

MINORITIES IN THE PROFESSION (MIPC)
AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION



Committee Newsletter | Summer 2017

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Farewell Message from Committee Chair

Dear Committee Members,

As the bar year ends, I want to thank all those who submitted articles for our newsletter and participated in our programs and events. I enjoyed meeting many of you at our organized meet-ups and in-person CLEs. I hope you found our programming and newsletters to be informative and relevant. In our newsletter, the leadership team published several articles on laws and policies affecting minorities and ways for young lawyers to make social change within their communities. We also organized a teleconference with two prominent civil rights attorneys who discussed the role of young lawyers in protecting civil rights. The teleconference podcast is still available on the MIPC website. We hope the information shared in our newsletters and programming inspired and equipped you to make a difference in your community. It is up to us, as young lawyers, to be consciously aware of what is taking place in our country and abroad, and to stand against any laws, policies, or practices that challenge progress or our civil rights.

It has been a great privilege to serve as the MIPC chair for the 2016-2017 bar year, and I want to thank our Vice-Chairs: Alisha Lubin, Jonathan Carraras, Jasmine Robinson, and Nicole Sorell for all their time and hard work in ensuring a smooth and successful year.

Sincerely,

Melissa A. Little
MIPC Chair
mlittle170@gmail.com

ARTICLES

Tips for Taming the Beast Docket

By Jasmine F. Robinson

Some attorneys manage a docket with a limited number of cases while others must manage a seemingly limitless docket filled with hundreds of cases. If you find yourself among those who must tackle a heavy caseload, at times it can seem like a daunting, untamable beast. When you have to attend meetings, prep a case for trial, or take a week-long vacation, you quickly feel like you have fallen behind and the work is catching up to you. Here are some tips to help you tame the beast before it gets you.

(1) Create Templates – Templates save time. If you generally file the same petition or answer, serve similar discovery requests and responses, file the same type of motions, or draft consonant letters, then you should create templates. A template will prevent you and your team from having to constantly draft new documents nearly identical in nature. It will also ensure your staff is conforming to your writing style, so you spend less time editing. With a template in place, you can simply change or add language to finalize the document. Using templates allows you to save time daily.

(2) Do Like Things Together – It is more time consuming to jump from one task to a very different task. If you have 5 petitions to draft, 5 sets of discovery to review, 5 summaries to send out, and emails to respond to, do not jump from petition to discovery back to petition and then to a summary. Complete one set of tasks because it allows you to work methodically and bill your time efficiently. After you have finished one task, then tackle the next. It can be almost impossible to focus on only one task with so many deadlines and distractions, but as much as you can, do like things together to work more efficiently.

(3) Train Your Team – Take the time to train your team members. Your team members will not know your preferences if you do not teach them. Training is time-consuming on the front end but time-saving on the back end. Even if you spend 6 months training, the investment of time is worth it because you will have a team that works efficiently for years.

(4) Delegate – So now that you have trained your team members, you have to trust them and delegate work. The hardest part of maintaining a heavy docket is managing the work load. If you do not delegate tasks to your team, you will work nonstop and never accomplish enough. Determine what tasks are best suited for your paralegal, legal assistant, and administrative assistant; then delegate.

(5) Run Reports – I quickly learned the importance of running reports. You will not remember the status of 200 cases, but you can run a report and get a summary in a matter of seconds. Depending on the database used by your employer, you can run reports on the number of cases assigned to you, the last activity performed in each case, the last date a case was reviewed, the time billed and money spent on a case, and the status of a case. Having this information easily accessible allows you to effectively manage a large caseload.

(6) Learn Your Craft and Move Fast – Learn your practice area well. Learn what is important to your client and how to communicate with them. Learn to look for key words and how to scan documents so you do not waste time doing work that should be delegated. Attend CLE courses and take the opportunity to speak with other attorneys about what works for their office. Practice perfecting your work and then practice doing it more efficiently.

Jasmine F. Robinson is a Subrogation Trial Attorney in the Trial Division of Nationwide Insurance. Jasmine is also an ABA YLD 2016-2017 Scholar and Vice Chair of the ABA YLD Minorities in the Profession Committee.

Holding Police Accountable

By Melanie Bates

“Mere access to the courthouse doors does not by itself assure a proper functioning of the adversary process.”

- Thurgood Marshall

This quote by Thurgood Marshall succinctly illustrates there are barriers to achieving justice and equal treatment under the law. Historically, African Americans have been racially profiled and

discriminated against by law enforcement.¹ African Americans are detained, searched, and arrested by police at tremendously higher rates than whites.² For example, in Washington, D.C., between 2009 and 2011, more than 8 out of 10 residents arrested were African American.³ The inmate population at the D.C. jail is 89.1% African American, but African Americans only make up 48.3% of the city's population.⁴ These figures are shocking and demonstrate the need for equal treatment under the law. Unfortunately, I recently found myself in a situation where I would need to demand such treatment.

A few months ago, my friends and I were passengers in a friend's vehicle, a newer model luxury car, when we were pulled over by D.C. police for no apparent reason. We were followed by this officer for at least a quarter-mile prior to being stopped. The officer stated the reason for the stop was a radio call about a woman in distress and my friend's failure to use his turn signal. Both statements appeared to be unfounded. After the officer ran my friend's license and registration, he issued a warning for failure to signal and stated that sometimes foxes are mistaken for a woman's scream. My friends and I were outraged. The stop seemed to be an obvious act of racial profiling. We were four young African Americans in a luxury vehicle, driving in an upper-class neighborhood in the early morning hours. I shudder to imagine how this incident would have ended had my friend not indicated he lived in the neighborhood.

