

**ALLIED DALLAS BARS EQUALITY TASK FORCE
CALL TO ACTION
October 2020**

PREFACE

Questions of race, justice, equality, and inclusion have been long-standing challenges in the history of this nation and the legal profession.

The demographics of our nation reflect an increasingly diverse landscape, and the nation's attitude towards diversity and inclusion has gradually evolved. In response to the nation's increasing diversity, our historically non-diverse legal profession has evolved as well. But, its evolution has been much more gradual.

Within the profession, bar associations are the conscience of the legal community. Like most other bar associations, the Dallas Bar Association is dedicated to the continuing legal education of its members and the community, the betterment of the profession, service to the community and the profession, and fellowship among legal professionals. However, it is the Dallas Bar Association's dynamism that sets it apart from other bar associations. Even with its rich history of success and progress, the DBA constantly strives to adapt to current challenges and opportunities within the profession.

Quoted from the *Final Report of the Dallas Bar Association Diversity Summit* (November 29, 2012, adopted by the DBA Board on June 19, 2013; "2012 Diversity Summit Final Report").

THE COLLABORATIVE MISSION

The Dallas Bar Association's Mission states that the DBA's purpose is to serve and support the legal profession in Dallas and to promote good relations among lawyers, the judiciary, and the community. Founded in 1873, the DBA was originally comprised solely of, and solely for the benefit of, white males; however, the DBA has evolved from a small group of white men to a vibrant and diverse membership of more than 11,000 attorneys. As stated in the *2012 Diversity Summit Final Report*:

The DBA and its membership accurately reflect the demographics of the State Bar of Texas. Consequently, like the State Bar and the profession itself, that reflection means that the DBA has historically been a predominantly non-minority professional community service, social, and networking organization; however, through the years, the DBA has made great strides in increasing its diversity and that of the profession. As the nation's attitude has become more inclusive and progressive on diversity matters, so too has the attitude of the DBA in realizing the imperative of diversity and its implementation.

It has been said that the DBA is the *Best Bar Association in America – Bar None*; and, part of what makes the DBA the best is its collaboration with other bar associations, including the Dallas Association of Young Lawyers, the J. L. Turner Legal Association, the Dallas Hispanic Bar Association, the Dallas Asian American Bar Association, the Dallas Women Lawyers Association, and the Dallas LGBT Bar Association (the "Sister Bars").

THE RECENT CATALYST

On July 12, 2020, in the aftermath of the tragic death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota by law-enforcement officers, the DBA and the Sister Bars passed a *Joint Resolution Reaffirming Commitment to Social & Racial Justice*, which also announced the formation of the **Allied Dallas Bars Equality Task Force** (the “Equality Task Force”).

Through the *Joint Resolution*, the DBA and the Sister Bars reaffirmed their collective commitment to preserve the Constitutionally protected right of peaceable assembly, to promote equality and social justice, and to pursue tangible progress through words and deeds towards a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive society.

Through this *Call to Action*, the Equality Task Force shall help ensure progressive action within the legal profession, accountability, and collaboration with community stakeholders with the goal of tangible, long-term sustainable impact on social and racial justice.

PAST, AS PROLOGUE: REVIEWING AND RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT

As the DBA and the Sister Bars, through the Equality Task Force, embark on our future of progress, we must review our previously articulated commitment to such change. Specifically, we review the following previously-promulgated documents, which can be found on the DBA website, and rely upon them in formulating this Call To Action:

- *Dallas Bar Association Task Force on Opportunities for Minorities in the Profession – Long Range Plan for Inclusion (1990)*
- *Dallas Bar Association’s Statement of Goals of Dallas Law Firms and Corporate Legal Departments (1994)*
- *Dallas Bar Association’s Statement of Long Range Planning Goals*
- *Final Report, “A Bar For All” (November 20, 2008)*
- *Final Report of the “Vision 2020 Commission” (December 16, 2010)*
- *Final Report of the Dallas Bar Association Diversity Summit (November 29, 2012, adopted June 19, 2013)*
- *Dallas Bar Association Bylaws (“Bylaws”)*
- *Joint Resolution Reaffirming Commitment to Social & Racial Justice (July 12, 2020)*

CALL TO ACTION: OUR COMMITTED FUTURE

Based on the foregoing and our commitment to improving our collective bar associations, legal community, state, and nation, the Allied Dallas Bars Equality Task Force issues this Call To Action.

