



# PERSPECTIVES

A Magazine for and about Women Lawyers



## The Significance of the Kamala Harris Vice Presidency and Deeper Dialogues Among Women Bolster Diversity and Inclusion



AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

Commission on Women  
in the Profession

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## Perspectives: July 2021

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# The Kamala Harris Vice Presidency—What Does It Mean?

By Erin Gordon

*A former lawyer, Erin Gordon is a San Francisco–based legal affairs journalist and the author of the women’s fiction novels Cheer, Heads or Tails, and Beshert.*

**A**s a biracial, first-generation American woman who graduated from a historically Black college and university, Vice President Kamala Harris is the very definition of intersectionality, making her election both historically and culturally significant.

## Historic Development and Natural Progression from Her Predecessors

“In a real sense, her election was a historic moment. She was elected after 58 elections in which the two people elected were men,” says St. Louis University Law Professor Joel Goldstein, an expert on the vice presidency. “In many ways, her election is more historically significant than the election of the president. She personifies America’s basic ideals: inclusiveness, opportunity, equality. It’s a much different moment than when Al Gore, Dick Cheney, or Joe Biden became vice president.”

Women have long been excluded from serving in the office because the executive branch traces its origins to the military, according to Lara Brown, director of George Washington University’s Graduate School of Political Management in Washington, D.C. “Our entire notion of the executive branch has had a masculine cast. And Harris’s breaking that barrier is very important.”

Feminist scholar Jo Freeman says Harris’s election should be viewed not as a stimulus but rather as an inflection point. “She’s part of a long-term process,” says Freeman, referring to previous candidates Geraldine Ferraro, Sarah Palin, and Hillary Clinton. “She’s just more visible than others.”

## How Harris Earned Her Position

Harris’s “deep, deep knowledge in so many areas of expertise” elevated her among other contenders for the nomination, according to Stephanie Schriock, president of Emily’s List, which works to elect women Democrats. “She was District Attorney of San Francisco, [and] Attorney General of California—which is a huge executive job for a state with the fourth largest economy in the world. Add her strength in domestic and foreign policy from her time in the Senate and she’s the whole package.”

Freeman also notes the importance of Harris’s personal connections in landing the nomination. “That she was a friend of Biden’s son Beau made the difference. And there’s the significance of Harris’s being a[n alumna] member of a Black sorority, a group of women who actively seek to promote their own into office.” Almost all Black women in office were once members of these sororities, according to Freeman.

## What Harris Will Make of Her Vice Presidency

Although Harris has finally broken through the glass ceiling that Hillary Clinton famously said had 18 million cracks in it, her success or failure as vice president will depend primarily on President Biden.

“Her opportunities and constraints will be determined by the president, not because of her gender but because of the nature of the office,” which has no decision-making power in and of itself, Brown explains.

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Nevertheless, Harris is expected to go far in the role, given that Biden has already shown he wants her to be his true partner.

There is already a huge contrast between the Biden-Harris relationship and, say, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, Freeman adds. “JFK and Johnson were mismatched. JFK picked him [solely] because he needed Texas to win, and then he largely ignored Johnson,” she explains. In contrast, “Biden and Harris look a lot more compatible.”

During Harris’s selection, Biden insisted that she would be the last person in the room—the last person he leaves meetings with, the person who could change his mind, Goldstein points out. “I expect her role to develop but to look a lot like Biden’s own vice presidency: a close, across-the-board advisor, a troubleshooter,” he says.

Harris has an office in the West Wing right between Biden’s chief of staff and the national security advisor, which “symbolizes that she’s important,” Goldstein notes. “She also has a weekly private lunch with the president.”

Harris’s particular assignments may be influenced by her intersectionality—the fact that she’s a woman, Black, Indian American, and the child of immigrants.

“Her demographic creates an opportunity for certain diplomatic roles, for different speaking assignments,” Goldstein says. “She has a lot of life experience, so there may be areas where she has additional insights or credibility and can speak with authority.”

Other assignments could include criminal and civil justice, given her background as a prosecutor and a government lawyer, as well as her work on Senate committees, including the Judiciary Committee.

In the past, many vice presidents, such as Mike Pence and Al Gore, were given more domestic responsibility because the president they served with wanted the role of chief diplomat. The Harris-Biden dynamic is different given Biden’s longstanding relationships in Washington, Brown notes.

