GPSolo Podcasts – Brown Bag Series

Strategic Alliances: An Alternative Approach to Achieving Diversity & Inclusion
March 13, 2019, 12:00 p.m. CT

OPERATOR: This is Conference #3385747

Operator: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. My name is Ryan. I will be your conference operator for today. At this time, I would like to welcome everyone to GPSolo Brown Bag Session, March 13 Conference Call.

All lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise. After the speakers' remarks, there will be a question-and-answer session.

If you would like to ask questions during this time, simply press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. If you would like to withdraw your question, press the pound key. It is my pleasure to turn the call over now to Mr. Steve Wildi. You may now begin the conference, sir.

Steve Wildi: Thank you, Ryan. This is Steve Wildi and I'd like to welcome you to today's podcast brown bag session. It's "Diversity in Action." I’d like to turn over to Cedric Ashley who will be speaking for us today. Thank you, Cedric.

Cedric Ashley: Thank you, Steve. Good afternoon. I think it's afternoon for everyone at this point of – it's midday for everyone at this point, wherever you are. And maybe if you're on the West Coast, it's still morning.

If you're in Hawaii, it's very early. And if you're in Europe, maybe you're almost ending your day. So good day to everyone who's on the call of the day. Good day, good evening, good morning, wherever you are.
I'm Cedric Ashley; I'm the former Diversity director for the division, a former Diversity fellow, a current special advisor to the Diversity board, a current assistant editor of the GPSolo magazine and the Diversity co-chair for the State Bar or the state of New Jersey.

So I'm pleased to be here with you and pleased to talk about this topic of "Diversity in Action.” And just give you some highlights or some 30,000 foot previews of what we're looking at doing in New York City this spring, and what we're going to do in – via print, so in the spring conference – and then what we're going have upcoming in July and August – the July/August edition of the GPSolo magazine.

And then we're going to just be talking about how you can implement diversity in your practice as a solo, small firm practitioner, and what does it mean?

Not necessarily from the perspective of a formal definition, but just you – when you think of diversity, sometimes you may think of large organizations. And when I speak of diversity, I'm referring to diversity and inclusion.

So you may think of a larger organizations and how can those possible non-diverse organizations recruit, retain and develop, and promote more diverse candidates, or you may think of it in terms of, maybe, business opportunities, how organizations can try to attract diverse businesses or lawyers providing business services.

So, though, we'll talk sort of, in that perspective. But, we'll also just talk as solo and small firm practioners, how diversity – particularly if you're not employing folks and, particularly, if you are sort of a small shop, where you're all partners – but how diversity can enhance business, how can it enhance, obviously, your professional network and why it's – why it's good to have a broad base of people you're connected to that are different, rather than – and existing in some of our own silos that we do.

And I – and I'll talk in perspective of both the – it's a two-way – it's more than a two-way street. It's a – sort of like a superhighway and interchanges – the superhighway, where it's incumbent upon both the diverse person or the
person of a diverse background to engage and step forth to deal with diversity, as well as the – (to the) traditional owners we place on institutions, organizations we believe, that are not diverse, how they must embrace diversity.

So it's a mutuality there, and there's a self-empowered piece when I think diverse people, who step forward and take on the reins of owning diversity for themselves as well.

So starting with the program in New York City, hopefully, all of you will be attending the Spring Joint Meeting in New York City, Manhattan – the big borough (of) New York City, this May – first couple days in May.

And if you do, there will be some programming that's related to diversity. And in this program, we'll be focusing on the business case for diversity or strategic alliances – how strategic alliances can achieve diversity.

So not a bunch of wonky data and things of that nature, but just a real-life example of how a large – mid-size and large New Jersey diverse – a non-diverse firm, majority firm partnered with a small minority or diverse firm – minority-owned, female-owned firm and created a synergy, where they developed – when they began to work together.

So they didn't go as far as a merger, and they didn't go as far as acquisition, and they didn't go as far as just (inaudible) the partners and associates from the small firm and gobbling them up, they really created a strategic alliance where they actually in equal partnership, worked together to create this alliance.

And so, some of the – some of the areas that we'll cover – we're going to really cover the whole formation and some of the backdrop and back story to the creation of the alliance, how it's working, what some of the (warts) are, what some of the strengths and weaknesses are and how that can be replicated or modeled for other people to pursue such an alliance.
So – so we're going to explore, historically, how did this diverse firm, this – I'll say it's the two firms – how did the two firms see this need or this opportunity arise to create the strategic alliance?

