

The Connecticut Bar Association's 7th Annual Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Summit

On October 19, 2022, the Connecticut Bar Association will host its Seventh Annual Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Summit, in a virtual format, from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. As with every Summit, the day promises to be full of opportunities for learning and inspiration, and we hope you will take the time to join us this year. This column will provide some context for the summit, and provide a preview of some of the day's offerings.

The summit has always maintained a consistent theme, drawing back to its first iteration in 2016: an emphasis on collaborative learning and work, towards strategic, accountable, and measurable diversity, equity, and inclusion progress. Each year, the summit serves as an invaluable learning and growth opportunity for representatives of the 40+ signatories to the Connecticut Legal Community's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Pledge and Plan ("DEI Pledge"). Originally limited to 150 representatives of these organizations (because of space limitations), the shift to a virtual format has allowed the CBA to open the event broadly to anyone who is interested in participating.

Each year, the summit focuses on the themes and commitments of the DEI Pledge. The DEI Pledge, first launched in 2016, lays out a multiyear plan, with specific organizational action steps for each year, to guide signatory organizations in their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. This year marks the conclusion of the 5th year of the pledge, in which signatories have pledged to take the following steps:

October 19 | Virtual DIVERSITY EQUITY & INCLUSION SUMMIT



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ctbar.org/summit

During Year Five, the Signatories will work to ensure that formal and informal leadership opportunities within the legal organization are meaningfully and realistically accessible to diverse individuals. The goal of these efforts is to continue efforts to open up the legal organizations' leadership structures so that they are reflective of a meaningful commitment to [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion], and that diverse individuals are able to

obtain the necessary skills and tools to ascend into leadership. The Signatories will assess and modify, as necessary, their policies, procedures and practices for promotions, career advancement and formal and informal opportunities for leadership. The Signatories will focus on developing clear and objective criteria for internal advancement, and will develop practices designed to eliminate implicit and explicit bias from these processes.

This year, the summit will be broken into three primary presentations 1) diversity metrics; 2) the annual keynote workshop; and 3) six breakout panels, allowing attendees to select topics of interest in two consecutive afternoon tracks.

Diversity Metrics Presentation: Each year, the signatories to the DEI Pledge complete an annual Assessment Survey, in which they report on their DEI efforts, and provide aggregate demographic data about the attorneys working in their Connecticut legal offices. This data is then aggregated each year, and presented in an annual report, which has allowed us to track the representation of diverse attorneys across the different represented sectors of the legal profession, at every level of contribution or leadership. With six years of available data after this year's assessment, the presentation has also allowed the CBA to track and benchmark representation changes and trends over time. While Connecticut has seen measurable progress in the representation of diverse attorneys, that change has taken a significant amount of time, and the overall representation of many forms of diver-

sity, particularly in leadership, remains small. Tracking and measuring our aggregate progress, across the 40 Signatory organizations, within each represented sector (private, corporate, government, and non-profit) has provided a vital snapshot of the impact of our DEI efforts.

Keynote Workshop Presentation:

We have had the privilege of drawing in inspiring speakers and keynote workshop leaders to the summit each year, and this year will be no different. Our 2022 Summit keynote workshop leader will be Ritu Bhasin, of Bhasin Consulting Inc. (bci).² Ritu will speak on inclusive leadership, and provide coaching to current and aspiring leaders within the Connecticut legal community on leadership that emphasizes meaningful inclusion, and not conformity. Her extensive DEI leadership and coaching experience promise an exciting and engaging presentation:

Ritu Bhasin is an award-winning speaker, consultant, author and internationally recognized expert in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); authentic leadership; anti-racism; and personal empowerment for people from equity-seeking communities. Before founding bci, Ritu spent ten years in the legal profession—first as a civil litigator and then as the director of legal talent for the preeminent Canadian law firm Stikeman Elliot LLP. Ritu also served as an instructor in the Executive Programs and the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto for three years. She regularly appears on national television and radio in the US and Canada as an expert on leadership, inclusion, personal empowerment, authenticity and anti-racism. Her first book, *The Authenticity Principle: Resist Conformity, Embrace Differences, and Transform How Your Live, Work, and Lead*, is an Amazon bestseller.

Panel Presentation Breakouts: In the afternoon, attendees will be able to choose between six presentations, offered between two consecutive tracks at 12:30 p.m. and 1:45 p.m. These presentations

will allow attendees to tailor their summit experience to their areas of interest, and are described briefly here:

Inclusive Leadership, The Foundation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within Your Organization This panel will feature prominent diverse leaders within the Connecticut legal community. The panel will offer a candid insight into the challenges and opportunities of breaking through ceilings, serving in a leadership role as the first of a particular identity to hold that role, and offer strategies and advice on inclusive leadership and mentorship.

Building and Positioning Your Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Team for Success: This panel will offer tips and strategies on how and why to invest in a dedicated DEI position(s) within your legal organization, how to expand and position your DEI team for success, and how to develop and implement your DEI personnel strategy across different professional sectors and firm sizes.

Promoting Access to Justice While Advancing Racial Justice: COVID-19 heightened and our societal awareness of both a significant access to justice gap, and issues of systemic racial injustice, and inspired renewed efforts to address these issues. This panel will explore the nexus between these two challenges, and feature private pro bono legal projects and non-profit efforts that have sought to shrink the access to justice gap while advancing racial justice.

Understanding and Addressing Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession: Rule 8.4(7) of the Connecticut Rules of Professional Conduct became effective on January 1, 2022, and defines discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment in professional contexts as professional misconduct. Learn about the various studies that have shed light

on the prevalence of these issues within the legal profession, and how the legal profession has responded in the rules that govern the ethical practice of law.

Promoting DEI in Corporate Legal Departments and When Retaining Outside Counsel: This session will feature representatives of prominent corporate legal departments in Connecticut, discussing their own internal DEI efforts, as well as how those departments consider and assess DEI when retaining outside counsel and other external expertise.

Words Matter, Continued: This session will continue the presentation by the same name, first presented at the Connecticut Legal Conference in June of 2022. The panel will focus on the impact of certain words and phrases, how some words may convey unintentional hurtfulness, and how attendees can become more respectful of others by considering their use of those words.

The CBA extends special recognition and gratitude to the small but dedicated group of volunteers who have joined us in organizing this year's summit: Hon. Cecil J. Thomas (chair), Hon. Tejas Bhatt, Hon. Neeta Vatti, Karen DeMeola, Salihah Denman, Michelle Duprey, Ronald Houde, Steven Reynolds, Alix Simonetti, and Kean Zimmerman. Many of the organizing committee members have served on the organizing committee for the past seven years.

For seven years, the summit has served as an integral opportunity for education, planning, and reinvigoration of your personal and organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion journey. We hope you will take the time to join us this year, for what promises to be a day full of learning and inspiration. Visit ctbar.org/summit to register! ■

NOTES

1. ctbar.org/pledge
2. bhasinconsulting.com/about-bci