“The president and vice president are typically about balancing—geographics, factions within the party, and generation,” she explains. “Since Jimmy Carter, the Washington outsider president has picked a Washington insider vice president: Clinton-Gore, Bush-Cheney, Obama-Biden. Now, it’s the opposite situation. Biden is a 40-plus-year Washington insider and our present crisis is domestic. So he may hand foreign policy to Harris.”

Although Biden is the linchpin in Harris’s success or failure, his service as vice president for eight years bodes well for her.

“Most presidents don’t know what it’s like to be vice president, but he appreciates the possibilities of the office and its frustrations,” Goldstein says. “Also, Biden’s signature characteristic is empathy. Those two factors are encouraging for Harris. Biden is likely to be helpful to her as she navigates the office.”

Regardless, the public is likely to grant Harris less margin for error than her male predecessors. “Unfortunately, it’s [still] a fact of our life: Women and people of color are treated differently than white men,” Goldstein notes.

There may be efforts to minimize her role, to conflate it with the role of First Lady, Brown adds. “Her

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being the first woman to serve as vice president is tricky,” she says. “We saw it with the inaugural coverage. Should we talk about her clothes? Does that trivialize her role? We’re having to reorient our understanding of leadership.”

To survive the added scrutiny, Harris’s primary job is to not make any gaffes, according to Freeman. “It’s hard to say if she will be judged harsher than white men,” she says. “Gore made no gaffes, but he inherited gaffes from Clinton. So, to some extent, she will [similarly] be judged by what Biden does.”

Although it is still the early days for the Biden-Harris administration, it is not too soon for opinions about how Harris is faring.

“What she’s doing right now is what I would expect: She’s spending time with the president, attending briefings, asking questions, establishing the fact that she’s in the room, establishing early on that she has access to the president. That he listens to her makes her a player,” Goldstein says.

“She becomes important to everyone else—to foreign leaders and to others in government,” he continues. “She’s already called foreign leaders in France, Australia, and the Congo. It’s her way of making a contribution and establishing relationships. She’s laying the groundwork.”

### **Future Impact of Harris’s Vice Presidency**

Harris’s historic service will undoubtedly change how the office of vice president is perceived.

“In popular culture—on almost all movies, sitcoms, TV series—women didn’t gain [executive] office by election but rather by some odd turn of events,” Brown notes. “It always raised the question: Should a woman be a legitimate vice president or president?” That ended with Harris’s election.

For watchers of women in politics, it is exciting to know that the vice presidency is, traditionally, the best springboard for becoming president. According to Brown, Biden is already looking to help Harris establish the credentials she would need to be his successor.

If Biden decides not to run in 2024, he could endorse her as his heir apparent like Clinton did with Gore. He could, instead, elect to step back and make it an open contest, like Obama did in 2016. “Usually, the runner-up for the nomination in the previous election is considered ‘on deck’ for the nomination unless the vice president gets the blessing from the president to be the party’s standard bearer,” Brown says.

Biden is already showing signs that he intends to endorse Harris, “though there are always un[fore]seen circumstances,” Brown notes.

This leads to the age-old question: Would Harris, a biracial woman, be electable?

“Political science research shows that women are as electable as men,” Brown says. “The issue isn’t gender but party. Only one person in recent history has won a third term for his party: George H.W. Bush. Harris has a lot better chance of becoming president if Biden doesn’t run again in ’24.”

There is another white man besides Biden who factors into Harris’s future; namely, former president Trump.

“If she’s the candidate in ’24, predictions for her success will depend on whether Trump runs,” Freeman

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says. “Apart from Trump—and my jaw drops open at his loyal following—I don’t see any truly outstanding Republican candidates, though there are plenty of competent candidates.”

If Harris makes no gaffes and Trump does not run, then her future “falls back on normal political science,” Freeman adds. “The single best predictor of a presidential election outcome is the state of the economy on election day.” More particularly, “it’s the state of the economy for particular voters; in 2016, the economy was in good shape, so Hillary should have won, but the economy was actually lousy in certain battleground states.”

The second most important predictor of an election outcome is voters’ gut feeling about the incumbent and the incumbent party, Freeman says. Harris will have a shot at being the first woman president “if Biden and Harris don’t alienate big groups, if the economy is good, and if she commits no gaffes,” she notes. “Those are lots of ifs.”

