

# SYLVIA F. JAMES

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**Experienced and energetic leader with 27 years of labor and employment; diversity, equity, and inclusion; project management; and organizational development experience. Ability to build consensus and create collaborative relationships with all stakeholders. Outstanding communication, presentation, negotiation, and leadership skills.**

## **EXPERIENCE**

**WINSTON & Strawn LLP**, Washington, D.C.  
Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer  
November 2017- Present

- Lead the development, implementation, and execution of a results-oriented, metrics driven, diversity, equity and inclusion plan that advances the firm's strategic goals.
- Serve as a thought leader and strategist to firm leadership.
- Serve as liaison with clients and external organizations dedicated to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession.
- Collaborate with leadership overseeing the direction of internal affinity groups.
- Partner with Chief Talent Officer, Attorney Recruiting and Development, Professional Development, and Human Resources to attract, develop, retain, and promote diverse talent; evaluate and report on attorney and staff metrics; and provide leadership in designing tools and programs to help attorneys and supervisors with work culture and retention.
- Coach and provide professional development support for diverse attorneys.
- Conduct training on diversity, equity, and inclusion internally and for clients.
- Cultivate and maintain effective partnerships with external diversity focused organizations that lead to strategic programmatic collaborations.
- Continually identify talent and rising leaders from a succession planning perspective.
- Provide attorneys and key staff members with professional development opportunities.
- Manage three full-time employees.
- Create and manage the diversity, equity, and inclusion budget.

**BAKER BOTTS LLP**, Washington, D.C.  
Diversity Counsel  
November 2006-August 2017

Worked closely with the Executive Committee, Human Resources Department, Recruiting and Development Department, Client Relations Department, Department and Practice Group Leadership, and Diversity Committee to develop and implement the Firm's diversity initiatives; served as the Firm's Affirmative Action Administrator; strategized and advised the Firm with respect to diversity initiatives; monitor and analyze the Firm's trends in recruitment, development, and retention of women and minorities; served as liaison with clients and external organizations dedicated to fostering diversity in the legal profession; conducted diversity training; advised on internal and external communications relating to diversity; and managed the Firm's Supplier Diversity Program. Additional responsibilities and accomplishments included:

- Developed and implemented a comprehensive diversity initiative to enhance the Firm's diversity program, profile and performance, which has resulted in the Firm being recognized by external organizations and corporate clients as one of the top law firms for diversity.
- Formed and actively manage affinity groups for women, LGBT and minority lawyers.
- Served as trusted advisor to senior management, providing guidance, constructive feedback and consulting on all aspects of the employment relationship.
- Provided counsel on employment matters.
- Facilitated the design and implementation of all diversity initiatives.
- Developed, recommended, documented and implemented enhancements to the Firm's employee relations policies, practices and processes.
- Designed and delivered diversity awareness, unconscious bias, and cultural competency training for lawyers, staff, external organizations and corporate clients.
- Organized retreats for women partners and diverse lawyers.
- Monitored work assignments and billable hours for diverse lawyers and summer associates.
- Revamped and enhanced firmwide mentoring program.
- Developed training curriculum for associates at all levels within the firm.
- Worked closely with women and diverse law student organizations.
- Created professional development programs for women and diverse lawyers.
- Created affirmative action plans and represent the Firm before the OFCCP.
- Managed two full-time employees and several other employees who help support the diversity initiative.
- Created and managed firmwide diversity budget.
- Prepared annual diversity reports and provided quarterly updates to Firm management.
- Wrote and managed all communication about the firm's diversity initiatives and performance.
- Served as a member of the Diversity, Recruiting, Professional Development, and Pro Bono Committees.
- Conducted and analyzed exit interviews of departing associates and counsel.
- Created and conducted employee surveys and worked with management to develop strategies based on the feedback.
- Served as subject matter expert at numerous diversity conferences.

**HOLLAND & KNIGHT LLP, Washington, D.C.**

*Corporate Diversity Counseling and Employment Attorney*

January 2002-November 2006

Spearheaded firm-wide diversity assessment of Holland & Knight, prepared diversity findings and recommendations, and assisted the firm in implementing the recommendations. Conducted mandatory diversity training. Consulted with *Fortune 500* companies and government agencies to improve diversity performance, programs, and profile by conducting diversity assessments; developing tailored, comprehensive diversity action plans, consistent with best practices and available resources; and assisting in plan implementation, monitoring and oversight. Major duties and responsibilities included:

- Served as team lead, including management of 4 junior associates, and liaison to senior management on numerous diversity assessment projects for both corporate and government clients.
- Created work plans and budgets for diversity assessment projects and managed budget allocation to ensure cost efficiency and avoid cost overruns.