ACTION INITIATIVES

This Call to Action expresses the commitment by the DBA and Sister Bars to directly impact the legal community and the community at large through the following activities:

- **Allied Bars Standing Committee on Equality:** The DBA and Sister Bars shall convert the Allied Dallas Bars Equality Task Force to the Allied Bars Standing Committee on Equality, with a goal that every major firm in Dallas have an active, upper management member on the committee. The Committee on Equality shall host quarterly meetings to assess the status and efficacy of the Call to Action's diversity efforts, including a list of items to be instituted, continued, or discontinued. (DBA Executive Director; Leadership)
- **Membership Growth:** The DBA, with the help of the Sister Bars, shall continue to grow its membership through strategic outreach focused on diversity. (Membership Committee)
- **Programming & CLEs:** The DBA and Sister Bars shall host quarterly programming addressing racial and social justice issues, develop CLEs on the intersection of race and law across practice areas, increase the diversity of CLE speakers in DBA sections and committees, and encourage CLE content that addresses equity, inclusion, and belonging that goes beyond legal compliance. (Minority Participation Committee & CLE Committee)
- **Member Aspirational Goal for Diversity & Inclusion Training:** The DBA and Sister Bars shall establish an aspirational goal of a minimum of three hours of Diversity & Inclusion Training annually for their respective members, and collaborate in the implementation of programming to accomplish the goal. (Equality Committee)
- **Diversity and Inclusion CLE Requirement:** The DBA and Sister Bars shall work with the State Bar of Texas to advocate for an annual Diversity and Inclusion CLE requirement for all attorneys licensed in Texas. (Equality Committee)
- **Texas Bar College for Diversity & Inclusion Training:** The DBA and the Sister Bars shall work with the State Bar of Texas to advocate for a Texas Bar College recognition specifically for Diversity & Inclusion Training to encourage and recognize participation. (Equality Committee).
- **Disciplinary Rules & Prohibition of Discriminatory Activities:** The DBA and Sister Bars shall work with the Texas Supreme Court and State Bar of Texas to advocate for revised language and strengthened enforcement of the Prohibition on Discriminatory Activities provided by Section 5.08 of the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct. (Legal Ethics Committee)

- **Diversity & Inclusion Law Firm Survey:** The DBA and the Sister Bars shall sponsor an annual survey studying the diversity of attorneys working at major Dallas law firms, with an emphasis on recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion. Survey results shall emphasize best practices for diversity and inclusion, promote improved diversity and inclusion, and inquire about diverse (particularly minority) lawyer attrition. This may include recognition for law firm diversity efforts. (Equality Committee)
- **Enhanced Focus on Diversity in Marketing:** The DBA and the Sister Bars shall enhance their focus on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging in its marketing and publications, including the addition of a ‘Diversity’ or ‘Equality’ tab on their websites and increased emphasis on diversity in publications. (Publications Committee; Communications Director)
- **DBA Diversity Calendar:** The DBA and Sister Bars shall incorporate into the DBA Online Calendar listings of all major events of the DBA and Sister Bars, major holidays, DBA and Sister Bar programs celebrating significant anniversaries of historical events, and commemorative months such as Black History Month (February), Women’s History Month (March), Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month (May), LGBTQ+/Pride Month (June), and Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 – October 15). (Executive Director; Communications Director)
- **DBA Toolkit for In-house Counsel:** The DBA and Sister Bars shall establish a “Toolkit for In-house Counsel”, including a guide of recommended best practices for retaining Outside Counsel, a ‘ready-to-implement’ Outside Counsel Diversity & Inclusion Policy for RFPs, and a ‘Diverse Vendor Policy’. (Minority Participation Committee)
- **Enhanced Mentoring:** The DBA and Sister Bars shall enhance and expand their mentoring programs to increase focus on Diversity & Inclusion. (Transition to Law; WE LEAD; Sister Bars for their programs)
- **Race in Law School Curricula:** The DBA and Sister Bars shall encourage and support local law schools to incorporate the study of race and racism into the law school curriculum in order to further develop students’ understanding of the law and develop ‘race-literate’ lawyers. (Equality Committee)
- **Pipeline Projects:** The DBA and the Sister Bars shall develop recommendations to increase the pipeline of diverse students entering and graduating from law schools and to increase the pipeline from law school into the legal profession, including enhanced outreach to underrepresented groups and scholarship and internship opportunities. (SLIP Committee; Law in the Schools Committee; Dallas Bar Foundation; Sister Bars)
- **“Street Law” Program** – The DBA and Sister Bars shall establish and implement training and pamphlets on what to do in various situations as a ‘target’ or ‘bystander’. (Equality Committee)
- **Racial Equity / Diversity & Inclusion Habit-Building Challenge:** The DBA and Sister Bars shall develop and sponsor a racial equity habit-building challenge, which invites lawyers to perform assignments to develop a deeper understanding of racial justice issues. (Minority Participation Committee)

