

Debevoise
& Plimpton

Diversity and Inclusion



“We are committed to creating and sustaining a community that fosters full inclusion of diverse talent at all levels of the firm.”

Michael W. Blair, Presiding Partner (2011 – 2022)



Diversity, Inclusion and Community Drive Our Firm

Our clients come to us for the finest legal advice and service. We provide that service by bringing to our firm the best and most diverse talent, and by working to build and sustain an inclusive community – one in which our diverse group of lawyers can grow, thrive and work as a single team, weaving together the power of the many different perspectives and experiences they bring.

The firm has been engaged in diversity and inclusion leadership efforts for many years. As an example of our focus, the firm has been on *The American Lawyer's* “A-List” every year since the creation of this honor in 2003. This annual list of the “best of the best” highlights the top 20 most well-rounded firms of the year by measuring cultural and financial data. The areas of excellence that factor into “A List” recognition are revenue per lawyer, pro bono commitment, associate satisfaction and racial and gender diversity among the firm’s partnership.



“Diversity and inclusion lie at the core of our promise of talent and service. We recruit with a lens wide open to the range of lawyers who can make us better and we provide an environment in which they can reach their full potential. We seek to build teams that can work effectively across difference, both internally and with our clients.”

Michael Gillespie
Corporate Partner and Co-Chair of Diversity & Inclusion



“I wouldn’t be where I am today without the support, guidance and mentorship of my Debevoise colleagues. As a firm, we remain committed to providing our diverse lawyers with the training, the opportunities, and the platform to thrive in their careers.”

Natalie Reid
Litigation Partner

Community and Connection

One of the greatest strengths of Debevoise is our community. This has been true throughout the history of the firm. More recently, we have built upon that strong foundation with specific community-building initiatives and firmwide events.

Firm Culture

Town Halls. Since the start of the pandemic, the firm's Presiding Partner has held global town halls every two weeks. These town halls have covered a range of topics, including a frank discussion of social, political and other events of significance to our community, reiterating the firm's focus on building an inclusive community where everyone feels safe and valued.

Advising Program. Through our advising program, associates have the opportunity to discuss their career development with an assigned advising partner. We reshaped the program, with the goal of ensuring that each associate has advising relationships with three partners over the course of their first four years.

Mansfield Certification. In 2021, Debevoise decided to seek Mansfield Rule certification, which is awarded to firms that have at least 30% women lawyers, lawyers from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, lawyers with disabilities and/or LGBTQ+ lawyers in candidate pools for significant leadership roles and opportunities. Mansfield Rule Certification is evaluated over a 12-month period, and Debevoise will attempt certification in 2022.

Introspection. The global racial reckoning ignited by the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and many others both challenged and provided an important opportunity for the firm to freshly assess its diversity and inclusion efforts and identify strategies to accelerate the rate of change. During this time of reflection, the firm examined its processes to identify and eliminate bias and build stronger bridges of understanding between our people. We have rededicated ourselves to match our diversity and inclusion aspirations with more tangible achievements. As an example, in addition to building upon our pro bono work and financial contributions to enhance racial justice efforts, we have undertaken our InConversation Speaker Series.

Focus on Personal Connection. Working remotely during the pandemic highlighted the strength and resilience of our culture and established best practices to continue our development and training efforts as well as our connectivity with each other to enhance our sense of community.

Community Support

Diversity & Inclusion Committee. The newly created Diversity Committee is comprised of associate and partner representatives from each affinity group and meets periodically to discuss issues diverse attorneys face as well as provides a forum where various members can bring up ideas and collaborate with each other. It is led by the Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Team, a leadership group of two former Management Committee partners, the Global Director of Talent, the Director of Global Diversity & Inclusion and Diversity & Inclusion professional staff focused on raising the bar for the Firm's diversity and inclusion strategy and implementing our D&I priorities.

Affinity Groups. Our Affinity Groups – Asian Lawyers Affinity Group, Black Lawyers Affinity Group, First Generation Professionals Affinity Group, International Lawyers Affinity Group, Jewish Lawyers Affinity Group, Latin@ Lawyers Affinity Group, Lawyers with Disabilities Affinity Group, LGBTQ+ Lawyers Affinity Group, Muslim Lawyers Affinity Group, Native American Lawyers Affinity Group and Women's Resource Group – play an integral role in the firm, providing an invaluable source of community.

