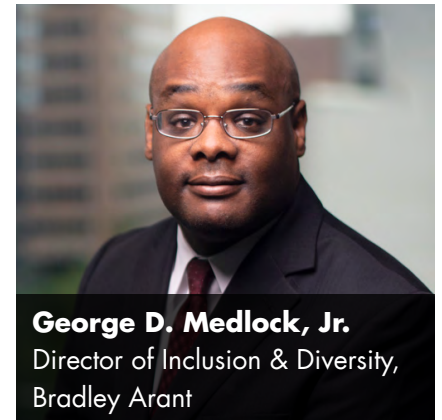




Q&A with Director of Inclusion & Diversity at Bradley Arant, George D. Medlock, Jr.

George Medlock is a Partner and the Director of Inclusion & Diversity at Bradley Arant in Birmingham, Alabama where he has served in this capacity since October 2019. Mr. Medlock leads the firm’s diversity and inclusion efforts, including recruitment, training and retention of diverse attorneys, as well as works to promote a culture that reflects Bradley’s core values of inclusion and respect.

He sat down with Segal McCambridge Shareholder and Chair of the firm’s Diversity & Inclusion Committee Kenneth Williams to discuss his role and his firm’s approach to D&I efforts. [Read more.](#)



Reconciling Competing World Views

This perspective of Kenneth Williams appeared in The Voice, DRI’s weekly e-newsletter published on September 9, 2020.

Over the past six months, earth shattering events have highlighted that, despite the improvement of opportunities and economic gains by minorities including African Americans, ongoing racial tensions in the United States have never been fully addressed. Many in the country believe that the socioeconomic improvement in the lives of many minorities is “proof” that the racial tension and divisiveness of the past have been dealt with, or at least have greatly improved since the 1960s. [Read more.](#)

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Introducing Forward Together

With sights set on fostering a culture of inclusion and equality, co-chairs Jill Felkins and Carla Varriale-Barker launch *Forward Together*, a new initiative supporting the female attorneys of Segal McCambridge in elevating their careers through a three-pronged approach focusing on education, mentorship and networking.



While the networking piece is put on hold due to COVID-19, the firm is excited to move forward with the other two elements of the program. [Read more.](#)

Cont. from cover page – Q&A with George D. Medlock, Jr.

Q: How has your firm Bradley Arant embraced D&I efforts differently than other law firms?

A: Early on, our firm recognized that diversity impacts all aspects of our business and is key to our bottom-line success.

Diversity is a core value of our firm. Moreover, if clients demand diverse teams, we need to build the infrastructure to service clients today, ensure our talented attorneys stay with us for the long haul, and plant the seeds to have a strong pipeline of talented diverse attorneys moving up through our ranks. This has been a true differentiator for us, and I help capitalize on that by playing a significant role in marketing and business development efforts.

Q: How does your role as Director of Inclusion & Diversity shape the culture of the firm?

A: My role is very well integrated into the recruiting process, giving me a birds-eye view of candidates and capabilities. I am a voting member of the Recruiting Committee, and in that role I have worked with the committee to expand the schools from which we recruit. I am also a voting member of the Associate Review Committee, ensuring that we work to retain promising associates.

Additionally, I mentor a number of our diverse associates, which is one of the most meaningful parts of the role to me. I enjoy the opportunity to talk with younger attorneys about how the firm works and help them carve out their path to success here. We are fortunate to have many partners that are committed to the success of our associates.

Our firm always had an inclusive culture, but now there is a person turning our words into action.

Q: What was your motivation to serve in this capacity while still an attorney with all the requisite billing requirements?

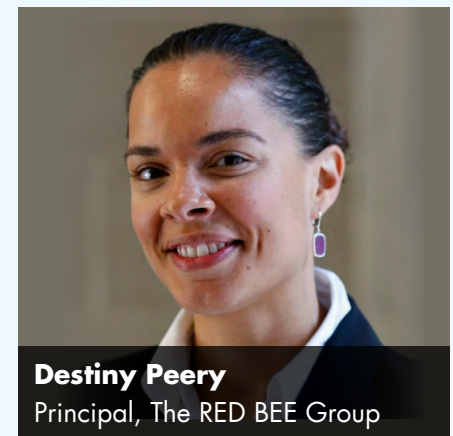
A: Throughout my career I have stayed active with diversity and inclusion efforts, but as I moved up, I assisted more with mentoring younger attorneys and providing career advice. I found that I really enjoyed that part of my work, and once a diversity position at my firm opened up I knew I had to pursue it. ■

Implicit Bias in the Courtroom: Jury Selection with Destiny Peery

Segal McCambridge’s Diversity & Inclusion Committee hosted speaker Destiny Peery on Wednesday, September 23, 2020, where she led two sessions exploring implicit bias. A social psychologist and legal scholar with The RED BEE Group, Ms. Peery specializes in the study of identity, bias and discrimination, diversity, equity and inclusion, including their intersections with the law and in spaces within the legal profession.