- **DBA Managing Partner Diversity & Inclusion Training:** The DBA, with the support of the Sister Bars, shall incorporate a diversity and inclusion training into its Managing Partner Breakfast Series. Possible topics include best practices, difficult conversations around difference, affinity bias, cultural competence, and more. (Executive Director)
- **Unity Programming:** The DBA and Sister Bars shall integrate community-focused unity programming (such as “Together We Can” and “COFFEE Break”) into its programming. (Public Forum Committee)
- **Racial Equity / Diversity & Inclusion Resource Library:** The DBA and Sister Bars shall create a racial equity/diversity & inclusion resource library to guide practitioners on racial justice issues, racial equity in the justice system, and diversity & inclusion in the legal profession. (Equality Committee; Communications Director)
- **Book Club on Racial Equality Issues:** The DBA shall implement, in conjunction with the Sister Bars, a DBA-led book club on Racial Equality Issues. (Minority Participation Committee)
- **Enhanced Volunteerism with Marginalized Groups:** The DBA and Sister Bars shall enhance their organized volunteer activities with marginalized groups and are encouraged to work collaboratively with others. (Community Involvement Committee; Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program)
- **Review of DBA Diverse Representation:** The DBA shall review the diversity of its membership, committee and section leaders, and Board annually. (Executive Director)

ASPIRATIONAL INITIATIVES

This Call to Action encourages the DBA and Sister Bars to seek a greater impact on the legal community and the community at large through the following activities:

- **DBA Leadership Academy:** By establishing a Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Academy, including allyship training, to develop bar leaders who have a commitment to diversity & inclusion and the ability to foster collaboration and community with other entities. (Equality Committee; Minority Participation Committee)
- **Law Firm Commitment to Racial Justice:** By advocating for law firms to sign a “Law Firm Commitment to Racial Justice” pledge to support this Call to Action and to make other commitments to advance racial justice. (Equality Committee)
- **Criminal Justice Reform:** Pursue racial justice by organizing bar members and non-lawyers with relevant expertise to study the use of force and Constitutional rights of assembly, speech and freedom, and identifying and developing remedies for racial disparities in prosecutorial decision-making and outcomes. (Criminal Justice Committee; Criminal Law Section)

- **Section-Based Racial Justice Improvement Projects**: By supporting and encouraging development of "Racial Justice Improvement Projects" in DBA Committees and Sections, including programs educating citizens about their constitutional rights of assembly, speech, and freedom from seizure and how to advocate for themselves. (Equality Committee)
- **Divided Community Project Academy**: By organizing a Divided Community Academy at which Dallas area leaders come together to strengthen cross-group ties, enhance their mutual understanding and conflict-resolution capacity, and facilitate processes for identifying and addressing the underlying causes of community division. (Public Forum Committee)

CONCLUSION

This Call to Action is promulgated in furtherance of the ideals we collectively espouse and promote – liberty, truth, fairness, justice, due process, and equality. It is the hope of the Allied Dallas Bars Equality Task Force that this Call to Action will assist in facilitating that powerful intersection of deeds and words - for the betterment of our bar, our community, and our nation.