No matter where Harris lands after the vice presidency, Schriock expects her serving in the role to have a ripple effect in politics and society at large.

“It’s so hard to be what you can’t see, so it’s hard to underestimate the importance of seeing a woman, a Black and Asian-American woman, as vice president,” Schriock says. “Her presence is critically important for encouraging others to rise up and run for office,” she continues. “We were already seeing a surge in women interested in running since the 2016 election, which is a credit to Hillary Clinton. Others saw Clinton run, saw her attacked, saw her lose, and instead of stepping back, they rose up. And now we see the power of the victory. We were already at a moment of sea change, and Harris’s election threw gasoline on it. This is a generational shift, and Harris took it to the next level.”

Schriock expects this Kamala Effect to transcend politics. “In this country, women and men don’t see women in executive positions. More than 20 states, including California, have never had a woman governor. There still aren’t a lot of women CEOs,” she says. “It’s incredible to have a woman in a visible executive position, and after the pandemic, we’ll see more of her as she begins traveling. Culturally, it’s going to have a big effect.”

## How Deeper Dialogues Among Women Can Bolster Diversity and Inclusion

By Cynthia L. Cooper

*Cynthia L. Cooper is an independent journalist in New York and a former practicing lawyer.*

**W**hile recently moderating a panel called “A Day of Conversation on Race, Ethnicity and Gender in the Legal Profession” for her law firm, Angela Liu, a partner specializing in securities litigation at Dechert LLP, started with this question: “When did you first become aware of the differences between how women of color and white women experience gender bias?”

Liu admits that she felt hesitant about moderating the program—intended to be a sharing of experiences around race and gender by women of color and white women—when first approached by Dechert’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) team in tandem with its Global Women’s Initiative. “I thought, ‘This is going to be a difficult conversation. I didn’t want to feel that one group was pitted against another,’” Liu recalls.

But as co-chair of the firm’s Asian Affinity Group and a participant in the Global Women’s Initiative, she also recognized an opportunity. “This topic of intersectionality, probably now more than ever, is having a real profound moment,” Liu points out. “It was something we wanted to discuss in light of the events of the last year—the pandemic, BLM (Black Lives Matter), Stop Asian Hate, etc.”

The panel brought together two white women, one Latina, one African American, and another woman who, like Liu, is Asian American.

Personal stories about how overlapping identities such as race and ethnicity may affect women—often in ways that are distinctly different from what men of color or white women experience—lie at the core of the term “intersectionality,” a concept first articulated by scholar and law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Liu notes that the Dechert conversation was “incredibly eye-opening.”

Linda Goldstein, a panel member and partner at Dechert, agrees. “I’ve been part of a lot of diversity and inclusion seminars over the years. This was one of the most emotionally direct. It was very worthwhile,” says Goldstein, a litigator who has been practicing for more than 35 years.

### **Breaking a Bubble and Building Allies**

The Dechert program grew from a multipronged rollout of *This Talk Isn’t Cheap: Women of Color and White Women Attorneys Find Common Ground*, a 2020 publication of the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession. [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/women/thistalkisntcheapreport10\\_23\\_update\\_final.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/women/thistalkisntcheapreport10_23_update_final.pdf).

The project began in 2016 as an initiative championed by Michele Coleman Mayes during her three-year term (2014–2017) as chair of the Commission, and she continued to shepherd it after her tenure ended. Mayes, vice president, general counsel, and secretary for the New York Public Library, wanted to bridge a gap that she believes prevents women of color and white women from working together more closely to

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address gender bias as well as concerns about diversity, equity, and inclusion.

As an African American lawyer, Mayes says she often heard private conversations among women of color in the profession about obstacles that they were encountering. “The little, dirty conversation that would take place behind closed doors is—‘You know that woman doesn’t *get* me.’ And yet we’re supposed to all be on the same team. And that wasn’t the case. The women of color would suffer in silence. And I didn’t want it to be silent anymore,” Mayes explains.

