



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Diverse Teams More Profitable: Orange County Bar Association Panelists Detail Financial And Other Benefits Of Diverse Teams

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif., Nov. 30, 2015 – On Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2015, the Orange County Bar Association (OCBA) hosted a panel that detailed the financial and other benefits of hiring diverse teams. The OCBA Diversity Task Force’s inaugural event, the seminar entitled “Moving Forward Through Diversity: Perspectives on the Collective Benefits of a Diverse Workforce in Today’s Legal Environment” featured Orange County Superior Court Judge Karen L. Robinson; Starbucks Corporation Director and Corporate Counsel, Employment Law Sara Bowen; Palace Entertainment General Counsel Michael L. Baroni; Baker Hostetler LLP Partner Joseph L. Chairez; Orange County Public Defender Frank Ospino; and Shook, Hardy & Bacon LLP Partner Michelle M. Fujimoto. Snell & Wilmer, LLP Partner and OCBA Diversity Task Force Chair Richard J. McNeil served as event moderator.

Judge Robinson opened the evening with a brief presentation about the nature of diversity as well as best practices to foster and maintain it through inclusion. Ms. Fujimoto expanded on Judge Robinson’s premise by presenting data from Catalyst (www.catalyst.org), which shows that more diverse teams drive higher profits and greater innovation. She noted the particular importance of diversity among litigation teams due to the increasingly diverse jury pools in the United States.

The panelists went on to address various aspects of inclusion and diversity. Sara Bowen explained Starbucks’s annual audit process, in which it collects data from each outside law firm it uses and awards the most diverse firm its Excellence in Diversity Award. Starbucks also offers guidance to its outside law firms that would like to become more diverse and actively mentors diverse attorneys in the local community. Michael Baroni provided examples of recruitment practices employed by Palace Entertainment to ensure a diverse applicant pool when hiring within its legal department. Joseph Chairez and Frank Ospino described cases in which their diverse teams were better able to serve their clients’ interests and more fully developed client trust. Following a selection of clips from the films *Twelve Angry Men* and *Runaway Jury* screened by Rick McNeil, Judge Robinson detailed the diverse jury pools she observes in her Court.

Over 75 attendees, including attorneys in private and corporate practice, members of the judiciary, and law school faculty, deans, and students, participated in the session. Participants discussed ways to include diverse team members, such as University of Pennsylvania Professor Angela Duckworth’s work on “grit” (<https://sites.sas.upenn.edu/duckworth>) and providing access to resources and skills training in such vital areas as business development.

The OCBA Diversity Task Force initiated its new focus early in 2015, under the leadership of Chair Rick McNeil and with the support of OCBA President Ashleigh Aitken. Its members include: Ashleigh Aitken, Aitken Aitken Cohn LLP; Rebecca Callahan; Larisa Dinsmoor, Orange County Public Defender; Michael Gregg, Littler Mendelson P.C.; Mona Hanna, Michelman & Robinson LLP; Dimetria Jackson, Golden State Foods; Deirdre Kelly, Whittier Law School; Kirsten Kreymann, Public Law Center; Monica Lukoschek, U.S. Immigration Law Group, LLP; Rick McNeil, Snell & Wilmer LLP; Kyhm Penfil, UC Irvine; and Mayte Santacruz, AlvaradoSmith, APC. Any ideas for future events or initiatives that the OCBA Diversity Task Force might sponsor may be submitted via email to info@ocbar.org.

About the Orange County Bar Association

Established in 1901, the Orange County Bar Association, with over 8,500 members, is one of the largest voluntary bars in California. The mission of the Orange County Bar Association is to enhance the system of justice, to support the lawyers who serve it, and to assist the community served by it.

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