Fortunately, the District of Columbia has an established mechanism for residents to hold law enforcement accountable. The Office of Police Complaints (OPC) was opened in 2001. Its stated mission is "to increase community trust in the District of Columbia police forces by providing a fair, thorough, and independent system of civilian oversight of law enforcement."⁵ Residents can file complaints against the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department and D.C. Housing Authority Office of Public Safety within 90 days of an incident.⁶ Since OPC opened, it has

¹ Kappeler, Victor, *A Brief History of Slavery and the Origins of American Policing*, (January 7, 2014), <http://plsonline.eku.edu/insidelook/brief-history-slavery-and-origins-american-policing>.

² Soffen, Kim, *The big question about why police pull over so many black drivers*, (July 8, 2016), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/07/08/the-big-question-about-why-police-pull-over-so-many-black-drivers/?utm_term=.6a2f0178ea7a.

³ Washington Lawyers' Committee For Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, *Racial Disparities in Arrests in the District of Columbia, 2009-2011*, (July 2013), https://www.washlaw.org/pdf/wlc_report_racial_disparities.pdf.

⁴ District of Columbia Department of Corrections, *DC Department of Corrections Facts and Figures*, April 2017, <https://doc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/doc/publication/attachments/DC%20Department%20of%20Corrections%20Facts%20and%20Figures%20April%202017.pdf>.

⁵ Office of Police Complaints, *About the Office of Police Complaints*, <https://policecomplaints.dc.gov/page/about-office-police-complaints>.

⁶ *Id.*

received approximately 15,830 total contacts with potential complainants and has handled 6,968 formal complaints.⁷

I submitted my complaint to OPC and was interviewed by an OPC investigator a few weeks later. My case was then referred to mediation. In mediation, the mediator guides you and the officer through a dialogue about the incident that led to the complaint with the goal of reaching a common understanding. My mediation went surprisingly well. The officer was very cordial. He provided an extensive history of his background and his thought process leading up to the stop. He described what he would have done differently in hindsight. The officer's statements seemed a bit scripted, but he also seemed to be genuinely concerned and empathetic about my frustrations as an African American woman. The officer's body camera did not capture the alleged failure to signal so it was essentially his word against mine. At the end of mediation, I agreed to resolve the complaint. It was a transformative learning experience. I was able to hear directly from the officer about his perspective of the incident and he was able to identify what he could have done differently, hopefully leading him to make better choices in the future.

As young minorities in the legal profession, I strongly encourage each of you to search for entities, most commonly called Civilian Complaint Review Boards, in your local jurisdictions that provide similar services as OPC. While it can be an extensive process, the results are invaluable. You will feel empowered and motivated to help others fight for their rights. We must come together and join forces to hold our government accountable to its citizens. Our collective action will effect movement towards a more fair and balanced justice system.

***Melanie Bates** is an attorney based in Washington, D.C. She is on the Advisory Board of Free Minds Books Club and Writing Workshop, a nonprofit organization that uses books, creative writing, and peer support to awaken D.C. youth incarcerated as adults to develop their own potential. The views expressed here are her own.*

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

William Reece Smith Jr. National Outstanding Young Lawyer Award Nominations Open

The ABA Young Lawyers Division is accepting nominations for the 2017 William Reece Smith Jr. National Outstanding Young Lawyer Award. The William Reece Smith Jr. National Outstanding Young Lawyer Award recognizes an ABA young lawyer in good standing who exhibits professional excellence, service to the profession and the bar, service to the community and a reputation for the advancement of legal ethics and professional responsibility. The nomination deadline is August 31. More information about the award and its namesake can be found at www.americanbar.org/groups/young_lawyers/awards_scholarships/national_outstanding_young_lawyer_award.html

⁷ Office of Police Complaints, *Annual Report 2016*, <https://policecomplaints.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/office%20of%20police%20complaints/publication/attachments/OPC%20Annual%20Report%202016.pdf>.

Job Opportunities

Check out the ABA Job Board for thousands of job postings - [ABA Legal Career Central](#)

<http://jobs.americanbar.org/jobseeker>

YLD Resources



Are you looking to develop leadership, management, and business development skills? Check out the Growing Lawyers Growing Leaders initiative developed by the YLD and the Law Practice Division:

<http://connect.americanbar.org/growinglawyers/home?ssopc=1>

Take advantage of the Young Lawyer Toolkit – a curated collection of eBooks, tutorials, and online resources free to ABA Members.

The toolkit is divided by years in practice: 0 to 3 years, 4 to 7 years, and 8 to 12 years. Learn about the practical aspects of practicing law, the mechanics of opening your own practice, and navigating the legal scene.

Put your membership to use:

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/young_lawyers/initiatives/young_lawyer_toolkit.html

Get Involved:

If you are looking for inspiration for diversity programs and projects to implement in your own community, check out the Next Steps Diversity Database. The database is a joint project by the YLD and the ABA Council for Racial & Ethnic Diversity in the Educational Pipeline. The Next Steps Diversity Database contains a catalog of program items, database of expert speakers and information on creating written materials for your event. The database is updated regularly so be sure to check it out when brainstorming about diversity and inclusion events for your community.



YOUNG LAWYER
TOOLKIT

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/young_lawyers/diversity_and_inclusion/next_steps_project_database.html