I think that may be obvious, in a general perspective, that there's a need for – there’s plenty of organizations and corporations, who are saying that if you're not, who believe in diversity, who value diversity, it's a core value.

And they’re telling firms that we need to see a diverse staffing of a particular project, we need to see a diverse pitch to us. And if you don't have it, you might as well not make the pitch or consider or think that we're going to consider your business.

So this – so the global or the overall broad need, clearly exists. But what was it about these two firms that caused them to begin to explore how they can work together. And, particularly, you will find that it's about relationships.

This wasn't some big consultant-driven, "Let's look at these firms, and let's look at this firm, and let's begin to vet these entities." It started out with a relationship between a female partner at the larger firm and a female owner partner at the smaller firm.

I think that's significant because, again, it's – was about relationships, not about some sterile genetic vetting process of "We're looking for this and we're looking for this, so we are – we're a perfect match."

I think it's also – I think it's also encouraging and telling that this was – this was driven information, and it's driven in action by two women partners, both owners of their respective firms.

Obviously, the smaller firm got much more say in the ownership of it. And the larger firm is more people that you got to work through and divvy things like profits up with.

In that presentation, it's going to be more of a kind of a – not a fireside chat, a conversational chat and then we will explore some questions from the audience, as to what concerns or questions they might have.
We're going to explore what were the pain points? I mean you're talking about this mid to large starts – sized Jersey firm that's not as diverse as they want to be and this female – and it's jointly owned, but this African-American, partially female-owned firm that's – one is in the city, one is in the suburbs.

How did they come to address the pain points that they were individually facing, in terms of either growth at their firms or securing the business that they wanted to secure, and not being able to do it on their own or not being able to really achieve the level they wanted to.

So the smaller firm wasn't possibly able to go after certain large business. And then the larger firm wasn't able to go after certain business, where the company – where the entity or the government institution was looking for real participation by – whether you want to call it minority or disadvantaged businesses or minority, small business women-owned enterprises.

So they're going to have a good transparent conversation about those pain points. And then we're going to go further along through that process and explore how did they, seriously, begin to look at one another, as potential strategic partners and the – and the strategic alliance. And what was the – the journey like for that? How long did it take to materialize? What was the process like?

They're going to talk about the vetting process, (the courting) process. What hurdles existed? What push back existed? What problems existed? Where were those unspoken silent conversations that may have existed that you had to get over and get to?

Then we'll look at what were some of the benefits of the strategic alliance? OK? So what was the outcome of this thing? And (I had them) – we'll report to you now and they will report to you, but this is a strategic alliance that's still going on, that's been successful. So, it's, clearly, had some continuity and we want to see what some of those benefits are.
Oh, there's some obviously clear benefits. They were both able to secure – they were both able to pitch for and secure business that they would not have received if it wasn't for the strategic alliance.

And not just pitch for it and not just receive but, obviously, what does this all relate to? It all relates to making it (rain) and bringing in the revenue and having successful client engagements. So we're going look at those obvious benefits.

And then we're going to delve down to find out well what is it that makes us – how can we – how can we template this? How can we replicate this? There's nothing to (shape) – there's nothing to (rather hide). They're going to continue their strategic alliance. They will continue to pitch for and obtain the business they obtained.

But for the various people who (envision) from – living in New York that (we'd) – how can a person from D.C., Connecticut, Detroit, Chicago, L.A., Washington – wherever, how can they begin the steps of replicating this wherever they are? And can this become something of a new model?

And then we're going to jump into what does the strategic – what does their strategic alliance look like in practice? From the – from the joint perspective, do they – do they make pitches, all of their pitches together. Do you – do you jointly staff the various projects? Or how do you staff the work that you're doing?

Who determines who's the lead? Or is there a lead on any one particular thing? Or is everything joined? Is there a (co)? And is there – was there a lead and a – and a – and a sort of a vice or a co-team leader and a – and a deputy team leader on it? Or is everything truly a joint venture strategic alliance?

