

LEGAL EDUCATION

ABA President Headlines Mentoring Conference

Mentorship is touted as the key to diversity in the profession



PAULETTE BROWN ADDRESSED A CROWD OF ATTORNEYS AT THE RALPH CARR JUSTICE CENTER ON THE INFLUENCE OF MENTORSHIP ON DIVERSITY.

PHOTO: LAW WEEK, TONY FLESOR

BY TONY FLESOR
LAW WEEK COLORADO

American Bar Association president Paulette Brown made a return trip to Denver for the National Legal Mentoring Consortium Conference May 5-7.

The National Legal Mentoring Consortium was founded after two national mentoring conferences generated interest and the need for a national organization.

Denver's conference, sponsored by national and local law firms and businesses, was a three-day opportunity for networking with speakers providing an introduction to mentoring for newcomers to advanced topics such as incorporating diversity and resilience as a part of mentoring.

The event focused on identifying keys to success for mentoring programs, choosing a format for programs, essentials for recruitment and preempting ethical questions.

Thursday night's reception included remarks from NLMC chair Lori Keating and DU Sturm College of Law dean Martin Katz. Colorado Supreme Court Chief Justice Nancy Rice introduced Brown.

Katz said that he was fortunate to have experience early in his career working for an employer who saw it as its role to mentor young attorneys, something that is increasingly rare. He said it should be a focus in legal education to think about what's good for students, and mentoring is about thinking about what's good for new lawyers.

Brown, also a partner at Locke & Lord in New Jersey, made her third speaking appearance in Denver as ABA president to discuss how mentoring intersects with diversity and inclusiveness in the profession, a major focus of her role as leader of the bar association.

Brown said she doesn't want the law to be the least diverse profession in another five to 10 years.

"It's incumbent upon me and others to pay it forward," she said. "Mentoring is one of the most important tools to achieve diversity and inclusion."

Using that tool involves mentoring multiple mentees but also being aware of the fact that forced mentorship, as it often happens in law firms, is not useful. She said assigning a mentee to someone who doesn't want to be a mentor is akin to forcing someone to have a child they do not want.

She also stressed the importance of mentors recognizing the value of diversity, saying that being "colorblind" is not good — race, gender and sexual orientation are all different dimensions that need to be recognized, she said. And part of recognizing that is checking implicit biases so that mentors don't only take on mentees who look like them.

Women of color are the least represented group in the legal profession, Brown said. The attrition rate for women of color is close to 100 percent. In order to make the law more accessible to women of color and attorneys of other backgrounds is to acknowledge implicit biases so that African American lawyers aren't only mentored by other African Americans, or so that diverse attorneys aren't only used to work with clients of a similar background.

Brown concluded her speech by highlighting the financial results of successful mentorship as well, citing a study of 1,000 employees at Sun Microsystems that found not only were the mentees more successful, but the mentors were more likely to get promoted and receive pay raises as well. The study concluded that mentorship also had a strong impact on retention; the company saved more than \$6 million that otherwise would have been spent on replacing and onboarding employees.

In a profession made up predominantly of white males, mentorship is seen as one of the key drivers to make sure young professionals of other backgrounds get the support they need in order to succeed. Brown recognized that every successful attorney found that success through the help of others.

"Someone along the way has mentored us. We have an obligation to pay it forward," she said. •

— Tony Flesor, TFlesor@circuitmedia.com



Spring Dinner



Wednesday, May 18

Denver Marriott City Center starting at 5 p.m.

For ticket information, visit www.ctlanet.org or call (303) 831-1192.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Scott Dikkers, Founder of *The Onion*

Get ready for an evening full of political satire with the founder of *The Onion* - Scott Dikkers. He captivates audiences with the crazy, unlikely and hilarious story of how he and a few friends dropped out of college and started a fake newspaper, which somehow turned into the

world's very first humor website. Today, *TheOnion.com* is one of the most popular humor destinations in the world.

HONOREES



Thomas Tomazin, Esq.

Kenneth Norman Kripke Lifetime Achievement Award



Siddhartha Rathod, Esq.

New Trial Lawyer of the Year Award

Nelson Boyle, Esq. and Thomas Neville, Esq.

Outstanding Service to CTLA Award

Jose Vasquez, Esq.

Access to Justice Award

2015 Case of the Year Award Finalists

Winner will be announced at the Spring Dinner.

Basevitz v. Fremont RE-2 School District, et al.

Paul Maxon of The Law Office of Paul Maxon PC

Browne, et al. v. City of Grand Junction

Mark Silverstein, Rebecca Wallace, Sara Neel and Jessica Howard from ACLU of Colorado

Pursuit Partners v. UBS & Moody's

Michael Burg, David TeSelle, David Hersh and Dean Batchelder from Burg Simpson Eldredge Hersh & Jardine, P.C.