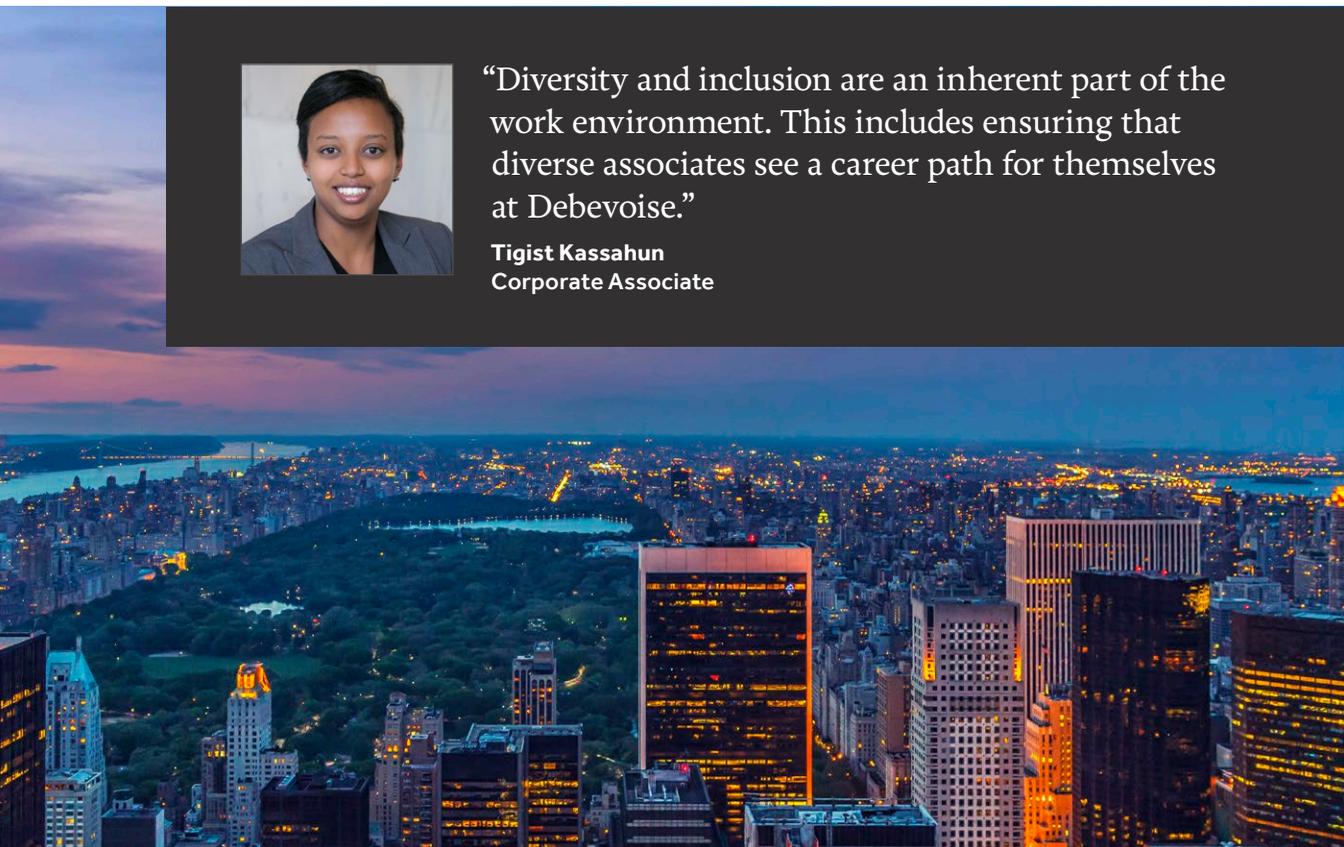
Debevoise Women's Review. The Debevoise Women's Review, a first-of-its-kind platform among law firms, was developed to inspire the legal and business communities to engage in discussion and collective action around gender diversity. Unlike a traditional marketing platform, the content is developed and the editorial process managed almost entirely by lawyers at the firm, most of whom are associates, allowing for an authentic, first-person perspective.

Associate Liaison Committee. We revamped our associate liaison committee, which works with partners and senior firm administrators on a range of topics and programs important to all lawyers at the firm.



“Diversity and inclusion are an inherent part of the work environment. This includes ensuring that diverse associates see a career path for themselves at Debevoise.”