Research by the Commission since its founding in 1987 looked at how women, as one generic group, were faring, without studying additional obstacles that women of color might face. When, in 2006, the Commission released its first separate study on women of color in the law, *Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Law Firms*, the findings showed disparate and blunted progress, even compared to the slow advances of white women. Today, the gains are still miniscule: Women of color account for a mere 3.3 percent of equity partners at law firms, according to the 2020 Vault/MCCA (Minority Corporate Counsel Association) Law Firm Diversity Survey Report. “Despite increases in hiring and promotions, women of color remain significantly underrepresented at partnership and leadership levels and overrepresented among attorney departures,” according to the report. (Women in total held 22.3 percent of equity partner positions, a sign of “progress,” the report notes.)

Convinced that women of color and white women needed to better understand their commonalities and differences, Mayes proposed a more reflective approach. The title, *This Talk Isn’t Cheap*, is a counterpoint to the common refrain of “talk is cheap” in public discourse. “In many ways, talk isn’t cheap—it’s your currency—because it allows you to begin, if you are so inclined, an honest way to broach a topic that maybe everyone is uncomfortable with, some more than others,” Mayes says.

In this case, the talk is among women. “I very consciously wanted it to be woman to woman,” Mayes notes. “The question is, ‘how can we move forward collectively?’ You can’t solve a problem you can’t talk about.”

Not everyone even saw the problem. Mayes recalls how, during the planning stage, she described the idea of opening better communications between white women and women of color to another lawyer. “The white woman to whom I was speaking said, ‘Is this an issue?’” Mayes recounts with a touch of disbelief. “I said in my most sympathetic tone, ‘Of course it is.’”

### **Focus Groups Share Experiences**

The project has several components, beginning with focus groups of women lawyers conducted by Dr. Arin N. Reeves of Nextions LLC. The volunteer participants, interviewed in discrete affinity groups, included 49 women of color (29 percent Black or African American, 25 percent Hispanic or Latina, 20 percent Asian or South Asian, 16 percent biracial or multiracial, and 10 percent American Indian or Native Alaskan) and 45 white women.

Women of color in the focus groups were asked what they wanted white women to know, and, conversely, white women lawyers were asked what they wanted women of color to know. The answers were revealing. Women of color wanted white women to know that combining race and ethnicity makes the gender experience different, but also that not all women of color can be lumped together. They also saw white women as being defensive when faced with racial and ethnic biases, making it thorny territory to traverse. The white women who participated wanted to know the perspectives of women of color and said they were interested in identifying their own unconscious biases but didn’t know how to begin conversations without seeming to be offensive or rude.

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The resulting 21-page report, chock-full of quotes and personal recounts of experiences, was paired with the equal-length toolkit that includes specific tips on how to dig deeper in discussions about the intersectional impacts of race, ethnicity, and gender in the practice of law. [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/women/thistalkisntcheap\\_toolkit10\\_26final.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/women/thistalkisntcheap_toolkit10_26final.pdf).

### **Digging into Diverse Perceptions**

The complementary toolkit includes a roadmap for panel or small group discussions, a facilitator's guide, and slides and video vignettes by performer Anna Deavere Smith on topics of belongingness, identity, brokenness, and poverty versus privilege. Suggestions for a meaningful conversation are included, such as this tip: Gently remind participants that the discussion might feel uncomfortable.

"A toolkit is a different way of igniting the conversation. It adds an active component so that it's not just research that is on a shelf," says Aracely Muñoz, a current Commission member who helped to develop the materials. "We often hear firms should do this or that. This toolkit gives individuals an opportunity to take responsibility for making change and bridging gaps within the workplace.

"It gives everyone agency to do something," adds Muñoz, who serves as director of the Lawyers Network and the Washington, D.C., office of the nonprofit Center for Reproductive Rights.

The approaches in the toolkit give space for nonmajority women to express their needs and concerns in their own words. "There are biases that we're not aware of," Muñoz says. "People don't intend to create barriers, but they do."

As a Latina, Muñoz says she sometimes hears inappropriate comments about how well she speaks English. "No one wants to believe that they are being racist. No one wants to say, 'You're being racist.' On both ends, it's an uncomfortable place to be. But it's necessary if we are to move the needle in some way.

"The last year and everything that has happened in this 'reckoning' have sparked some important conversations, and they're not pretty," Muñoz continues. "Simply because we are lawyers, it doesn't mean they are going to get any prettier.

The key, according to Muñoz, is active listening.

### **Seeking a Different Path**

The *Talk* initiative continued to expand with increased outreach. Under the guidance of current Commission Chair Maureen Mulligan, the group conducted a CLE-credited webinar, available from the ABA (ABA On-Demand CLE CW2011TTCOLC).