- Conducted hundreds of interviews with employees from senior management to support staff regarding diversity performance, programs, and communications.
- Prepared numerous reports detailing the results of diversity assessments including both specific findings of diversity deficiencies and concrete recommendations for improved diversity performance.
- Worked cooperatively with clients' senior management to develop a communications strategy for dissemination of diversity assessment results as well as implementation of a responsive diversity action plan.
- Numerous public presentations on behalf of clients' senior management to Boards of Directors, elected officials, and community advocates regarding clients' diversity commitment and performance.
- Mediated relations between client management and diverse employee populations, including informal employee networks, and employee affinity groups.
- Conducted sexual harassment and race discrimination investigations for both corporate and government clients and developed an internal EEO complaint, investigation resolution, and tracking system for a large quasi-government agency.
- Provided day-to-day employment counseling on issues relating to all aspects of the employer/employee relationship, including employee recruiting, hiring, evaluation, promotion, compensation, discipline and termination.
- Conducted sexual harassment, diversity, and EEO training. Conducted sexual harassment and race discrimination investigations for both corporate and government clients and develop internal EEO complaint, investigation resolution, and tracking systems.
- Defended cases brought under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"), the Age Discrimination in Employment Act ("ADEA"), the Fair Labor Standards Act ("FLSA"), the Family Medical Leave Act ("FMLA"), the National Labor Relations Act ("NLRA"), and other federal and state employment laws.

**SCOPELITIS, GARVIN, LIGHT & HANSON**, Washington, D.C.  
*Labor and Employment Associate*, May 2000-January 2002

Primary responsibility for multiple employment litigation and counseling matters involving Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"), the Age Discrimination in Employment Act ("ADEA"), the Fair Labor Standards Act ("FLSA"), the National Labor Relations Act ("NLRA"), and other federal and state employment laws. Supervised junior attorneys. Served as primary employment counsel to corporation with over fourteen thousand employees.

**AKIN, GUMP, STRAUSS, HAUER & FELD**, Washington, D.C.  
*Labor and Employment Associate*, September 1996-May 2000  
*Summer Associate*, Summer 1995

Assisted international employer with thousands of employees in developing and conducting employment discrimination/diversity audits of its nationwide facilities, including employee interviews, review and assessment of policies, procedures, and practices, and evaluation and measurement of diversity performance against legal and regulatory requirements. Advised clients on internal discrimination complaints and defended cases alleging discrimination under federal and state laws. Prepared employee handbooks and sexual harassment policies. Prepared briefs, pleadings, and memoranda for actions under Title VII, the ADA, the ADEA, the FLSA, the FMLA, the NLRA, and state laws.

## **EDUCATION**

### **DUKE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, Durham, NC**

Juris Doctor, May 1996

Law School Representative, Duke University Judicial Council

Secretary, Black Law Students Association

### **VASSAR COLLEGE, Poughkeepsie, NY**

Bachelor of Arts *with honors* (Political Science) May 1993

President, Commencement Committee

Research Fellow, Political Science Department

## **PROFESSIONAL**

- Admitted to practice in Maryland and the District of Columbia
- Duke University School of Law Alumni Board, Board Member, 2011-2016; Chair, Communications Committee; Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Alumni member; Member, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, 2019-present
- Association of Law Firm Diversity Professionals, President, Treasurer and Secretary, 2007-2012; Co-Chair, Training and Development Committee, 2009-2015; Historian, 2021-present
- Institute for Inclusion in the Legal Profession, Advisory Board Member, 2011-present
- Texas Diversity Council, Board Member, 2009-2012
- Presented at numerous diversity and inclusion conferences and programs, including conferences sponsored by Minority Corporate Counsel Association (MCCA), Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD), California Minority Counsel Program (CMCP), NALP, Association of Law Firm Diversity Professionals (ALFDP), Association of Legal Administrators (ALA), Texas Diversity Council, Institute for Inclusion in the Legal Profession (IILP), National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL), National Black Pre-Law Conference, Texas State Bar, University of the District of Columbia, Duke University School of Law, Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and American Conference Institute (ACI).

## **INTERESTS**

Hiking, skiing, and distance running.