Tigist Kassahun
Corporate Associate



Diversity & Inclusion Programming

2021 Programming Examples

Annual Attorneys of Color Retreat

In 2021, Debevoise hosted its annual Attorneys of Color Retreat where over 100 attorneys of color convened for two half-days of connection, thought leadership and fun. The theme of the retreat was “How Attorneys of Color Can Position Themselves for Success” and the keynote speech was given by Professor Kenji Yoshino, Chief Earl Warren Professor of Constitutional Law at New York University School of Law, who focused on the concepts of “covering” and “allyship.”

Communicating Across Differences

Consultant Valrine Daley joined Debevoise for a series of small conversations among partners and associates across the firm to connect/reconnect with each other during the pandemic.

Black History Month

In celebration of Black History Month, Frank Cooper III, Senior Managing Director and Global Chief Marketing Officer of Blackrock, joined Debevoise for a discussion moderated by Michael McGregor, an associate in the Litigation department and a leader of the Black Lawyer Affinity Group.

Imposter Phenomenon Series with Dr. Lisa Orbe-Austin

Debevoise hosted a three-part Impostor Phenomenon series designed to introduce the concept of imposter syndrome, identify its cause and impact, and provide participants with the tools to combat it. The series was led by Dr. Lisa Orbe-Austin, co-founder and partner of Dynamic Transitions Psychological Consulting and coauthor of Own Your Greatness: Overcome Impostor Syndrome, Beat Self-Doubt and Succeed in Life. Many book clubs met virtually over six weeks to encourage personal growth and resiliency to confront and overcome imposter phenomenon. The sessions were moderated by Debevoise’s Director of Learning & Development, Henry Brown, and associates Zila Acosta-Grimes, Norma Angelica Freeland, Courtney Bradford Pike and Amy Aixi Zhang.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

In celebration of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Senator Hirono shared the lived experiences and personal stories that have shaped her perspectives on public service and inspired her commitment to break barriers as the first Asian American woman and only immigrant serving in the U.S. Senate. The firm’s Presiding Partner, Michael Blair, introduced Senator Hirono and the discussion was moderated by Debevoise associates Dan Alford and Amy Aixi Zhang.

Honoring Juneteenth with Marisa Heu-Weller, General Manager at Microsoft

In commemoration of Juneteenth, Merisa Heu-Weller, General Manager at Microsoft, joined Debevoise associate Michael McGregor to discuss Microsoft’s Justice Reform Initiative and the work Microsoft is engaged in to empower communities and drive progress toward a more equitable justice system.

LGBTQ+ Cultural Competency: What Every Legal Professional Needs to Know to be a Supportive Ally

In celebration of Pride Month, M. Dru Levasseur, Esq., Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the National LGBT Bar Association, joined Debevoise partner Erica Weisgerber and associate Marisa Taney to discuss how individuals can increase their fluency in matters related to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, inspire allies into practical action, and create meaningful change within the workplace.