Next came the launch of *A Day of Conversation*, in which the Commission invited women lawyers to register and set up an event, using the toolkit. The day of outreach, set for April 27, 2021, resulted in 149 downloads of the toolkit and 69 registrations from law firms, nonprofits, corporate counsel, government offices, and even judicial staff, according to Ashleigh Hill, program specialist for the Commission.

Wendy Shiba, a retired general counsel and former Commission member, also worked on developing *This Talk Isn't Cheap*. As someone of Asian Pacific American heritage, Shiba says she's treated as a "perpetual foreigner," no matter that she was born and raised in northern Ohio. "But where are you *really* from?" people ask.

During her 40-year career, Shiba says she frequently bumped up against the “model minority” myth, casting a stereotype that Asian Pacific Americans, while smart and hardworking, are passive and lacking in leadership qualities.

“One of the outcomes we hoped for with this project is that white women who are in a position of seniority and influence in their organizations would be better sensitized to the issues of women of color who are often more junior and don’t have the position and the voice to advocate for themselves,” Shiba observes.

After setting up a panel discussion at her law firm with four partners around the concepts of *Talk Isn’t Cheap*, Lorraine McGowen, a partner at Orrick, became a believer in the power of the conversation. “It exceeded my expectations. Our people have read the studies,” she says, noting that, as an African American, she considers Orrick to be a leader in diversity and inclusion. “But this was personal. This goes beyond reading a report with a bunch of statistics.”

“All of the panelists said they felt raw—that’s how candid the discussion was,” McGowen continues. “One of the partners acknowledged that she always thought that she was great on race until we had this conversation, and she recognized that she was really focused on gender but had not focused enough on intersectionality. And that meant a lot.”

As a result, McGowen says, Orrick has become more focused on including women of color at all levels of its activities. “Hearing from peers takes away the myth that something like that couldn’t happen here,” she points out. “We can always do better.”

## VOICES

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# After the Resolution: What I Learned from 10 Years of Advocacy

By Mary Reding

**E**arly in her legal career, Eleanor was working as a judge advocate providing complex legal advice to the U.S. Army. Laura was working as a child rights advocate at a high-profile nonprofit in Washington, D.C. Donna was a corporate lawyer at a law firm in Manhattan. I was in-house corporate counsel for Pebble Beach Company. By 2011, those jobs, careers, and dreams were changed forever by love and the decision to marry a member of the military. Each of us started with successful legal careers ahead of us and ended up moving every two to three years across the country and around the world. Over a 20-year military career, the multiple moves can make a spouse's traditional legal career very difficult, if not impossible.

In June 2011, the four of us came together to form a bar association to represent the interests of lawyers married to servicemembers. What started with a small group quickly grew as we were drawn together by our shared experiences in the military community, our passion for the law, and our desire to serve. Soon after we started, we received the phone call of a lifetime from Roberta D. Liebenberg informing us of the interest of the Commission on Women in the Profession in sponsoring a resolution for the American Bar Association (ABA) House of Delegates. The goal was to remove licensing barriers to allow military spouses to maintain their legal careers.

With the support of Estelle Rogers and Lorie Masters, our sponsors from the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession, the ABA House of Delegates passed the resolution by a unanimous voice vote. We spent the next 10 years working state to state to change the licensing rules for military spouses. We were successful in creating licensing accommodations for military spouses in 41 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Efforts are underway in six more. Here is what I learned after the House of Delegates resolution:

1. **Invest in people.** In a decade, we have grown to more than 1,000 military spouse lawyers—over 90 percent women. Our model was focused on growing leaders and advocates. With hundreds of lawyer members across the country, we knew that people were our biggest asset and we had to invest in them. Our members are experienced lawyers who share a passion for the military community and a knowledge of how to navigate complex legal systems. We provided leadership training, mentorship, and access to job opportunities. In return, we had a committed group of volunteers dedicated to the mission.
2. **Brief, execute, debrief, repeat.** Developing and documenting process and procedures for advocacy is key. Strategy, call plans, and a roadmap were created and updated with new lessons learned after every successful state rule change. Our foundation of continuous learning provided critical skills and a cycle of training for our members. We now have hundreds of licensing experts across the country with strategic plans for successful advocacy.
3. **Identify core values and find supporters that share them.** Core values of community, service, and opportunity guided our early days and continue to play a key role in decision-making. By defining our core values, it was easy to identify organizations and key influencers that share our vision. We found true partnerships with the Commission on Women in the Profession, judge advocate general organizations, and women's bar associations across the country. We also identified organizations

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with shared core values where we could use our expertise to offer pro bono legal services for gold star families.