Ms. Peery’s presentation provided Segal McCambridge attorneys with a foundation for reducing the influence of biases, assumptions and expectations on decision-making in the legal practice. She discussed how to best recognize the subconscious decisions we make and understand how they were formed and reinforced over the course of one’s career.

The first segment of the workshop addressed how these biases and assumptions affect our decision-making, our relationships with clients and colleagues, and how we view the work done by our colleagues. Ms. Peery demonstrated strategies for addressing these challenges as both an individual and within the structure of a law firm.



In the second portion, Ms. Peery discussed how biases, assumptions and expectations of attorneys affect juries. This included how an attorney may perceive potential jurors, as well as how to address the biases, assumptions and expectations of jurors themselves to encourage better, less biased decision-making in the legal process as a whole.

Considered throughout both sessions was how the pandemic and the shift to virtual meetings and legal proceedings may affect perceptions and judgments of those around us. ■

**Cont. from cover page –
 Introducing Forward Together**

The educational prong of this program will illuminate the path to partnership within the firm. Every other month, partners will lead video conference meetings on a rotating cycle of topics based on the four components of achieving partnership status: productivity, legal ability, business development and firm citizenship. In the next year, *Forward Together* plans to host programs featuring female speakers from outside organizations ranging from insurance carriers to government entities. They will address a variety of perspectives, including policy changes and trends. While presentations will lean toward issues facing women in the field, all attorneys are invited to attend these meetings and benefit from these insightful programs.

Recognizing the many benefits of mentoring in the workplace, the firm advocates for all associates to adopt this practice by assigning them mentors at

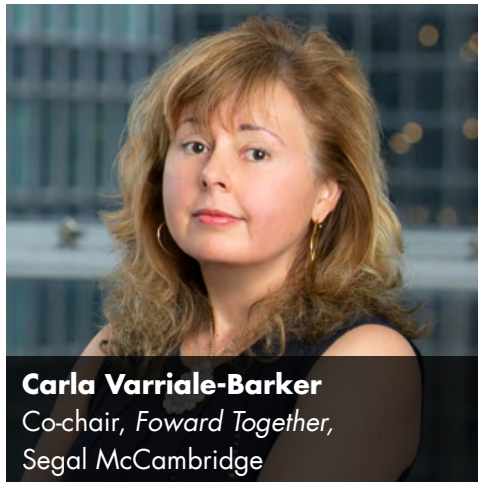
the start of their employment. *Forward Together* seeks to augment female associate’s existing mentor relationships with a dedicated female partner mentor. Aiming to help identify and achieve career goals, this mentee-driven prong provides an individualized component focused on addressing unique situations specific to female attorneys.

Once the pandemic recedes and to further encourage cultivating relationships within one’s field, the new initiative will create opportunities for female associates in each office to network with and learn from their peers and female partners. Access to and support from a like-minded, intellectual community when working towards career goals broadens resources and opens avenues to new opportunities, while at the same time developing confidence and self-esteem.

Forward Together reinforces the firm’s commitment to all women in the Segal McCambridge workforce, as well as its focus on diversity as a whole. ■



Jill M. Felkins
 Co-chair, *Forward Together*,
 Segal McCambridge



Carla Varriale-Barker
 Co-chair, *Forward Together*,
 Segal McCambridge

**Segal McCambridge
 Diversity & Inclusion
 Committee Members**

SHAREHOLDERS

Kenneth P. Williams
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Madina Axelrod
 New York

Carmen Y. Cartaya
 Ft. Lauderdale

Jill M. Felkins
 Chicago

Kerry Lynn Rhoads
 Detroit

Cameron Turner
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 Detroit

**PROFESSIONAL
 MANAGEMENT**

Matt Frederick
 New York

Cont. from cover page – Reconciling Competing World Views

Others believe that the recent police shootings resulting in the tragedies suffered by black people are “proof” that there is widespread systemic racism in every institution of law enforcement. The outcry against systemic racism has now spread to all facets of life. Irrespective of where one stands, every aspect of life has been impacted by the racial unrest in the country precipitated in large part by the tragic interactions between law enforcement and African American men. Compounding the matter is the global pandemic superimposed upon the unrest, which continues to also impact life in every sense. Protesting in support of either side has spread across the country and has now been mixed with violence. Some would argue that the violence has overshadowed the protesting with violence, theft, and destruction of property greatly distracting from the underlying issues of race and equality in the United States.

Our country is experiencing a clash of ideologies and a battle of world views. I do not believe there will be real change until those differing world views are addressed in a meaningful way. Neither side can prevail in forcing their world view upon the other. Real change cannot occur until those competing views are reconciled. Nor can real change be achieved until fundamental questions are addressed – whether the tragic interactions between law enforcement and black men is the result or byproduct of systemic racism in every institution in this country. This year has proven that the consequence of ignoring the problem is a litany of more and more tragic interactions that further exacerbate this collision between world views, including the clash between members and supporters of law enforcement and various minorities—and

black men in particular. What can be done?

