

# Stride

A Communication from the NYSBA  
Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

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## Darryl Gibbs Recipient of 2014 Diversity Trailblazer Award

**By: Brandon Vogel**

For some law students, Darryl Gibbs is the role model he never had.

He has risen through the ranks of his profession and given back at every turn to law students of color.

For his leadership and ability to draw others to the cause, the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion presented its Diversity Trailblazer Award to Gibbs at the Celebrating Diversity Reception on January 27 during the Annual Meeting.

### A choice for the better

Growing up, Gibbs wanted to be “one of the cool businessmen in suits.” The South Jamaica, Queens, native was the first in his family to go to college.

He dropped out after his first year and ran with a tough crowd, until he decided to do something better with his life. While working with black and Latino teenagers and young boys in group homes for seven years, he earned his undergraduate degree from Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus, and entered law school. “I knew that I would have better opportunities with a law degree,” said Gibbs.

He graduated from St. John’s School of Law in 2000 and joined Proskauer Rose LLP. He went to work for Safe Horizon, Inc., a nonprofit, two years later and then began work at AXA in 2005, where he manages the Commercial Agreements Group as lead director and associate general counsel.

### Mentor-in-chief

About six years ago, Gibbs met Professor Leonard Baynes, the first director of the Ronald H. Brown Center for Civil Rights at St. John’s School of Law and the 2010 recipient of the Diversity Trailblazer Award. They quickly connected and discussed ways to improve minority representation in the legal profession.

The Brown Center hosts a two-year program for first-generation college students, historically underrepresented students or students from disadvantaged backgrounds. “I could have used a summer-long program like this prior to law school,” said Gibbs. “I thought it was a good organization.”

In 2009, AXA began to take interns from the program, as did Hughes, Hubbard & Reed LLP and Paul Hastings LLP. The interns at AXA told Gibbs that they really needed mentors, so he created a mentoring partnership with the Brown Center. “The lawyers are really excited to be mentors,” said Gibbs.



**A Signature Moment:** Darryl Gibbs (l) displays his 2014 Diversity Trailblazer Award. (l – r) NYSBA President Dave Schraver, Committee on Diversity and Inclusion co-chair Ken Standard and Sherry Levin Wallach, chair of the Membership Committee, applaud his achievement.

Since the Brown Center partnership was created, eight interns have gone on to law school.

“Darryl is a leader in the legal profession who serves as a role model for men and women of every race and background,” wrote Baynes in his nomination letter.

Gibbs is excited to receive the award. “This is what I love to do. It gives me a sense of the impact I have had,” said Gibbs. “The award gives me a chance to smile and smell the roses for a bit. There’s a lot of work to do yet, but I am enjoying it now.”

View a **video of the ceremony**, which includes Mr. Gibbs’ remarks. ■

*Vogel is NYSBA’s Media Writer.*



## A Time to Connect: The 2014 Celebrating Diversity in the Bar Reception



Photo: Steve Hart

**Connecting:** Reception attendees meet with NYSBA Practice Section Representatives during the 2014 Diversity Reception.

The New York State Bar Association held its 11th Annual Celebrating Diversity in the Bar Reception following the Trailblazer Award ceremony honoring Darryl Gibbs. Over 300 people gathered in the Beekman Parlor of the New York Hilton Midtown Hotel to congratulate Mr. Gibbs and connect with fellow practitioners. Representatives from nearly all of the Association's 25 Practice Sections were on hand, encouraging NYSBA members – and even non-members – to join and take part in Section programs and Activities.

"I cannot overstate the need for all attorneys to network, communicate and support each other in their work and on behalf of the profession," said Kenneth

G. Standard, co-chair of the Committee. "For diverse attorneys, the need to connect is crucial. I'm glad the Association can provide this forum where everyone can relax, celebrate our award winner and share in the work people have done to enhance diversity awareness within the profession."

From another perspective, the reception allows NYSBA members – and again non-member attorneys – to meet leaders from many of the minority bar associations located in the New York Metropolitan area.

"I enjoy this event as it affords an opportunity for minority bar representatives to meet and catch up with what's hap-

pening in their respective associations," said Earamichia Brown, past chair of the New York State Conference of Bar Leaders. "It's also a good time to encourage partnerships among the minority bars and the state bar."

Rosevelie Marquez Morales, co-chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, along with Ken Standard presented Mr. Darryl Gibbs with this year's Diversity Trailblazer Award.

