

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The recent deaths of black Americans at hands of authorities are tragic. Unfortunately, these incidents are neither new nor isolated, but video of several of these deaths have caused a collective outrage and require all of us to recognize that black Americans continue to face injustices. I hope that this outrage can lead to necessary transformation of our justice system.

The NCBJ believes that systemic change must include greater diversity, including racial diversity, among bankruptcy judges and lawyers, and NCBJ is committed to these efforts. In 2009, the NCBJ established the Blackshear Fellowship Program, through which we provide a stipend/scholarship for up to five diverse attorneys to attend our annual meeting each year. In 2018, the NCBJ established a Diversity Committee, whose mission is to be a resource for the Conference on the issue of diversity and to promote diversity and inclusion within the bankruptcy profession by facilitating the entry, participation and retention of diverse judges, lawyers, bankruptcy professionals, law clerks and court employees. A number of bankruptcy judges routinely engage in outreach to minority organizations and communities to identify potential bankruptcy lawyers and future judges, and the Diversity Committee is developing tools to assist all of our colleagues in such efforts. Last year, the NCBJ adopted a Diversity Policy providing that every education conference sponsored by the NCBJ will include diverse panelists and educators with the goal being to mirror or exceed the diversity of the NCBJ, the bar and the communities that we serve. Finally, in October 2019, many of our members participated in a nation-wide program called "Roadways to the Federal Bench: Who, me? A Bankruptcy Judge?" that was aimed at improving diversity in the bankruptcy bench and bar and the federal bench in general.

There is more to do, and the NCBJ is determined to be a part of the solution. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any thoughts or ideas on how we can further our efforts.

Hon. Laurel Isicoff  
NCBJ 2019-2020 President