From Visible Invisibility to Visibly Successful:

The Women of Color Research Initiative Program Toolkit
While all women continue to confront obstacles in their effort to advance and succeed in the legal profession, women attorneys of color face a unique double-bind of both race and gender. For instance, according to the 2013-2014 NALP Directory of Legal Employers, attorneys of color comprise just 7.10% of law firm partners, and women attorneys of color comprise just 2.26% of law firm partners.

Disturbing statistics like this led the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession to undertake one of its most important projects, the Women of Color Research Initiative, launched in 2003.

With the assistance of a research firm, the Commission produced three cutting-edge research studies that included qualitative and quantitative data collected through nationwide survey research and focus groups. This research analyzed the career trajectories and experiences of women of color and the prevalence of factors that support or undermine their retention and advancement.
The first report, *Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Law Firms*, published in 2006, presents the findings of the initial research and concludes with specific recommendations for law firms interested in retaining women of color. In 2008, the Commission released a second publication, *From Visible Invisibility to Visibly Successful: Success Strategies for Law Firms and Women of Color in Law Firms*, featuring the insights of 28 women of color who reached the partnership ranks of their law firms despite the barriers standing in their way. A third publication, *Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments*, discusses the experiences of women of color in corporate legal departments compared to their law firm colleagues and was released in conjunction with the 2012 ABA Annual Meeting.

Our research found that, in both law firms and corporate legal departments, women attorneys of color receive less compensation than men and white women; are denied equal access to significant assignments, mentoring, and sponsorship opportunities; receive fewer promotions; and have the highest rate of attrition.

Clearly, much work remains to create a level playing field for women attorneys of color, but working together we can help create positive change.
As a leader in the legal community, you can call attention to the challenges and barriers that numerous women of color face and provide resources to help your organizations and clients understand the issues and implement solutions. You can and should play a leading role in achieving a level playing field for women attorneys of color.

To assist you with this important task, the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession developed the Women of Color Research Initiative Program Toolkit. This Toolkit will guide you every step of the way and provide you with all the necessary tools to conduct a conference to inform on the research and strategies that will ensure the success of women of color.

By presenting the information in this Toolkit, your organization will be part of an important national effort to foster meaningful dialogue and effect change on an issue of vital importance to the legal profession. We urge you to convene a program to discuss the bedrock principles of diversity and inclusion within the workplace as well as how to eradicate barriers and implement strategies to ensure the advancement and success of women attorneys of color.
The Program Toolkit: How It Works

This Toolkit provides you with all the materials you need to present a successful program, including: a program agenda, customizable PowerPoint slides, scenarios for discussion, program handouts, and a bibliography. The Toolkit also includes sample copy for use in your promotional efforts and suggested dates so that your program can coincide with national events to maximize publicity.

The Toolkit allows you to:

- Tailor the program to any audience.
- Customize the program to the format and time allotted.
- Facilitate discussion using a variety of different scenarios.
- Offer future reading and learning opportunities.

The Toolkit is designed to help navigate the most frequently encountered challenges women of color face. The scenarios address topics such as:

- Salary disparity and performance evaluations,
- Personal appearance,
- Diversity committee participation, and
- Mentors and training.
With This Toolkit, You Can:

- **Design** and present information on issues related to the visibility of women of color in law;
- **Increase** awareness of facts about women attorneys of color and how disparate treatment impacts law firms, corporate legal departments, and the legal profession;
- **Identify** factors that influence disparate treatment and discuss strategies that firms and legal departments can use to ensure the success of women of color;
- **Foster** an open dialogue about critical areas that affect women of color such as mentorship and support, networking, salary disparities, performance evaluations, work/life balance, career goals, and much more;
- **Explore** both known and hidden biases that affect diversity and inclusion; and
- **Energize** your legal community to apply broad recommended practices applicable to women attorneys of color increase inclusiveness.

With the Toolkit, you will also provide specific strategies and action steps that can be taken by law firms and legal department leaders to:

- **Recognize** the value that each woman of color contributes to the firm’s business, such as client services, committee work, and other non-billable activities that the firm needs and mandates;
- **Develop** and communicate defined measurement tools to assess the progress of women of color at every level and practice setting;
- **Include** diverse members on committees and create strategic planning goals around diversity and inclusion issues, with adequate resources and participation from firm or department top leaders like the CEO or chair;
- **Provide** women of color with equal opportunities and equip them with the necessary tools to develop a book of business for career growth; and
- **Create** an atmosphere and culture that will lead to increased retention and advancement of women of color.
The Women of Color Research Initiative
Program Toolkit: Materials for Your Use

All materials for the Toolkit are available online at www.ambar.org/WomenOfColor.

Materials include:

1. Program Agenda—A conference agenda for either a 11/2-hour or a 21/2-hour program.

2. PowerPoint Slides—Customizable slides with talking points to use for programming and discussion.

3. Core Reading—The Women of Color Research Initiative’s research studies provide in-depth background information:
   a. Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Law Firms
   b. From Visible Invisibility to Visibly Successful: Success Strategies for Law Firms and Women of Color in Law Firms
   c. Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Fortune 500 Legal Departments

4. Handouts—Executive summaries of two of the Women of Color Research Initiative’s publications are available as handouts and may provide the necessary materials for CLE credit depending on your state’s accreditation standards.

5. Library of Scenarios and Discussion Guide—A library of written scenarios for large or small group discussions with a discussion guide for presenters.


7. Marketing the Program—Text that can be used to create a marketing flyer including a program description, tips for attracting an audience, and suggested dates to consider holding the program to tie in with larger national events.

8. Bibliography—List of additional resources for a more in-depth understanding of the research as well as potential solutions and strategies.
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A project of the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession

For more information, visit www.ambar.org/WomenOfColor