"Events such as this help communities know the work that has been done by trailblazers and how others can get involved," she noted. "It's inspiring to hear all the stories of volunteerism and participation." ■

# Spring 2014 Youth Law Day Programs Open a World of Possibilities for Hundreds of Prospective Law Students

By: Mark Wilson



Photo: Meghan Lalonde

**Looking Ahead:** High School Students at Youth Law Day Program. New York Law School, February 7, 2014

Since 2006, the New York State Bar Association has sponsored a pipeline initiative that draws diverse prospective law students – the nation’s future lawyers – closer to the threshold of the legal profession.

Initially developed through the Association’s Law, Youth and Citizenship Program (the first event was held at Fordham Law School), Youth Law Day (YLD) has become part of many law schools’ efforts to reach diverse high-school students interested in learning more about a career in the legal profession. Since then, the number of attendees at these programs has exceeded one thousand students.

As with most beginnings, the idea for the program emerged from a fundamental need. In 2004 then NYSBA President Kenneth G. Standard convened a Special Committee on Youth Outreach to address inequities in opportunities for diverse youth – in particular, the educational underachievement of minorities and the impact it has on society.

Eileen Gerrish, current director of the Law, Youth and Citizenship Program (LYC), recalled starting her job at the State Bar and taking on this new initiative. She attended meetings of the Special Committee to gain insight on its mission and develop a plan.

“The idea was to segment concerns within the Special Committee and deal with discrete issues that might be more manageable,” explained Eileen. “One of the issues in the education-achievement area was the eventual creation of the Youth Law Day program.”

Eileen prepared an educationally sound program model that could be replicated easily by any law school interested in hosting an event. Her office developed templates of invitations, checklists, correspondence and related information and posted them on the YLC website. She added the ABA’s Choose Law video as a program resource, on the recommendation of Ken Standard, who had seen it in conjunction with his ABA diversity

efforts. Eileen established a working relationship with Debra Lesser and the New York City Public Schools as part of the effort to connect with metropolitan-area high schools, and provided printed copies of the Pocket Constitution to all program attendees.

A few years later, responsibility for the program shifted from LYC to the Committee on Minorities in the Profession, later renamed the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion. Today, there is a subcommittee with seven members who maintain contacts at all 15 law schools throughout New York State and work to develop programs at each school on a regular basis. As a result, six schools held YLD programs between February 7 and March 31 this year.

“This past year we have been very focused about having a dialogue with the law schools,” said Elise Jaffe, chair of the Youth Law Day Program Subcommittee. “We are delighted that we have been able to expand the scope of the program to reach so many local youth. We want to continue to deepen the substance of the program to be sure we are engaging the students when we bring them to the table. The momentum and continuity we have developed in our relationship with the law schools has given us the opportunity to do more.”

Programs typically include keynote speakers from diverse backgrounds, such as Brooklyn District Attorney Kenneth P. Thompson, Bronx District Attorney Robert T. Johnson, and Brookhaven Councilwoman Valerie Cartright. Members from the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion are asked to attend the lunch portion of the program and discuss their experiences with students. This one on one is sometimes the defining moment in a student’s decision to pursue a law-school education and legal career.

“It’s another example of how NYSBA members step up and do wonderful things for students in New York State,” says Gerrish.

# 2014 Reception Sponsors

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## Additional Underwriting Support:

- Black Bar Association of Bronx County
- Metropolitan Black Bar Association
- Epstein Becker Green P.C.
- Joyce Y. Hartsfield, Esq.
- Joseph L. Serling, Esq.

# Scenes from the 2014 Youth Law Day Programs



Photo: Elise Jaffe

**A DA at YLD:** Bronx County District Attorney Robert T. Johnson addresses students at the Cardozo Law School Youth Law Day, March 21, 2014.



Photo: Meghan Lalonde

**A Program with Swag:** Attendees of New York Law School's program pose for the camera on February 7, 2014. More than 150 students attended.



Photo: Rosevelie Márquez Morales

**Youth Outreach at Work:** Kings County District Attorney Kenneth P. Thompson (second from right) poses with attendees of Youth Law Day at Fordham Law School, March 31, 2014.

## Current Diversity Report Card Available



Kenneth G. Standard, Co-chair of the New York State Bar Association Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, presented the biennial 2013 Report Card to the House of Delegates on January 31, 2014. The report was approved by the House on the same date.

The first report issued in 2005 marked the Association's commitment to enhancing diversity at every level of participation and providing reporting of its progress every other year. This Fifth Edition of the Diversity Report Card reveals that the Association and its Sections have made significant strides since the first report, but that there is still significant work to do.

Since the first report, subsequent data-gathering efforts and resulting reports have been issued every other year, with project oversight moved to the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion in 2011. With each report, more detailed data have allowed a more comprehensive analysis of how far the Association has come in raising the awareness of diversity issues within its own organization and the profession. After publication of the 2011 report, committee leadership agreed that that year's format would serve as a benchmark for subsequent reports, with only minimal references to earlier editions of the report, as needed. This agreement was made to coincide with the start of the Association's presidential Section Diversity Challenge in 2011 – 2012, followed by a second yearlong challenge in 2012 – 2013.

