, or another minority, you have a unique perspective and story

to share. While your own story is unique, your experiences and feelings may not be all that different from others whom you know. Regardless of your personal background, you can help pave the way in creating a more enriched, diverse, and inclusive profession by your willingness to share your story, climb into someone else’s skin, and walk around in their shoes. You might be surprised by what you find. ■

Notes

1. https://www.bustle.com/p/the-college-admissions-scandal-should-remind-grads-of-color-we-were-always-good-enough-16952921?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=owned&utm_campaign=feminismbustle&fbclid=IwAR1kRgroqJKW9HnAGrCOgQCPqGWW-FUD40jcvHClMnwp55Mp1rhjmKE3_ZQ

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