

FINDING THE PHOENIX IN THE ASHES OF 2020: USING OUR POSITIONS IN LAW TO ACHIEVE DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES THAT PROMOTE JUSTICE IN THE WORLD AROUND US

Date:

Wednesday, May 19, 2021

Time:

12:00 p.m. – 1:20 p.m. CDT

About this Webinar:

This webinar is an encore presentation of a session from ALFA International’s International Client Seminar (ICS) this past March. During this session, the panel discusses how 2020 was a year of change in ways most of us could not even imagine in 2019. From a pandemic that shut down the world and impacted women and minorities more sharply than white men, to protests over police violence and racial inequality in our criminal justice system, to a Supreme Court decision over LGBTQ rights in the workplace, to a new woman Supreme Court justice appointed weeks before the presidential election, there was unprecedented change in the world as we know it. As those who work in law and our system of justice, it is our dual privilege and responsibility to leverage our positions to cause positive change in 2021 and beyond in response to the events of 2020. This panel focused on how we can start discussions and bring the positive changes home to our own workplaces to increase both diversity and inclusion in our everyday world. **There will be a live interactive discussion and Q&A in Zoom breakout rooms at the conclusion of the recorded session.**

Moderator:

KATE WHITLOCK, a senior partner with the ALFA International member firm of Hawkins Parnell & Young, LLP, Atlanta, Georgia, has spent her entire professional liability, products liability, and premises liability career defending people who are accused of not doing their jobs right. Clients include lawyers, insurance claims handlers, product designers, construction professionals, property managers and others in cases with claims of malpractice, sexual misconduct, design defect and more. She takes the complex and makes it simple; the confusing, understandable. Almost all of Kate’s cases come to her with complicated underlying transactions. She works hard to untangle those early on so the matter can be brought to conclusion as efficiently as possible. Kate works tirelessly for her clients, appearing in state and federal trial courts, courts of appeal, and alternative dispute forums. She has tried more than 60 cases to verdict and taken many cases all the way through appeal. Embracing pandemic realities, Kate has tried a virtual bench trial and argued to the Georgia Supreme Court virtually, bringing home the win in the Supreme Court case. She has received several professional honors, speaks and writes on numerous subjects, and is active in multiple professional and civic organizations.

Presenters:

EDWARD BLAKEMORE is Assistant General Counsel with Rockwell Automation, where he has primary responsibility for the management of all product liability litigation, commercial litigation, environmental liability litigation, and toxic tort litigation filed against the Fortune 500 Company. Prior to joining Rockwell Automation, Edward was Counsel-Litigation for Eaton Corporation, where he managed the defense of product liability, commercial, employment, and intellectual property disputes for seven years for the Fortune 500 Company. He is

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the President of the Cuyahoga County Public Library Board of Trustees and is a member of the Applewood Centers Board of Trustees. He earned his B.A. degree from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, and his J.D. degree from the University of Dayton School of Law in Dayton, Ohio.

LORRIE VICK LEONARD is an Associate General Counsel & Chief Litigation Officer for Allianz Global Corporate & Specialty, NA (AGCS). In that capacity, she leads a staff of professionals whose responsibilities include management of internal investigations, employee relations matters and litigation, vendor contracts, corporate litigation, real estate and claims for extra-contractual liability. One of her major responsibilities includes creating and implementing strategy to manage outside counsel spend while achieving the best result for the Company. Before joining AGCS, she was a practicing attorney at Baker & McKenzie in Chicago, Illinois and Foster, Swift, Collins and Smith in Lansing, Michigan. Formerly, Lorrie was a member of the ABA Standing Committee on Lawyers' Professional Liability and spoke at numerous conferences on litigation management, conflicts of interest, and avoiding malpractice claims. She has been practicing law for more than 35 years and is a member of the Association of Corporate Counsel Chicago Chapter and the Michigan and Illinois State Bar Associations.

SUSAN RIDGEWAY practices in Missoula, Montana, as a partner of Axilon Law, the ALFA International member firm in Montana. Her practice is focused on litigation of business and commercial claims in a wide range of industries. She has represented clients in disputes involving breach of contract, construction defects, commercial real estate, condominium rights, insurance defense, insurance coverage, surety, indemnification, bad faith, product liability, professional negligence, employment, covenants not to compete, shareholder liability, disregard of the corporate entity, health care, banking, trucking, manufacturing, retail, and agriculture. More recently, she has represented clients in the developing field of assisted reproductive technologies. Susan is experienced in all aspects of dispute resolution and civil litigation in both state and federal courts, including mediations, arbitrations, trials, and appeals. She also handles some transactional work. Susan has dedicated a portion of her practice to LGBTQ family rights; she has litigated ground-breaking cases and provides legal services for surrogacy arrangements and gamete or embryo donations. She is recognized as a Super Lawyer, holds an "AV" Peer Review Rating for legal ability and ethics from Martindale-Hubbell, and is a frequent guest lecturer at the University of Montana School of Law.

JESSICA J. THOMAS is Director Counsel, Employee Relations at Target Corporation. Jessica provides day-to-day counseling, training, and advice to HR leaders responsible for supporting over 800 Target stores in the Northeastern region of the United States, including New York, Connecticut, Maine, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire. Jessica also works with Employee Relations teams to identify and resolve legal and HR-related issues as well as to ensure strategies and actions in Employee & Labor Relations matters support the company's brand, mission, and philosophy. In addition to supporting the execution of HR and business objectives and strategies, Jessica serves as lead ER counsel for Target's Asset Protection and Property Management teams. Jessica also leads a team of legal professionals responsible for providing ER advice to HR and other business partners, employment litigation across the Northeast, Midwest, and the South, and nationwide agency charges for the HQ, Distribution, and Stores organizations. Jessica serves on the Board of Directors for Twin Cities Diversity in Practice and is a 2020 Leadership Council on Legal Diversity Fellow. Prior to joining Target, Jessica was Senior Corporate Counsel with Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Inc., where she was responsible for leading the Employee Relations Department; overseeing the defense of guest litigation, nationwide agency charges, employment litigation, and employment arbitration; and project management for the company's multicultural initiative established to attract and retain diverse employees and guests.