

President's Message

by Doris Henderson Causey



“You Can’t Change People, You Must Accept Them for Who They Are.”

— Dorothy B. Henderson
My mother

MY MOTHER OFTEN TOLD ME to accept people for who they are. We are all born the same. Embracing the differences in each other with respect and appreciation is diversity. Making sure that our companies, firms, schools and organizations represent many different people is inclusion. Statistically, the legal profession is one of the least diverse professions. Thus, we must make extraordinary efforts to be diverse. February is Black History Month, but it is all year long that we must focus on inclusion and parity.

Diversity cannot be done by proclamation. It must be done by active participation and inclusion. It can only be accomplished by action. You must act when wrong occurs. Maybe it's the inappropriate/insensitive joke at the water cooler, the pass over for promotion/bonus — when two people were both hired at the same time, being the only one different within the firm/committee/boardroom, the constant “mistake” of leaving a name off the list, and giving others assignments that were clearly meant for someone else. These events, no matter how big or small, are wrong.

It is so easy to marginalize people (minorities, women, the undocumented), sometimes unconsciously, but the majority of time with purpose. Time's up for being silent. No matter what the hashtag: me too, take a knee, girl power, women's march, million man march — they all speak to our need for

more diversity and inclusion. These movements are here to stay, and they truly show the power of one multiplied by many. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. *Whatever affects one, affects all indirectly.*”

Being diverse and inclusive affects everyone. The more we realize that what we do today affects the children who are destined to follow in our footsteps, hopefully, the better we will be. Times are changing and we must change with them. I know that I stand on the shoulders of giants — those that remained silent (peacefully protested) so that I could be where I am today. Those that understood the words of Dr. King when he said, “Morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated.” I am forever indebted and mindful. Lawyers are amazing; they make good things happen and they change bad things. Let us all remember in our roles as lawyers to be *drum majors* for those who have the smallest voices — for justice, for equality, for doing the right thing above all other things.

It simply means being a good person, including everyone, and, most importantly, doing what is right. It is such a low bar for us to set for ourselves, and yet too often we miss the mark. Whether you are heavily

involved in the Virginia State Bar, or simply pay your dues and register your MCLE hours, you contribute to each of the goals and mission of the VSB. You are the VSB. The VSB is committed to diversity and inclusion. I am making extraordinary efforts for greater diversity and inclusion. And I challenge every lawyer, firm, and company to do the same.

Notice the makeup of your firms, committees, groups, and organizations. Become diverse. Having only one is not diverse or inclusive. We must make efforts for everyone to see someone like them in the room/firm/committee. I truly enjoy the different perspectives and experiences of others.

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We must take a stand and right the wrongs, be inclusive and diverse. We cannot remain silent. If you see/hear something, say/do something. In the words of Dr. King, “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”