It's important when you're bringing together two potential different cultures – and it's less about culture, but it is. You have to focus on cultural issues and how do you work through those things?
But what's not different is everyone has to adhere to some level of – whether they are Rules of Professional Conduct or disciplinary rules, whatever the title is, in whatever jurisdiction, we've got it or the model RPC, we've got to follow some type of rules.

In New Jersey, they're called the Rules of Professional Conduct or RPC. So what unique or different RPC issues did you have to be concerned with – did they have to be concerned with from that joint strategic alliance perspective. Not just what was being done on joint projects, but is there anything that could spill over, in effect, the strategic alliance?

You're also dealing with, inevitably, on any of these joint ventures, I'm sure they had to deal with issues of supervising non-lawyers on these matters. So what's the culture like in the different firms?

Is it more of a hands-on approach at one firm or more of a broad approach in another other firm in terms of how much (leeway) a non-lawyer (has) in handling certain matters?

You know, how does – the signature like this – does the partner or attorney review everything in person visibly or do they hear it on the phone? I'll look at the first draft and via e-mail and say, "OK, no problem. Sign it with a slash with your initials and we're good to go?"

So all those issues that that could come up – and, obviously, issues of billing. What – how did you get to issues of billing and splitting fees? And how much work was put in? And how did you keep track of all those wonderful things?

We'll also look at some specific bumps in the road that they'd be willing to share, that we haven't specifically addressed and how did they resolve them? What were they? And do they come up again, are they recurring? Or is it just different bumps over time?

And, finally, as – with respect to the alliance or the – I would say, the – I would say the strategic alliance – where is it heading? Is it a merger and acquisition down the road? Have you thought that through? Is it some upsides and downsides to a merger acquisition?
And then from the different perspectives, I can see how a smaller firm, who's totally in control of – a five or six attorney firm not necessarily wanting to go into a 40 or 50 or more 80-attorney firm and becoming now with 10 percent of that overall firm and, disproportionately, there's only so much management and control that you're going to have in the larger firm, compared to where you are staying on your – on your own.

So we'll look at like a – whether or not there's any future direction, or whether this is what it is – a strategic alliance and that's the best way it is, and it's going to stay that way.

And then finally, we’re going to explore some of the different strategic alliance formats and what other models may exist to achieve diversity in a different way, so we're (going to talk) about achieving (the) diversity wire, where more diverse attorneys are moving into this larger firm.

Where keeping diversity where this minority firm and majority firm were working together on business for corporations who are seeking diverse, legal services providers. And there are different ways.

You can have a prime – where the diverse firm is the prime contractor, and the subcontractor may be the majority firm. Or, it could be reversed, where the prime contractor is the majority firm and the subcontractor may be the diverse firm. You can have sort of an equal co-council kind of horizontal model.

And then there are models that may also – that they will – they will look at in terms of how certain states or entities – are we – are encouraging for promoting, in terms of set aside how much business should be dedicated to – to diverse firms. So there's some external factors that may come into play, in terms of making a decision about the model.

And then you may have a referral model, where it's – you're working together to refer matters back and forth to one another. So that's the overview highlights of the spring session.
That’s off the top of my head. Let me look real quick, I should have had this, but that program should be at 10 am on – should be at 10 am on Tuesday, the 10th. Yes, 10 am – I'm sorry – Tuesday the – Tuesday – let's get this straight – 10 am, May 2nd, Thursday.

My dates were all crazy. I'm looking at 10, I'm thinking 10 am, and I'm saying the 10th. If you are in New York City on the 10th, you will be there on a Friday, hopefully, still having fun. So the program that I'm talking about would be May 2nd from 10 am to 11 am, Thursday, May 2nd, at the spring meeting. Hope to see you there.

I want to give some quick highlights, as to the – sort of right after – not I'd say right after that, but after that, and maybe right around this time of the annual meeting, the July- August edition of the GPSolo magazine will be coming out. And that issue is specifically on the diversity and inclusion in action.

So that's a dedicated – so I mean the – before I (read) this – just celebrate the overall GPSolo magazine board for having the vision to dedicate an entire edition of the (G.P.) – the award-winning GPSolo magazine to diversity.

That's a – that's the – this division has led, in my mind, and this – the data shows the overall bar in diversity issues. I believe I'm correct in saying that the GPSolo division – a little, small (protection) division. Prior to the ABA's adoption of a diversity plan, we adopted ours ahead.