Looking back on 10 years of advocacy, we are proud of the military spouses who volunteered to create real impact for the military community, and we are inspired by the next generation of military spouses who now have the opportunity to continue successful legal careers. This would not have happened without the support of the ABA and its continued partnership to advance women in the profession.

# CWP NEWS

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## 2021 Brent Honorees Announced



Hon. Irma Gonzalez



Joan Haratani



Joyce Hughes



Pamela Karlan



Ellen Rosenblum

The Commission on Women in the Profession is proud to announce the recipients of the 31st Annual Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Awards. The award was established in 1991 to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of women lawyers. Each year, this award honors up to five outstanding women lawyers who have achieved professional excellence in their area of specialty and have actively paved the way to success for other women lawyers. These women demonstrate excellence in a variety of professional settings and personify excellence on either the national, regional, or local level. The honorees will receive the award during a virtual ceremony on Thursday, August 5, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. CT, as part of the events at the 2021 ABA Hybrid Annual Meeting.

The 2021 Margaret Brent Awards honorees are:

- Hon. Irma Gonzalez—U.S. district judge, retired, San Diego, CA
- Joan Haratani—partner, Morgan Lewis, San Francisco, CA
- Joyce Hughes—professor of law, Northwestern University School of Law, Chicago, IL
- Pamela Karlan—principal deputy assistant attorney general, Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice; co-director, Stanford Supreme Court Litigation Clinic, Stanford Law School; Washington, DC
- Ellen Rosenblum—Oregon attorney general, Oregon Department of Justice, Salem, OR

Information about how to support the Commission and its 2021 Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Awards can be found at <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity/women/margaret-brent-awards>. Support opportunities are available through July 23, 2021.

The Commission thanks Goodwin Procter LLP for its generous support as a Silver Commission sponsor, which allows the Commission to move forward with its project and activities such as the 2021 Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Awards. A full list of supporters can be found at <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity/women/margaret-brent-awards/2021-brent-awards-supporters>.

Individual tickets for the 31st Annual Margaret Brent virtual ceremony are now available for \$30 as part of the registration process for the ABA Hybrid Annual Meeting, which can be found at [ambar.org/annual](https://www.americanbar.org/annual).

Margaret Brent, the namesake of the Brent Awards, was the first woman lawyer in America. She arrived

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in the colonies in 1638. She was a master negotiator, an accomplished litigator, and a respected leader. She was involved in 124 court cases over eight years and won every case. In 1648, she formally demanded a “vote and voice” in the Maryland Assembly, which the governor denied. More than 250 years later, *Harper’s Magazine* noted: “By this action, Margaret Brent undoubtedly placed herself as the first woman in America to make a stand for the rights of her sex.”

# CWP NEWS

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## **21-Day Grit and Growth Mindset Challenge Successfully Launched**

The Commission on Women in the Profession has introduced its newest tool for retaining women in the profession, helping them thrive, and expanding awareness of the grit and grow mindset: the **21-Day Grit and Growth Mindset Challenge**, [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity/women/initiatives\\_awards/grit-project/21-day-about](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity/women/initiatives_awards/grit-project/21-day-about).

This 21-day challenge is composed of 21 short, daily activities (typically 5–15 minutes) and is designed for all women working in, or supporting, the legal profession. More than 520 people have signed up to receive daily email reminders to participate in the 21-Day Grit and Growth Mindset Challenge.

To launch this project, the Commission on Women in the Profession and the ABA Antitrust Law Section’s Women Connected Committee co-hosted “Alison Levine and the Grit and Growth Mindset” on June 2. Levine, an American mountain climber, sportswoman, explorer, and leadership consultant, spoke about her experiences that exemplify grit.

