

PUBLICATION

Diversity Matters: Note from the Editor - Spring 2017

April 27, 2017

Every day we celebrate very dynamic women who impact our lives. During March, we highlighted the accomplishments of historical and ceiling-shattering women. Tonya Mitchem Grindon is one such dynamic and ceiling-shattering woman. Several years ago, we highlighted her many accomplishments, when in 2008, Grindon became the first woman to chair the Securities/Corporate Governance Practice Group at Baker Donelson. Today she continues to chart her own course and break down barriers. In so doing, she has developed a very successful practice in corporate finance/securities, an area long dominated by men, and has developed one of the most demographically diverse practice groups at Baker Donelson in an area of law not known for diversity. Grindon has been very intentional about hiring successful lawyers and being self-aware:

"For quite a few years, I didn't realize it, but I was almost exclusively hiring lawyers who were 'mini-mes' (white, outgoing women). It wasn't until I participated in the Firm's implicit bias training, did I realize that I unintentionally had been hiring lawyers who resembled me. Following this training, I began to look for qualities that had also made other people successful."

Grindon has taken her own advice and diversified her search for excellent talent, where the Corporate Finance/Securities Department now has LGBT representation, 10.5 percent minority attorneys and 26.3 percent women. This year, Grindon continued to take a path very few women have taken, when she was named to head the Firm's Business Department, the first woman in the Firm to hold that position. She has been a member of the Firm's Board since 2013, serves as chair of the Firm's audit and finance committee, and continues to have a thriving corporate finance/securities practice. She attributes her success in her practice to being comfortable in her own skin (i.e., developing personal relationships based upon mutual interests and referrals rather than following how others may have been successful in developing business). Along with being true to herself, Tonya also is loyal to the Firm and to those with whom she works, as well as respectful to all she meets. There's no substitute for character.

As we end Women's History Month, we celebrate someone at Baker Donelson who continues to build bridges and extend her ladder of success to a wide variety of people: Tonya Mitchem Grindon.