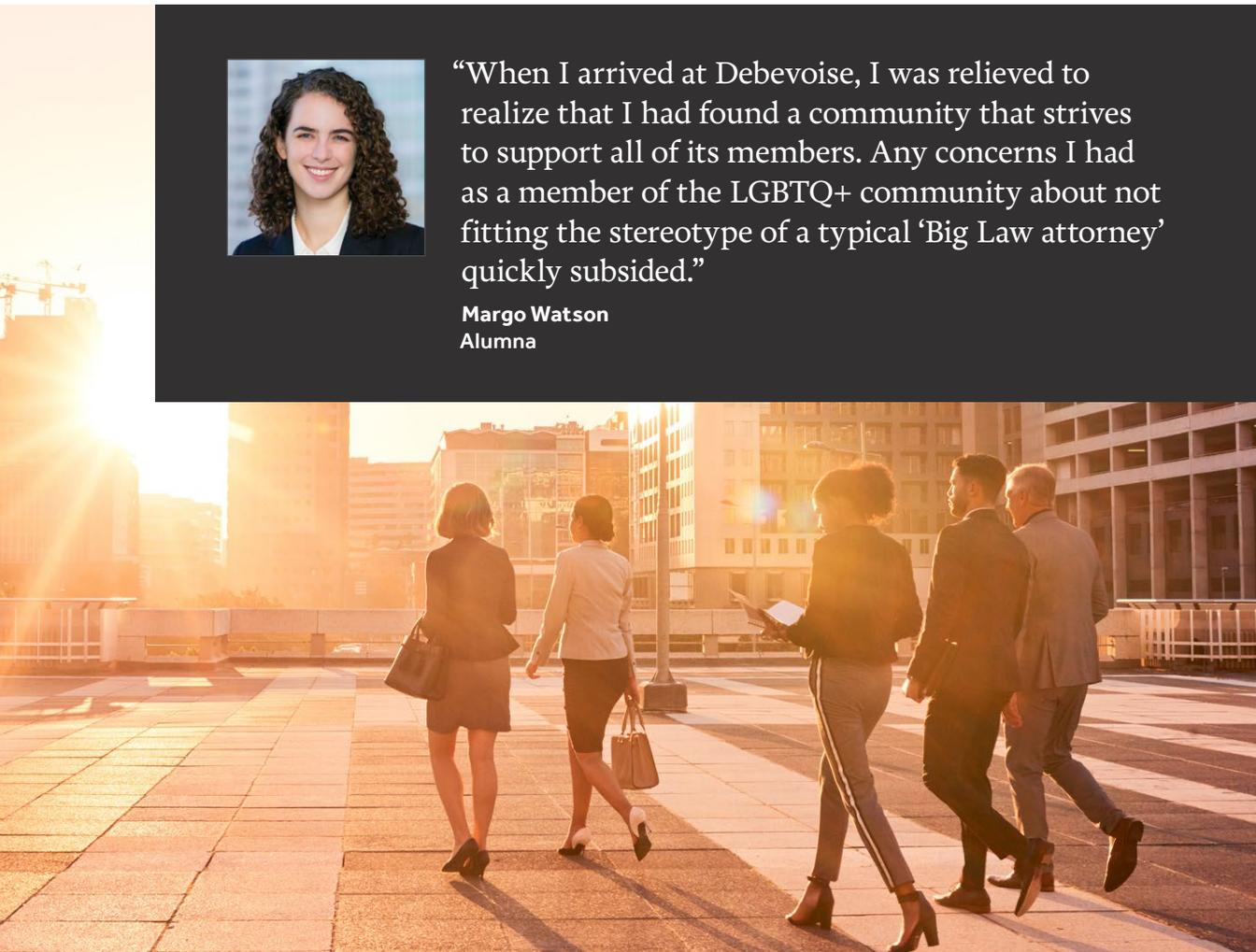
The Latinx Disparity in America's Prisons: A Conversation with LatinoJustice PRLDEF, HNBA Regions, and the Director of Bad Hombres

In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, Jac Quiles-Nohar of the HNBA Region II, Jorge Antonio Renaud of LatinoJustice PRLDEF, and Carlos Sandoval, Director of Bad Hombres and Emmy-nominated filmmaker, joined Debevoise associate Norma Angelica Freeland to discuss Bad Hombres and the systemic criminalization of Latinx communities in the United States. The discussion invited audience members to examine themselves and their relationships with others as well as interact and empathize with various communities.



“When I arrived at Debevoise, I was relieved to realize that I had found a community that strives to support all of its members. Any concerns I had as a member of the LGBTQ+ community about not fitting the stereotype of a typical ‘Big Law attorney’ quickly subsided.”

Margo Watson
Alumna



Muslim in America: A Film Screening and Panel Discussion with the Producer and Director of Americanish

The Muslim Affinity Group hosted a screening of *Americanish*, a film about three American Muslim women navigating romance, culture, career and family. Following the film, Director Iman Zawahry and actor Aizzah Fatima discussed Muslim identity and representation as highlighted in *Americanish* with Debevoise associates Aasiya Glover and Thamanna Hussain.

The Road to Allyship

Professors A. Todd Franklin, Tao Leigh Goffe and Frances Negron-Muntaner joined Debevoise partner and Co-Chair of Diversity & Inclusion Michael Gillespie and associate Kate Stein to discuss allyship, including the importance of speaking up, strategies for long-lasting advocacy, and how to be an effective change maker.

InConversation Speaker Series

In 2020, the firm launched its "InConversation" project, designed to enrich our collective understanding of the impact of race, racism and bias in our lives, relationships with others, and in our institutions.