## CWP NEWS

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### **Webinar Series—The Financial Future Is Female: Women Lawyers and Wealth Creation**

The Commission on Women in the Profession held the first webinar of a four-part series **The Financial Future Is Female: Women Lawyers and Wealth Creation** titled “Empowering Your Own Financial Future: An Overview” on April 20, 2021. The webinar panelists provided practical tips and advice on how to start thinking about money management, negotiating salary and compensation, and creating future goals. They also offered additional financial and lifestyle advice.

Speakers included Maureen Mulligan, chair, ABA Commission on Women in the Profession, as moderator; Virginia “Ginger” Brennan, senior vice president, ABA Retirement Funds Program; Paulette Brown, senior partner and chief diversity and inclusion officer, Locke Lord LLP, and past president, American Bar Association; Jin Hwang, startup founder, Jinvesting Consulting, and former associate general counsel, Verizon; Wendi Lazar, partner, Outten & Golden LLP; and Shenique Moss, deputy legal counsel, the Executive Office of Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

The Commission on Women held its second webinar of the series, titled “Young Lawyers: A Deep Dive on Debt, Health, and Wealth,” on July 13 from 1:00 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. ET. This webinar was intended to empower young lawyers and focused on identifying strategies to manage debt and create long-term financial health and wealth. Panelists shared real stories on how the pandemic has impacted their finances, along with common financial concerns young lawyers face early in their career as well as potential means of addressing those concerns.

The panel was moderated by Maria Fisher, vice president and national sales director, ABA Retirement Funds Program. Panelists included Roberta “Bobbi” Liebenberg, partner, Fine, Kaplan & Black, R.P.C.; Jasmine Grant, associate attorney, Shulman, Lopez, Hoffer & Adelstein LLP; Michelle Medugno, investment advisor, Voya Financial Advisors Inc.; Sheena R. Hamilton, partner, Dowd Bennett LLP; and Samantha Martin, attorney, Samantha Martin Law.



# CWP NEWS

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## Commission Sponsors Day of Conversation

The Commission on Women in the Profession invited organizations to participate in the Day of Conversation on April 27, 2021. Registrants committed to hosting conversations to address equity in their workplaces by using the Commission's **This Talk Isn't Cheap: Women of Color and White Women Attorneys Find Common Ground** report and Guided Conversations toolkit. The 54 participating organizations were asked to provide feedback about their Day of Conversation experience, via a response form, to inform future Commission efforts.

The goal of the Day of Conversation was to build allyship, increase unity, reduce bias in the legal profession, and help people create next steps in order to commit to race, ethnicity, and gender equity. The research and toolkit provided to Day of Conversation participants can be found at [ambar.org/guidedconversations](https://www.ambar.org/guidedconversations).

# CWP NEWS

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## **Release of Report: Practicing Law in the Pandemic and Moving Forward**

The ABA Coordinating Group on Practice Forward has released the results of a nationwide survey of more than 4,200 ABA members. **Practicing Law in the Pandemic and Moving Forward** assesses the experiences and needs of lawyers in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic and their expectations about how law practice is likely to evolve as the worldwide health crisis winds down and eventually comes to an end. The report was authored by former Commission on Women Chairs Stephanie A. Scharf (2017–2020) and Roberta D. Liebenberg (2008–2011, 2013).

# CWP NEWS

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## Release of Report: In Their Own Words

A new report, **In Their Own Words: Experienced Women Lawyers Explain Why They Are Leaving Their Law Firms and the Profession**, released by the Commission on Women in the Profession, looks at the factors that influence the decisions by experienced women lawyers to remain in practice, move to a different job within the law (including in-house counsel), or step out of the profession altogether after 15 or more years of practice.

The report is authored by Joyce Sterling, a professor at the Sturm College of Law in Denver, who has researched the problems facing women in their legal careers for more than 30 years, and Linda Chanow, a nonprofit executive and nationally recognized authority on women lawyers. The report addresses three questions:

- What do women lawyers like about the practice of law?
- What negative factors or experiences do women identify as forces that make them consider leaving the practice of law?
- What changes can be made to encourage women to stay in law practice?

The full report, *In Their Own Words: Experienced Women Lawyers Explain Why They Are Leaving Their Law Firms and the Profession*, can be found at [https://americanbar.org/groups/diversity/women/initiatives\\_awards/long-term-careers-for-women/in-their-own-words.html](https://americanbar.org/groups/diversity/women/initiatives_awards/long-term-careers-for-women/in-their-own-words.html).

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