

The Importance of Diversity and Inclusion

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These last few months have been tough for our country's soul with the acts of violence against Americans of color, from the violence against Jacob Blake to the tragic killing of George Floyd.

At Sheppard Mullin, we proudly affirm we are a welcoming, supportive, safe and inclusive place. We also recognize our obligation to participate in the larger dialogue and responses to the effects of systemic racism in this country. In June, we formed a Task Force of attorneys and staff that will look both inward and outward. Its work will include providing resources and trainings on allyship, promoting cross-cultural understanding and dialogue, providing opportunities for the firm and its members to support affected communities, supporting peaceful efforts to achieve racial justice, and assisting with issues related to COVID-19 related racism. We will determine how to best support the community through a number of avenues, including community service, pro bono, D&I organizational restructuring, and financial contributions.

One of our initial pro bono projects is leveraging our firm's unique experience in several aspects of police reform in America, gained through the appointment of our firm and Washington, D.C. partners Jonathan Aronie and David Douglass as the first federal monitor of the New Orleans Police Department. Growing out of this work, Aronie, Douglass, and others have invested almost 3,000 pro bono hours to support the creation of the nation's first department-wide police intervention program called EPIC (Ethical Policing Is Courageous). The program teaches officers skills and tactics to intervene in another officer's actions to prevent mistakes and misconduct. Aronie and Douglass have been asked by police chiefs from departments around the country to work with their departments to help initiate similar programs.

The firm also joined in the launch of the Law Firm Antiracism Alliance (LFAA). Comprised of law firms around the country, LFAA is an initiative for law firms to work together, collectively dedicating substantial pro bono resources to addressing systemic racism in a long-term, high impact and collaborative way.

Real change will require us to engage, let down our defenses, listen, do our best to put ourselves in the shoes of others with different life experiences, take action and persevere. Our Firm is committed to this endeavor and pledges we will do what it takes to make sure these times represent a turning point and not just an uncomfortable episode in our nation's history.

Be well and courageous.