We have begun the project by inviting outside speakers to Zoom events involving the entire firm community. Recent speakers have included Heather McGee, a racial justice strategist and author of the book, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*; Richard Rothstein, historian and author of the bestselling book, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*; Isabel Wilkerson, Pulitzer Prize winner and National Humanities Medal recipient and author of *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*; and Uzo Iweala, CEO of The Africa Center, Nigerian American author and medical doctor, and Lulu Wang, the acclaimed director of *The Farewell*.

Diversity Speaker Series

Our Diversity Speaker Series draws to the firm senior legal executives from different fields and diverse backgrounds who come to speak with our lawyers about their professional experiences and career paths. Recent programs have featured general counsel and other senior executives from Blackstone, Goldman Sachs, Home Depot, JPMorgan Chase & Co., MetLife and Xerox, senior lawyers from Lambda Legal and the Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund, as well as federal judges.

Pilot Program with the National LGBTQ+ Bar

The firm partnered with the National LGBTQ+ Bar to launch a pilot program for those who identify as trans and/or nonbinary lawyers and professional/support staff working in big law. Gatherings are held monthly and are led by openly trans attorney Dru Levasseur, the LGBTQ+ Bar's Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.



“As an Asian woman in the M&A field, where a lot of people often don’t look like me, what has been most meaningful to me is simply that I feel supported in a way that doesn’t have to do with being Asian or being a woman.”

Jennifer Chu
Corporate Partner and Co-Chair of the Women's Resource Group



Lawyer, Team and Firm Development

We have embedded diversity and inclusion within all elements of the firm's broader talent development work.

- **Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Team**

Our Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Team is chaired by two senior leaders of the firm who are former Management Committee members, Maeve O'Connor and Michael Gillespie, who work with Marc Grainger, our Global Director of Talent, Leslie Richards-Yellen, Director of Global Diversity & Inclusion, Faith Chung, Diversity & Inclusion Manager, and Tu Cam Ha, Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator. Michael formerly headed hiring at the firm, and Maeve is currently co-chair of our global Talent Initiative, thereby increasing the integration between talent and diversity and inclusion.

- **Management Committee Sponsorship Program**

In 2016, we launched our Management Committee Sponsorship Program to foster the advancement and promotion of diverse talent. Members of the firm's Management Committee and departmental leaders are paired with top-performing mid- and senior-level diverse associates to promote and support their careers through opportunity generation, profile raising and internal leadership.

- **Addressing Implicit Bias**

We have instituted implicit bias training in all aspects of our talent cycle – recruiting, advising, staffing, evaluation – and for all levels of lawyers.

- **Practice Group Leadership**

Practice group leaders are expected to actively implement practices and procedures to encourage inclusive leadership and reduce unconscious bias. The firm implements training programs designed to educate attorneys at all levels on these concepts. This training has included internationally based, drama-infused learning on unconscious bias as well as neuroscience training on inclusive leadership practices.

- **Real-Time Informal Feedback Program**

To enhance career development for our lawyers, the firm has implemented our Real-Time Informal Feedback Program. Lawyers are taught a number of simple yet effective feedback techniques, and meet regularly to discuss their experiences in giving more frequent feedback.

- **Centralized Staffing**

We apply a centralized approach to staffing our junior litigators, with the objective of ensuring an equitable distribution of responsibilities and opportunities.



“Our goal is to be the very best place for talent, and that means creating inclusive teams that give everyone the opportunity to grow and to shine.”

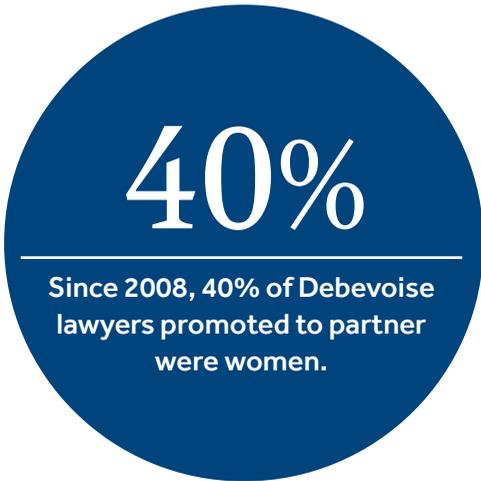
Maeve O'Connor
Litigation Partner and Co-Chair of Diversity & Inclusion



Moving Forward: By the Numbers



In 2021, 39% of our U.S. associates and 19% of our U.S. partners were diverse.