Anger alone is not a basis for change. Violence (murder, assault, rioting, destruction of property, and theft) in response to perceived social injustice and/or inequality will forever disfigure the message of where and how change needs to occur. The emotional response of violence causes the true need and even the potential for change to be buried and forgotten until the perceived “lawlessness” is brought to an end. In fact, many of the protests and most visible corporate “responses” have seemingly been in response to both the protests and the violence itself. The reality is that the violence is skewing the issue and where change needs to occur.

Before the critical question can be addressed, the issue of competing world views needs to be identified and explored. World views contain inherent bias. Those biases must be explored and addressed in an environment that can spark change, one in which true understanding can take place. An individual living on the south side of Chicago will inevitably have a different world view and set of biases than someone living in Northern Maine. The nature and extent of interaction with diverse people in either locale will differ as well, accentuating and magnifying the disparity in world views and biases. Opportunity for change travels along the pathways of human social connection. The greater the opportunity for interaction with diverse people, the more opportunity we have to see others as human beings, not as races, cultures, stereotypes or archetypes of different world views. People within law firms or on sports teams or shopping at grocery stores experience opportunities to interact with, work with, learn about and co-exist with one another. World views are shared and explored through direct interaction, and this is how

Firmwide Diversity & Inclusion Training

At Segal McCambridge, diversity and inclusion are critically important. We are committed to cultivating an environment and culture of inclusion throughout our offices. Employees are currently participating in a required, firmwide diversity and inclusion training online in order to promote cultural and social awareness.

The firm hosts a yearly training using an interactive program through NAVEX Global to educate employees on best practices when engaging with coworkers regardless of race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion or national origin. Compliant with both federal and state laws, NAVEX courses are updated annually and customized to include a variety of situations specific to each person’s role as employee or manager.

Continuing to educate employees on workplace etiquette, despite many working from home, is vital to maintaining a strong, cohesive organization and effectively representing the interests of our clients, who also come from various cultures, backgrounds, lifestyles and belief systems. In person interaction has been replaced by phone calls and Zoom meetings, but the need for an informed workforce has only increased. Segal McCambridge is dedicated to keeping its employees connected through like values and goals in the firm.

people learn, grow and come together despite diverse backgrounds.

If the combined world view results in a belief that there is systemic racism in this country, what has to be addressed is whether the experience of black men with law enforcement is the result of that systemic racism. However, the law enforcement/black male interactions are vastly different than the broader issue of race, justice, inequality, education and other issues that could be a byproduct. If those latter issues are not a result of "systemic racism" then the entire societal narrative is flawed. The most tragic result that could emerge from 2020 is that all of the loss of life, the destruction of property, the tragic interactions between African Americans and law enforcement, all collectively become akin to one month out of the year where these issues are celebrated and discussed, leaving the remaining 11 months for a return to an alleged normalcy.

Interestingly, there is a meaningful passage on how to create change in a document from a few years ago in the Report of the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards: Fostering Public Trust in Law Enforcement in Michigan – Published April 19, 2017

Quote Pages 112-113:

The latest findings in the psychological sciences indicate that one's view of the world can become more universal

through positive contacts with other belief systems, other cultures, and with those who think differently than he or she does. This contact must occur in an environment where a true exchanges of views can take place. This is one way to avoid the pitfalls of faulty intuition, which often leads to inappropriate stereotyping and bias. Recruits often do not have an opportunity to interact with those with diverse belief systems. Both the Commission staff and the training directors must work together to enable students to interact with the public through assignments, projects, practical exercises, or just casual conversation to help widen worldview. This helps avoid potential unconscious biases that creep into decision making and judgment.

As this quote explains, it is incumbent upon every individual who seeks a new world view in the United States among human beings and societal institutions, to first address the flaws of the popular narratives in our country and drill down to where and why real change needs to occur.

Now is the time to vote. Now is the time to volunteer. Now is the time to take diversity and inclusion beyond a slogan or a tag line. Now is the time to utilize my law degree beyond just the practice of law, but to impact all facets of the reach of my network. The power to change rests on every one of us, but it can only happen in an environment where true exchanges of views can take place. ■

EVENT CALENDAR

WEBINAR

APIW D&I Panel - Acknowledging and Addressing Racism in the Insurance Industry and Paving the Path Forward

Carla Varriale-Barker – Attended
 September 1, 2020

WEBINAR

Implicit Bias in the Courtroom: Jury Selection

Destiny Peery – Presented
 September 23, 2020

WEBINAR

Foward Together: Business Development

Carla Varriale-Barker – Presenting
 October 14, 2020