Last year, 2017, 2018 – last year, two years ago, probably closer to 2017, the GPSolo magazine adopted a Diversity policy to ensure that we're reaching all voices, all fingers, all costs to the authors for the Diversity for the GPSolo magazine. So we – implemented diversity – an editorial policy, encouraging diversity.

And then also, I became sort of the special advisor for diversity for the magazine. And I'm not saying those things because those were the work of the entire board and some subcommittees that pushed those things along, including the subcommittee by Judy Toyer, who was a long-time member of the division, and has done tremendous work.
And with the lead of Jeffrey Allen and the staff lead of Rob Salkin. So if you see any of them at the spring meeting, give them a thumbs up for their (full-throated) support of diversity initiatives.

So the July-August 2019 edition of the GPSolo magazine, again, "Diversity in Action." We're going to look at a number of interesting topics and a number of interesting people.

And some of those topics include – and these are the general themes. When the magazine comes to print, the title may be shifted a bit. We're going to have one author looking at – looking back. Can you believe that?

The article is going to address – at a – a period of – it's going to look back to a period of time where the mere fact that person chose to love a person of the same sex, that prevented them from being admitted to practice in certain states. The mere fact of being gay, alone, was a bar to being admitted to practice in certain states.

And I'm honored to have Tom Prol, who is the former State Bar Association President for New Jersey State Bar Association and the first openly gay State Bar President. He will be authoring that article and I'm looking forward to that. And, hopefully, everyone will look forward to that.

Another article will be, tentatively, GPSolo taking the lead, that will be an interview by (Jay) – retired Colonel James Durant, who's former chair of the division current House of Delegates and was an inaugural Diversity fellow back around 1999 in the first class.

He will be interviewing Wynn Gunderson, who was the – around that time period was the Chair of the GPSolo division or just rolled off from becoming chair. But around that time period, he was one of the leaders that was involved in developing the Diversity Plan and the Diversity Fellows Program. So that's going to be very interesting.

A couple of other profiles, we'll be looking at some of this year's – and a prior Diversity fellow – we'll be looking at some profiles of some significant
people, who have risen through the ranks to show that diversity matters and diversity works.

So Andrea Van Leesten, Ginny Hsiao, Lewis “Jamie” Boston, and Jerry Christmas will be interviewing four former Diversity fellows – Laura Farber, James Durant, Amy Lin Meyerson and Dan Tann.

Laura Farber, James Durant and Amy Lin Meyerson are three former Diversity fellows who went on to become chairs of this division. So, again, it shows that diversity matters, diversity works and (retention) works.

And they've gone off not only to be chairs of the division, but to be influential leaders throughout the various parts of the ABA. So we'll have those interviews. And then Dan Tann, who's currently active in the – in the division will be another interviewee. He's not a former chair.

He's been on the council many years; he's held directorships for various divisions at various areas within a division and he's still a very active recruiter for Diversity fellows and mentoring Diversity fellows.

That article will be by our current chair, Lisa Atkinson on "Expanding Your Network." We often exist in silos, as both diverse and non-diverse people, and we need to begin to ask ourselves what can we all do to expand our network?

I like to say that diversity is not a one-way street. It's not a two-way street. It's really an interchange with overpasses, on-ramps and off-ramps of a multi-lane superhighway, and we need to figure out how to navigate that highway. So Lisa Atkinson, current Chair of the Diversity Committee, will be authoring that article.

Then we'll look at a very significant topic that's beginning to get a little bit more attention coming to the fore, and that will be unconscious bias, implicit bias and micro aggressions.

So before we can even, sometimes, focus on outright discrimination or disparate treatment or hostility or anything that may be overtly – overt and
really bubbling up top, we really have to look at what are those implicit biases, unconscious biases and micro corrections that we all have and we need to learn how to spot and to deal with?

I mean – and before we even talked about a – (specific) bias or an unconscious bias, we have to just begin with implicit association. So if I said, make sure I phrase it correctly, I don’t give you any hints, the well-esteemed neurosurgeon known throughout the country did a (won) – another tremendous job.

What images come to your mind? What do you think of as you’re – hear me talking about the – well-esteemed – and I'm not going to repeat the same way – nationally known neurosurgeon who takes risks and succeeds time and time again at the top of the surgical game? What comes to your mind when you're thinking of this neurosurgeon?