Overall, data gathered for the 2013 Report Card reveal that:

- Eleven women serve as Section chairs, comprising more than 44% of Section chairs in 2012 – 2013. This reflects a significant increase from the number of female Section chairs in 2010 – 2011, which was 25%. This 44% represents the highest percentage of females in any one reporting category.
- During this reporting period, only three of the Association's 25 practice Sections had a member who is diverse based on ethnicity, race or sexual orientation serve as chair. The committee was disappointed in the slow progress of the Association's diversity efforts in terms of Section leadership.
- Twelve Section executive committees had ethnic/racial diversity equal to or greater than their Section membership, compared to five Sections in 2011.
- Twelve Section executive committees had sexual orientation diversity equal to or greater than their Section membership. This is twice as many as reported in 2011.
- The number of members who decline to report their diversity status is growing and is of increasing concern to the committee.

At the House meeting, Mr. Standard asked delegates – as Association members – to provide information about their gender, ethnic, sexual orientation and disability status in order to better chart participation of diverse members in Section and association leadership. He also addressed an increase in the number of members declining to provide diversity information.

"The most important thing I want to emphasize with you," he said referring to the report, "is information. We lack information on certain categories of diversity, but more importantly a number of our members feel uncomfortable in making these disclosures – even though they will not be made public, are kept confidential, are received and held by only a very limited number of people within the Association. The committee does not have names, just numbers. So we are hopeful we will get to a point where people who have a disability or people whose sexual orientation is different from the majority of the members of this House will feel comfortable making those disclosures, because only if we as a committee have this information in the aggregate, are we able to do what we can to make everyone feel comfortable, welcome and valued as members."

View the complete **2013 Diversity Report Card**, which is also posted on the Committee's **website**. ■

## How to Succeed as a Summer Associate / Summer Intern

The committee hosted an evening program on March 26 at New York Law School for 1L and 2L students on how to get a summer associate or intern position.

The meeting included a panel presentation with attorneys from the public, private and non-profit sectors, offering insights and tips on ways to present oneself, be helpful and be noticed. Fifteen students from more than a half dozen law schools took part.

The response from participants was positive. "It was particularly valuable to hear from representatives from such a range of practice areas," was one student's feedback on the program. ■



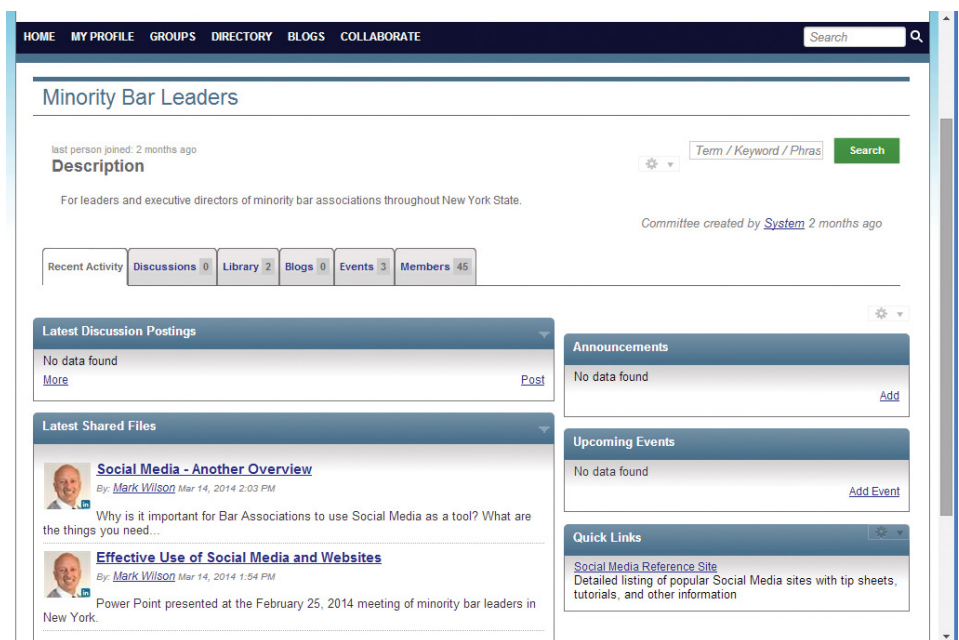
**Leading by Example:** Presenters at the Summer Intern program on March 26 were (l to r, first row) Hon. Margarita Lopez Torres, Kings County Surrogate's Court; Emilio Estela, Deputy Bureau Chief, New York County District Attorney's Office, Trial Bureau; program moderator Rosevelie Márquez Morales, partner at Harris Beach PLLC; Neysa Alsina, staff attorney, Municipal Credit Union; and Andrea Alonso, Member of Morris Duffy Alonso & Faley. Program participants appear behind the presenters.

