



## Young Lawyers Report

*Sheina R. Long*

*Foley & Mansfield, PLLP, Minneapolis*

### Dealing with Diversity

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As young lawyers, diversity is an issue of focus. Recognizing this, the question we then face is how. For this Young Lawyers article, I interviewed Jazz Hampton, a young attorney with *Foley & Mansfield, PLLP*, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, about his experiences and advice with issues surrounding diversity in the law. Jazz is a litigator who focuses his practice on issues of products liability. He has previously presented on topics such as racial justice, Black History, and diversity and inclusion.

#### **How are you personally working toward making diversity a priority in your firm?**

I am the Co-Chair of the Diversity Committee at *Foley & Mansfield, PLLP*. Our committee created a nine-step program to improve diversity and inclusion within the firm. As a part of those steps, and our commitment to that goal, we have signed on this year to participate in the Mansfield Rule 2.0—the next generation of the NFL’s Rooney Rule—for law firms. The goals of the Mansfield Rule are threefold: first, to encourage firms to track and document their efforts, to help us understand where we are, and plan where we want to go. The second goal is to diversify the pipeline at the leadership level, and third goal is to increase transparency regarding our firm’s processes and governance. We believe that taking this inclusive approach on who we consider for current and future leadership positions at the firm will ensure that we are inviting and considering the broadest field of talent possible as we look to the next generation of firm leaders.

#### **What would you say to people who may think that there are more important issues that firms need to address rather than focusing on diversity?**

We are all professionals, and we can multi-task. All law firms have a litany of issues they deal with everyday. Diversity should be one of your priorities. Clients are demanding diversity in the attorneys they hire. Law firms are losing diverse associates at alarming rates compared to their counterparts, which costs money. Business development opportunities expand when diversity increases. Whether your issues are client happiness, financial constraints, or a need for new business, those problems could be stemming from a lack of diversity and inclusion within your firm. Improving diversity does not only need to be a goal. It can also be a catalyst to help you reach several other goals as well.

#### **Do you see diversity as being a bigger focus at law firms within the next few years?**

Yes, law firms seem to work to meet their clients’ requests, and diversity and inclusion will be no different. Fortune 50 companies are undertaking substantial initiatives to ensure their legal counsel is diverse. Some of those companies will require diverse candidates at pitch meetings, then they follow up to ensure those same diverse individuals are billing on their files as well. As law firms see this is of high value to the clients, they will increasingly focus on diversity and inclusion as well.



### **What would you say to those who are struggling to implement a diversity practice at their firm?**

You can do anything if you just take it one step at a time. Create a plan that can help you identify your goals, and reach them within a specified period of time. Here is an example that can be used to improve Diversity and Inclusion within a firm:

Step 1: Compile Data

Step 2: Identify Needs and/or Areas of Concern

Step 3: Address Policies or Practices Affecting Diversity

Step 4: Identify Business Objectives

Step 5: Procure Buy-in and Support

Step 6: Implement Initiatives

Step 7: Communicate the Initiatives

Step 8: Measure and Disseminate Outcomes

Step 9: Review and Adjust

### **About the Author**

**Sheina R. Long** is an associate in the Minneapolis office of *Foley & Mansfield*. Ms. Long focuses her practice on personal injury, products liability, and premises liability, with an emphasis on the defense of toxic tort/mass tort claims. She has represented clients including premises owners, individuals, and product manufacturers from initial complaint to trial prep. Ms. Long received her J.D. in 2014 from Liberty University School of Law. While there, she interned with the Madison County Circuit Court in Illinois, where she researched, compiled, and compared legal documents for Madison County Civil Court judges.

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