Well, a lot of people would automatically have a guy – maybe a white guy – but a guy in mind. Because we have been conditioned and trained through our environments to associate certain images and certain occupations with certain genders.

So before we get to the point of bias, we have to realize that we've got a lot of implicit associations going on and we've got a – we’ve got to figure out how do we sort of keep those in check, because the implicit association could lead to other things like implicit bias, like, "Well, she doesn't want to move up at the firm or take on this big litigation because she's – whatever, raising kids at home. Or he doesn't want to do this particular thing because of X, Y and Z."

So we get to these implicit associations, and then we may wind up having (bi) – and we too – wind up having biases because we think – I'll totally tell you a truthful bias I have that I recognize on this. May be definitely different and weird, too, but I recognize, I see it and I have to be conscious about keeping it in check.

And though you're like, "Well what is it – what is it – what is it?" It's different – it's different. It's pickup trucks – Ford F150s. I – when I see them
on the road, I automatically assign a lot – assign a lot of things to the driver, who I don't even see of that truck. And I recognize that.

And I haven't gotten to the point where I – soon as I see it, I want to start doing something intentional – intentionally discriminatory or biased, but I recognize that I have certain perceptions about the owners of those trucks, and that's a little – that's a little example on my end – a little different.

And then micro aggressions – the article, we'll look at micro aggressions and how – it's some of those daily – and if again, a lot of us are solo, small firm practitioners, so we may not be in a larger setting with other people all the time.

But it could be in court, you could be – it could be dealing with an adversary, where there's a little day-in, day-out, minor, not discriminatory, not hostile but not so friendly and micro – small – but a – but a – but aggressive in what that person is doing or saying or how they're behaving. And, we'll look at that.

That's going to be by our Artika Tyner, who's another former fellow – Diversity fellow, and is a professor in Minneapolis, Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota, University of St. Thomas, I believe.

Then we’re going to look at new ABA model rules (84G). (84G) is a – basically, I would call it a anti-discrimination – basically, it is – it's an anti discrimination rule. So you may have (lit) – you may have a legislation in some states that says you can't discriminate – (inaudible) discrimination or some civil rights law or the Title Seven on the federal level.

This is an ethics rule that deals with discriminations and improper conduct, based upon some of those protected classes, as it relates to our day-to-day lives as a lawyer. So it ranges everything from the law firm where or wherever, where the partner or somebody gets drunk and starts putting their hands on somebody.

Not only is that, potentially, criminal, not only that, potentially a violation of a civil statute, it's also, potentially, a violation of the ethics rules of, at least, from the model rules.
And I'm happy to say (in) New Jersey, we preceded the ABA by like 20 years. So we've had this rule – a version of it – (ours is not) the (test). I think the actual new rule by the ABA is better than ours.

But it's a rule that tried to curtail conduct by folks who are lawyers in the legal setting. And there's some nuances in those – the article will talk about – within the practice, outside of the practice setting as – and where you could run a file and where you cannot run a file.

We – we'll have a article by James Alexander Lewis, who's the – his article will be "The Future of Diversity in the Trump Era.” And he will explore sort of what does his (fertile) bench look like?

No, I mean I can't look at how many hundreds of people President Trump has appointed but, quietly, while all this other stuff is going on, that we see the face of the judiciary on the circuit court level and, obviously, the Supreme Court level has been changed.

And that's going to have an impact for practitioners, it’s going to have an impact for – to our – our proponents and supporters of diversity and inclusion for decades to come. So we'll have sort of an overview look at how Trump has reshaped the judiciary – the judiciary in, what, less than two – well, a little more than two years at this point in time.

And, finally, two other articles. One will be included in disabilities, looking at how are – or what are we doing to include lawyers within disability – with disabilities into the larger practice.

Not just physical barriers but just what are we doing to be intentional about incorporating or incorporating them and not being, I guess, indifferent to the fact that, that disabilities or differently-abled – they are different terms people use.

I try not to lock into one term, but how are – making sure that we realize that diversity is broad, and it's not just an historically – an historical group of people, who may have come out of slavery.
It's not just a person who may practice a religion that is in a minority, in one particular area of the country or country of the world. It's broad. And we're looking forward to seeing that explored.