## Minority Bar Leaders Online Community

Earlier this year, the New York State Bar Association unveiled a new online community for minority bar association leaders. The community will provide a forum for minority bar leaders and executive directors to discuss issues common to association management and operations, an electronic library for posting and sharing related references, a statewide calendar of events with links to the minority bar websites and opportunities to create blogs for viewing by other community members.

"The idea is to expand the concept of connectivity beyond the traditional list serve format," explained David Adkins, NYSBA's Chief Technology Officer. "These closed communities provide enhanced services and are an easy and effective way to keep in touch with minority bar leaders."

The Committee on Diversity and Inclusion will provide information on related programs and activities to the community through an events calendar that all members can use to promote their association's events. Inquiries about the community are welcome by contacting Mark Wilson (518.487.5540 | [mwilson@nysba.org](mailto:mwilson@nysba.org)). ■



**An Online Glance:** A look at the nascent Minority Bar Leaders Community Page.

## Law Student Conference Day

The Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, in sponsorship with bar associations and law firms throughout New York State, is hosting its Fourth Annual Minority Law Student Conference Day on Thursday, August 7, 2014, from

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at New York Law School, 185 West Broadway, New York, NY. This half-day program is free and open to current law students and recent graduates. Sessions will be presented on crafting resumes, drafting cover and

thank-you letters and interview preparation—including fashion advice and tips on how to be an engaging candidate.

To register, contact Bridget Donlon at 518.487.5541 or [bdonlon@nysba.org](mailto:bdonlon@nysba.org) ■

## Next Meeting of Minority Bar Association Leaders

The next meeting of minority bar association leaders and directors is scheduled for Monday, September 22, 2014 at the law offices of Epstein Becker Green, 250 Park Avenue, New York, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Diversity Trailblazer Award, will attend and lead a discussion on the impact minority bar associations can have within the legal profession and the communities they serve.

from 6:00 to 6:30. A deli buffet will be provided. Teleconferencing service will also be available for those unable to attend in person.

To register, contact Bridget Donlon ([bdonlon@nysba.org](mailto:bdonlon@nysba.org) | 518.487.5541).

Court of Appeals Judge Jenny Rivera, a 2012 recipient of the Committee's

There will be a meet and greet of bar association leaders and members of the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

## Call for Nominations: Candidates for 2015 Diversity Trailblazer Award



The call for nominations for the New York State Bar Association's 2015 Diversity Trailblazer Award is now available. The Trailblazer Award recognizes exceptional efforts by men and women within the legal profession to promote the full and equal participation of diverse people at all levels of the profession. Each Diversity Trailblazer candidate should present a unique blend of experience (from up-and-coming to lifetime), skills and accomplishments. New York attorneys, whether practicing or not, are eligible. **Download the fillable pdf form.** For more information, contact Mark Wilson ([mwilson@nysba.org](mailto:mwilson@nysba.org) | 518.487.5540). ■

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**PRIDE**  
MONTH

In celebration of  
**LGBT Pride Month**

**June 2014**

## MISSION STATEMENT

The objectives of the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion are to promote and advance the full and equal participation of attorneys of color and other diverse attorneys in the New York State Bar Association and in all sectors and at every level of the legal profession through research, education, fostering involvement and leadership development in NYSBA and other professional activities, and to promote knowledge of and respect for the profession in communities that historically have been excluded from the practice of law.

The Committee shall also foster the development of, monitor progress of and report on diversity initiatives of the Association, as well as partner with the Sections to continue to pursue enhanced diversity and inclusion in the Association, including among the leadership of the Association.

In conducting its work, the Committee shall consult with and engage Association leaders, other entities and individuals, including Sections of the New York State Bar Association, the New York State Conference of Bar Leaders, the Committee on Leadership Development, the Committee on Women in the Law, the Committee on Civil Rights, the Committee on Issues Affecting People with Disabilities, the Special Committee on LGBT People and the Law, The Law, Youth & Citizenship Program, minority and women's bar associations, and others with an interest in the Committee's mission and activities.

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## Subcommittees

Constance Baker Motley Symposium

Diversity Reception Event Planning

Diversity Report Card

Long-Range Strategic Planning

Programming

Trailblazer Award Nomination Review

Youth Law Day



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**COMMITTEE ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

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