We are single-mindedly focused on creating and sustaining a truly inclusive community of diverse professionals at all levels of our firm. To help lead us further along that critical path and after a nationwide search, [Leslie Richards-Yellen](#) has joined the firm as Director of Global Diversity & Inclusion.

Ms. Richards-Yellen was previously Director of Inclusion-Americas at an international law firm, and before that she was partner and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer at a national law firm, where she also chaired the diversity committee. Earlier in her career, Ms. Richards-Yellen worked as a finance attorney in law firms and at a financial services company. She was president of the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) from 2016 to 2017. She received her B.F.A. from Drake University and her J.D. from Cornell University School of Law.



[Faith Chung](#) is the Manager of Diversity and Inclusion at Debevoise and currently a member of the Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Team. She received her J.D. from Cornell University School of Law. Ms. Chung has prior experience in D&I work at another AM100 firm and was previously a Real Estate Finance Associate in the Finance Department at Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft.



It Starts With Recruiting

As part of our expansive efforts to recruit diverse talent, we reach out as early as possible in the educational pipeline by sponsoring, supporting and participating in programs that improve the educational outcomes and career paths of students of color, beginning with high school students and continuing through to new firm hires:

- **Law MENTOR Program.** Debevoise is a charter member of the Law MENTOR program, which provides high school students with exposure to law-related activities. Each year through MENTOR, Debevoise coaches a mock trial team from the High School for Law and Public Service, a public high school with a large diverse student body, which competes in the city's annual mock trial tournament.
- **Partnership for New York City Career Discovery Week.** In 2021, Debevoise participated in the inaugural Partnership for New York City Career Discovery Week and hosted a class of NYC high school sophomores for the day. We introduced them to different legal career paths, held a workshop on resumes and interviews, and led them in a mock negotiation exercise in which the students pretended to represent a rock band and an arena in negotiating the terms for a performance.
- **Sponsors for Educational Opportunities (SEO) Law Fellowship Program.** The SEO Law Fellowship Program serves to link talented, underrepresented incoming law students to global law firms. We welcome several SEO Fellows into our summer program each year.
- **Diverse Law School Student and Affinity Groups.** We sponsor diverse student groups at law schools across the country, including affinity groups such as:
 - › Black Law Students Association (BLSA)
 - › Asian Pacific American Law Student Association (APALSA)
 - › First Generation Professionals
 - › Latino Law Students Association (LaLSA)
 - › OUTLaws/Lambda (LGBTQ+)
- **Diverse Job Fairs.** We recruit for candidates at job fairs such as:
 - › Northeast BLSA Job Fair (NEBLSA)
 - › Hispanic National Bar Association Job Fair (HNBA)
 - › Lavender Law Career Fair (LGBTQ+)
- **Connection with Diverse Debevoise Lawyers.** To provide guidance to diverse candidates during our recruiting process, we connect each of them with diverse Debevoise lawyers.
- **Debevoise Diversity Reception and Social Events for Offerees.** We host a Diversity Reception and social events for diverse offerees, allowing them to make meaningful connections with future colleagues and each other.
- **Engagement between Debevoise Affinity Groups and Summer Associates.** Our affinity groups host a variety of programs for summer associates. Members also act as informal advisors for summer associates of diverse backgrounds.

Diversity and Inclusion in the Broader World

The work of creating a more diverse and inclusive firm connects us to clients and others outside the firm.