And then, finally, the article – the last article will be the "Illusion of Inclusion." That's going to be – going back to inclusion disability – disabilities, I believe that Kathleen Havener, who’s going to author that.

And then finally, the "Illusion of Inclusion" by Denise Sharperson, who's going to take a real look at – sometimes we – sometimes we try – sometimes we don't try, wasn't that it? Sometimes we try to do the right thing.

And so – there’s some times we try to do the right thing and some times when we don't try to do the right thing. And there's this illusion that inclusion exists. So you may have diversity, you may have different people sitting around the table, you may have – you can (out) it in numbers, but is there true inclusion?

Are they at the table? And if they’re at the table, are they involved in decision making? Another phrase is sort of your – you invite them to the dance but isn't anyone is – are they dancing at the dance?

So the question becomes not just look good on the – on paper, but do we look good in action? Are we really, really – because when it's all said and done, if everyone around the table is a carpenter, and not – and I mean you just – doesn't matter what gender, race, religion. But if everyone is a carpenter, then every problem will look like a nail, and every solution will require a hammer.

When you don't have diverse workplaces or bar associations, or what – communities or whatever it may be, you have this homogeneous group-think way of doing things.

So everybody's looking, "Where's my hammer? Where's my hammer? Where's my hammer? Let me begin to look for the nail and hammer, hammer, hammer."
But when you have diversity, you have diversity of thought, you have diversity of experience, you have diversity of opinion. And that leads to more engaged – more fruitful conversations and conclusions and outcomes.

So to sort of move into the final piece that – at least, I'll lead into it for questions is – one, if you have a question, feel free. Do not be shy. Hit whatever button the operator tells you to hit and (hold) it and we can see what kind of answer we have, if we have if we have it. And if not, well, say, "Why, I don't have a truthful answer."

But it becomes what does diversity in action look like for you? What kind of self audit are you doing? What are you doing to sit back and reflect to say, "How?" What – wherever I am, whether I’m viewed as diverse or non-diverse by somebody, what am I doing to expand my network to become more inclusive?

Can I – can I – can I count the different genders, ages, races, religions? Can I count all the different types of groups of people that I can point to say, "I've had these different clients?" Do I have a network of attorneys that I could say, if I needed to – if somebody for cultural (inaudible) – and I mean we didn't even talk about cultural competency.

But to the extent that if I – if I – if I need a trusted advisor's, advisors and somebody I can bounce stuff off of because I don't know this particular thing how or how I should approach this particular thing or if I just think this person may be better served by this attorney because of their experience, because of whatever it may be, do I – do I have that network?

When I'm driving home and I'm looking at the houses or apartments or row homes or (inaudible) my condo, whatever it may be or farms, I'm looking to my left and my right, can I – can I really say that there is diversity in my neighborhood or does everyone look like me?

When I think of the last wedding that I attended, was the person like me? Excluding gender, was the person like me, in terms of racially, religious or national origin? Politically, were they like me or were they different?
When I was invited to my – at the most recent wedding, (that I was not in), what did that look like? Were – was the person who invited me like me – different or whatever?

Who's my go-to group of people on a regular basis and then they spend time with outside of (the) – outside of (law)? Or, within bar associations? I mean, is my go-to person going to look like me? Have the same experiences as me, or are they going to be different?

And if – whatever the answer is, if your content with that answer, that's fine. I would encourage everyone to try to explore and expand those borders of those networks because it is important.

But what can I do to do that? How can I go – how can I go about that? And that's about it. So it's about 1:42. I'll turn it over to the operator, if there any questions that anyone may have and we'll go from there.

Operator: That is noted. At this time, I would like to remind everyone in order for you to ask questions, please press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. We will pause for just a moment to compile the Q&A roster.

Steve Wildi: Cedric, this is Steve at the ABA again.

Cedric Ashley: Yes.

Steve Wildi: I just wanted to point out that – to everyone listening that the Diversity Fellowship Program is open for applications. If you go to our website ambar.org/gpsolo, there's a link at the top bar for the fellowships.

And I wondered if you had some experience with the Diversity Fellowship that you would like to share with us? I'd encourage you to apply.

Cedric Ashley: Oh, sure. Without a doubt. And I – Steve, you may have a (good) idea. Are we still live, as the operator doing what the operator is doing? Or …

Steve Wildi: Yes.

