

# Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Update

GROOM LAW GROUP

www.groom.com

At Groom, we are excited and engaged in diversity! We are proud of our diversity, equity & inclusion programs that focus on hiring, retention, and advancement of diverse lawyers already at our firm, as well as that create and sustain the pipeline of students who will be our future colleagues. We are pleased to share an update of our recent diversity, equity & inclusion programs.

## Town Hall Meetings

At Groom, our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (“DEI”) Committee decided that we wanted to start a real conversation about race. We also wanted to challenge ourselves in our everyday interactions at the firm, including learning to be more comfortable being uncomfortable. Groom had three engaging and interactive Town Halls led by Janet Crenshaw Smith of the Ivy Group, which helped us become more aware of how diversity issues impact our colleagues and clients and how to move forward with intention and purpose to be better allies. We are continuing these Town Halls in 2022.

## Six-Week Challenge & Summer Book Club

In addition to spotlight training sessions, Groom has really dug in with ongoing diversity learning programs. We held a “Let’s Talk About Race” 6-Week Challenge where, each week, DEI Committee members introduced articles, videos, and podcasts related to race. Members explained why these resources were personally meaningful to them and where to learn more. Other firm members weighed in with comments – over 40 Groomies completed all 6 weeks!

Groom also hosted a Summer Book Club Series in 2021. The goal of the book club was to invite honest discussions surrounding critical issues to help foster a more open and inclusive workplace environment. Together, we read “So You Want to Talk About Race” by Ijeoma Oluo. This book is a practical guide about how to have tough conversations surrounding race in public, in the workplace, and at home. Following each reading, the Book Club met virtually to discuss specific sections of the book.

## Juneteenth Holiday Recognition

The celebration of June 19th (“Juneteenth”) is of significant importance to the Black community. Thanks to the efforts of the DEI Committee, Groom recognized that this date deserved to be elevated to an official firm holiday to honor the lived experiences of Black Americans and to provide the space and time for reflection. In connection with Juneteenth, the DEI Committee has provided educational information about the significance of the day, as well as ideas to celebrate, such as local exhibits or dining at Black-owned businesses.

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*Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Update (Continued)*

## Pride Month

The DEI Committee helped the firm celebrate Pride Month in June 2021 with a presentation at our monthly “Third Thursday” all-firm Zoom that highlighted three LGBTQ+-focused charities. Committee members selected the charities and presented a background on each. We encouraged our colleagues to support these groups, and the firm made a donation as well. We also sent out educational videos and emails about why it is important to recognize each individual’s pronoun and re-structured our email signature line to include our own pronouns. For 2022, we have invited a speaker to facilitate additional training on the use of pronouns and other LGBTQ+ issues.

## Awareness Campaign

To enhance the cultural competency of every employee at Groom, the DEI Committee has created an email awareness campaign spotlighting diversity leaders and movements, as well as, heritage months and key holidays. Committee members share relevant historical information as well as ideas to celebrate locally. In addition, the DEI Committee partnered with the firm’s Culture Committee to host training that connects diversity-related issues to our values. For example, we held a microaggression training program that offered the opportunity to understand the negative impact between microaggressions and our value of “Respect.” We also had a training on our firm value of “Accountability,” including accountability when diversity issues arise in the workplace. These continued efforts to educate all lawyers and staff at Groom ensures that our firm remains an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

## Affinity Groups

Groom Law Group understands that the firm’s success – its ability to deliver superior solutions to clients – depends on identifying and removing barriers to success for those who are underrepresented in the legal field, particularly in private practice. Groom sponsors four affinity groups that are comprised of a mix of partners, associates and of-counsel.

- The Collective brings together attorneys from racially diverse groups and The Collective Plus brings together attorneys from racially diverse groups and the LGBTQIA+ community. The goals of the Collective and The Collective Plus are to allow Groom’s diverse attorneys to build relationships within and beyond the group, to support our diverse attorneys, and to provide a space for attorneys to share experiences and strategies that will lead to greater inclusion and integration within the Groom community.
- The Women’s Initiative promotes retention, advancement, networking, and leadership opportunities for women attorneys at Groom. The Women’s Initiative hosts periodic meetings, panels, networking events and provides development tools to support women attorneys. A highlight of the Women’s Initiative is the women’s networking event at our annual Firm Seminar where Groom female attorneys interact with clients in a discussion geared towards leadership and advancement. Some years this program has been facilitated by an outside party. Past programs have included “book group”-style discussions on a notable book on women’s issues and fireside chats where Groom attorneys and clients came together for an honest and open discussion of diversity issues affecting women.