- Externally, our senior lawyers and firm leaders routinely speak at diversity events, including Bloomberg BNA’s Big Law Business “Diversity & Inclusion Summit.”
- Presiding Partner Michael Blair chaired the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity’s (LCLD) Partnership and Teams Committee. Under his leadership, the Partnership and Teams Committee initiated a secondment program. Secondments provide meaningful opportunities for diverse lawyers to establish close relationships with corporate clients. This experience will enhance the skill set and client knowledge of diverse lawyers which will promote career development.
- Many of our lawyers – including women and other lawyers of diverse backgrounds – have served in senior leadership positions at prominent bars and other professional organizations, and in a variety of public service roles. Just a few examples include the following:
 - › Senior Government Positions: Mary Jo White (former SEC Chair and U.S. Attorney, S.D.N.Y.), Catherine Amirfar (former Counselor on International Law to the Legal Adviser, U.S. Department of State) and Jim Johnson (a former U.S. Treasury undersecretary, now Chief Operating Officer of Trinity Church Wall Street)
 - › New York City Bar Association: Retired partner Barbara Paul Robinson was the first female president of the New York City Bar Association (1994-1996). She joins retired partner John S. Kiernan, who is immediate past president, and two other Debevoise partners who have led the Bar Association. Debevoise is a signatory of the NYC Bar’s three diversity statements.
 - › American Bar Association: Deborah Enix-Ross, senior advisor to the firm’s International Dispute Resolution Group and a member of the firm’s Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council, is the president-elect of the American Bar Association, where she co-founded the ABA’s Women’s Interest Network.
 - › We have eight alumni serving as federal judges, including four from diverse and underrepresented groups: Hon. J. Paul Oetken, Hon. Lorna G. Schofield, Hon. Laura Taylor Swain and Hon. Gregory H. Woods.
- Our firm is engaged in many pro bono projects that provide underserved communities with access to justice. One initiative that we are especially proud of is the Holloway Project. Our lawyers on a pro bono basis represent more than 30 federal prisoners who are largely men of color serving extremely long mandatory sentences under a firearms law. The firm is seeking resentencing under a novel interpretation of “compassionate release,” as in 2018 Congress recognized the disproportionate impact of the firearms law and abolished it.



“When I first joined the firm over five years ago as an SEO summer intern, I was apprehensive. I had just graduated from college and didn’t really know anything about law firms – I hadn’t even started law school yet. What I came to learn was that I was quite fortunate to be placed at Debevoise, and that’s why I continued to return each summer and as a full-time associate. Debevoise was an integral part of the early years of my legal career, and I truly view the firm as my Big Law home.”

Daniel Pedraza
Alumnus



Our lawyers hold leadership positions in a range of organizations dedicated to improving the diversity of the legal profession.

- **Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD).** We take a leading role in LCLD, which offers next-gen leaders access to training and mentoring from more than 300 corporate chief legal officers and law firm managing partners. In 2018, Debevoise was named to receive both “TOP” and Compass Award badges, recognizing the firm for going above and beyond to participate and support LCLD’s mission. Presiding Partner Michael W. Blair has served on the Executive Committee of the Board and as Treasurer and continues to participate as an LCLD Member.
- **Catalyst.** Debevoise is a member of Catalyst CEO Champions for Change, a global nonprofit working with some of the world’s most powerful CEOs and leading companies to build workplaces that work for women. Mary Beth Hogan, partner and co-chair of Debevoise’s Litigation department, serves on the Catalyst Board of Directors.
- **National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) Challenge Club.** Debevoise is a member of the NAWL Challenge Club, and in partnership with the Club, we provide high-potential women associates on the path to partner opportunities to network with in-house counsel, gain pitch experience and participate in mentorship sessions. Retired partner Beth Pagel Serebransky is a Member at Large of NAWL’s Board. Debevoise litigation partner Arian June was named co-chair of the 2020 NAWL Spring Conference.
- **DirectWomen.** Debevoise sponsors DirectWomen, a nonprofit that works to increase the representation of women lawyers on corporate boards. Partner Sue Meng has been named to DirectWomen’s 2022 Board Institute Class as one of 19 distinguished women lawyers.



“We have seen again and again that the quality of our work product is higher, and the firm and our clients benefit, when the voices of lawyers from diverse backgrounds contribute to solving our clients’ most difficult challenges.”

Jonathan Lewis
Tax Partner



Recognition

Ranked 4th
– 2021 *American Lawyer's*
"A-List"

Ranked in top 5%
of law firms
– 2021 *Law360*
Diversity Snapshot

100% ranking and designated
as one of the "Best Places to
Work for LGBTQ Equality"
– 2022 Corporate Equality Index



Our Commitment

We are deeply proud of the considerable success we have had in hiring diverse lawyers and law students. We know that it is the quality of our practice, and the culture and people who form our firm, that attract such great talent.

We also know that the work of building a truly diverse and inclusive firm cannot be measured just by accolades, and that numbers alone do not fully tell the tale. It is our job at Debevoise to create a professional environment in which all our lawyers can thrive and succeed.

We are intensely committed to driving change in our partnership and in the legal profession. That requires not only good intentions but effective initiatives and practices, including those outlined in this brochure. We welcome the opportunity to speak with you in more detail about our plans and practices in the course of our interviews and time with you.



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To learn more about Debevoise, our people and our culture, follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

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