Cedric Ashley: … we're on – we're still live. OK, good.
Steve Wildi: We're still live. Yes.

Cedric Ashley: Very much. Thank you, Steve. Oh, thank you very much. Yes, if you are – if you go to the website and you've indicated – look at the materials, see if you're eligible. If you're eligible, if you fit the criteria, the category – if you fit the criteria and everything, apply. If you don't, please (forward) it off to somebody else.

I would have to say without – I became active in this – in the division through GPSolo, G.P. diverse – Diversity Fellowship, nominated by the person I mentioned, Dan Tan, who's one of the people who would be interviewed in our magazine.

And it was – it's the – it's been the greatest, in terms of Bar Association work and everything, it's been, probably, the greatest experience I've had within the – within the ABA. I started out as a Diversity fellow, I think, in 2014, 20 – yes, 2014, 2015. There about – no, I've been 2013, 2014 – but I think in 2014.

Fall 2014, was accepted as a Diversity fellow. Attended the Fall meeting in San Antonio, that was under the leadership then of Amy Lin Meyerson, who was Chair of the division at that time, was appointed – and – this is the appointment – everything would have taken place in the spring of 2014.

And then the ABA – when the bar year started, that's when I would have been serving these positions. Started out as a Diversity fellow, was on the GPSolo magazine. (I've been) on a couple other committees. So was, obviously, on the Diversity Committee.

My initial thought was, "Oh my god." I was appointed a mentor, who was Colonel James Durant, great guy. My initial appointment as a member of the Editorial Board of the magazine. I was like, "Oh my god, why? Oh, why did they appoint me? I just – Editorial Board?" I mean, "No, I don't want to do it."
Turned out to be the greatest appointment that I had, and so (we) – it's been so much fun. I would have never thought that I would have liked it so much and excelled at it so much.

Since then – since 2014, I've been active in the division. I – after – (it was) a period of time, maybe a year or so, I became, I think, a (coach).

I think I became a co-chair of the – a co-chair or chair in (two place) here, but a chair or co-chair of the Diversity Committee the following year. And, I was reappointed the following year. And then I was elected to General Counsel, so now I'm a member, which I didn't say earlier, I'm a member of General Counsel.

And still on the magazine board, now Assistant Editor. And it's been – yes, it's – thank you, Steve. I mean that – if – who – please share it with – if you're not eligible, please share it far and wide, it's the – it's the – it's a very good program, so I'll stop there.

Steve Wildi: And, again, it's – if you just go to our website, ambar.org/gpsolo. There's a link right at the top of the page. Nominations are due by April 12th. So, please apply, as Cedric recommends. And he's been a great fellow and great to work with in division. Operator, do we have any questions?

Operator: No participant on queue for question at this time. Please continue.

Cedric Ashley: OK. So I'm not going to keep everyone. No question is too unimportant – too small, too dumb, too whatever. I'll see if Operator pulled up any other queue. So now the question – see now is the time. If you got a question, whatever may be – and the question is not necessarily a question.

The question is a question or a question is you want to speak and you want to say, "I think this call totally sucks." Or you may say, "I want to say this call was great." Or you may want to ask about something totally different.

So now's your opportunity. But at the same time, if there aren't any, I will – I'll turn it over to Steve and we'll conclude a little bit early, if there are no calls coming through via the – via the Operator.
Operator: Still no participant on queue for question at this time. Please continue.

Cedric Ashley: Any …

Steve Wildi: I can wrap it up, if you like?

Cedric Ashley: Sure.

Steve Wildi: I just want to thank everybody again for joining us. The podcast is a sneak preview of some presentations scheduled for the 2019 section of Litigation and Solo, Small Firm General Practice Division CLE Conference at the Marriott Marquis in New York from May 1st to the 4th.

Go to www.ambar.org/ltgpsolo for more information. Also in conjunction with the meeting prior to the meeting, there's a 2019 LGBT plus forum, which is available for a special price as an add-on to our May meeting, and we encourage you to attend both. Thank you, Cedric. And thank you, everyone, for listening today.

Operator: This concludes today …

Cedric Ashley: Thank you, Steve.

Operator: Sorry for – sorry for that, sir. This concludes today's conference call. You may now disconnect.

Cedric Ashley: Thank you.

Steve Wildi: Thank you.

END