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## *Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Update (Continued)*

- The Parent Affinity Group allows working parents to trade information, attend programs on technical topics, such as family tax planning, and advise Groom on potential issues impacting parents. Thanks to input from our Parent Affinity Group, the DEI Committee helped create a ramp down/ramp up policy related to billable hours leading to and following parental leave, initiated the MilkStork program for nursing mothers who are traveling, and rolled out the Mindful Return program for mothers and fathers who are returning to the workplace following parental leave.

Groom actively supports attorneys who wish to participate with outside legal affinity groups and covers expenses for those who wish to attend diversity conferences or learning events. Our attorneys have attended conferences hosted by the National Bar Association (“NBA”), Minority Corporate Counsel Association (“MCCA”), LGBTQ+ Bar Association, National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (“NAPABA”), and more.

## Summer 1L Diversity Mentoring Program

Over several summers, Groom has hosted a summer program for diverse 1L students to receive hands-on mentoring on the law firm recruiting process and the variety of legal opportunities in DC. We generally focus on four specific areas: (1) preparation for the upcoming on-campus and callback interview process for 2L summer positions, with mock interviews; (2) what a summer program or associate life in a law firm may look like; (3) “outside the law firm box” of other unique legal opportunities in Washington, DC (for example, working on Capitol Hill or a federal agency); and (4) guidance on developing and fostering strong professional associations that can be relied upon throughout their careers. Our goal is to give diverse students the tools they need to obtain a 2L summer associate position and succeed while they are there. Each year, we have had former participants get back in touch with us months later to thank us and say how much the program helped them navigate the interview process. Even during COVID, we have continued to evolve with other creative ways to support and build a pipeline of diverse 1L students, including partnering with CLEO for their Pre-law Summer Institute and the Diversity Lab’s 1L summer program.

## Minority Corporate Counsel Association (“MCCA”) Scholarship Program

Groom is a proud and long-time member of the MCCA. Since 2006, we have supported the MCCA Lloyd M. Johnson (“LMJ”) Jr. Scholarship Program. The goal of the program is to nurture the academic and professional careers of outstanding law students and advance the diversity pipeline to the legal profession by providing financial support for diverse first-year law students. Groom actively participates on the selection committee and has taken our involvement a step further and committed to provide support for all three years of law school for the designated Groom scholar. Our last scholar currently is a first year associate at a prestigious New York City law firm. We have a new MCCA scholar this year, whom we will support through her three years at Columbia Law School.

## Crump Law Camp

We have participated in the National Bar Association’s Crump Law Camp since 2005. This program brings high school students from across the country to Washington DC to learn about legal careers and participate in a mock trial. Three other national minority bars – the Hispanic National Bar Association, the Native American Bar Association and the National Asian Pacific Bar Association – also are involved in the camp. Every summer since 2012, Groom has provided supplies for the camp and hosted a lunch program for the campers in our office.

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*Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Update (Continued)*

## Employee Benefits Law Panels

We regularly partner with student organizations, such as Black Law Student Associations, to organize panel discussions at law schools about careers in benefits law. Usually 2 to 3 Groom attorneys participate, and we arrange for government lawyers and corporate counsel who practice benefits law to appear as well. Law students may not know about employee benefits law, so for many students, these panels provide an introduction to our practice and a potential pipeline for future diverse attorneys.

## Financial Support and Sponsorships

Groom has been a sponsor of events for numerous organizations, including the local Chapter of the Hispanic National Bar Association, the Asian Pacific American Bar Association Educational Fund ("AEF"), the National Bar Association ("NBA"), and the DC Women's Bar Association ("WBA").

In honor of Juneteenth, Groom launched a firm wide fundraising campaign to raise funds for organizations we believe to be critical parts of making a difference in racial justice and equality. In 2020, we selected Legal Aid and the Equal Justice Initiative for our fundraiser. To expand our efforts, in 2021, we again raised money for Legal Aid and EJI, and as part of a more targeted commitment to racial equality, we also raised funds for the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center ("APALRC"). With incentives for participation and some generous matches from the firm and individuals, the firm was able to raise over \$50,000 for these exceptional organizations.

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If you have questions, please contact the Groom Law Group Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee:

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The information contained within has been updated as of May 2022.

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