



We at Murtha Cullina value all people and recognize that diversity within Murtha Cullina strengthens our firm and enhances the services we provide to our clients. We appreciate that meeting our diversity goals better enables us to participate in the communities where we practice law, work and live, as well as enhancing our overall experience as a member of the larger legal community. To that end, we welcome all people, without regard to race, national origin, color, ethnicity, religion or religious practices, gender, citizenship, marital status, age, mental or physical ability or disability, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

WELCOME TO THE FIFTH ISSUE OF *QUAE VIDE*,  
MURTHA CULLINA'S DIVERSITY NEWSLETTER

JULY 2010

In April, the "grande dame" of the civil rights era, Dorothy Height, passed away at the ripe age of 98. Ms. Height was renowned for being on the platform at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963, an arm's length away from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as he delivered his "I have a dream" speech. But there is more to that story in what was just one of many important moments in her long and momentous life.

As a child, she attended integrated schools outside of Pittsburgh, and as a teenager she volunteered working on voting rights and anti-lynching campaigns. With a talent for public speaking, she participated while in high school in a national oratory contest, where she reached the finals as the only black contestant; she was awarded first prize, by an all-white jury, for which she received a four-year scholarship. With scholarship in-hand, she was accepted at Barnard College, but was told before classes began that the school had already met its quota of Negro students (2) so that she would not be enrolled. NYU accepted her immediately, where she graduated with a bachelor's in education and a master's in psychology. She didn't take much time to make her mark as a thoughtful social activist.

Working for the YWCA in Harlem during the 1930's, she called attention to "slave markets" in New York City, which involved the practice of white women driving into "the City" to pick up black women for pennies an hour to perform domestic duties in the suburbs. Her testimony on the subject before the New York City Council drew national attention. She coordinated a visit to the Harlem YWCA by the first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, to address the National Council of Negro Women. Ms. Height served as president of the NCNW from 1957 to 1997. She also helped to integrate the facilities of the YWCA on a nationwide basis. She became an informal advisor to Mrs. Roosevelt as well as to U.S. Presidents beginning with Eisenhower on civil rights issues. In the early 1970's, as part of her efforts to tie the women's movement to the civil rights movement, she was also one of the founders of the National Women's Political Caucus, along with Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan and Shirley Chisholm.

In 1963, during a period of activism to register African-American voters in the South, the governor of Alabama, George Wallace, allegedly told a reporter that what was needed to stop integration in his state was a "few first-class funerals." A few weeks thereafter, with tensions heightened, a church in Birmingham that was used for meetings by civil rights leaders was bombed at a time when Sunday School was in session; four young black girls died, and over 20 other people were injured in the blast. As president of NCNW, Ms. Height responded to this tragedy by organizing "black-white dialogues" including founding an event called Wednesdays in Mississippi, which under the auspices of the NCNW brought together northern women to meet with their southern peers in teams that were interracial and interfaith. School integration and voter registration were key objectives.

Now about Dr. King's 1963 Washington speech: A brilliant orator herself, Height had been unable to persuade the organizers of the event that she, a woman, should be one of the speakers that day. She was relegated to being on the dais while the male civil rights leaders all addressed the crowd. In her memoir, she explained that "sometimes the men had trouble seeing why I was always linking desegregation with hunger and children and other social welfare issues." In its obituary of Height, The New York Times concluded that "[i]f Ms. Height was less well known than her contemporaries in either the civil rights or women's movement, it was perhaps because she was doubly marginalized, pushed offstage by women's groups because of her race and by black groups because of her sex." The Times went on to state that she ". . . is widely credited as the first person in the modern civil rights era to treat the problems

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of equality for women and equality for African-Americans as a seamless whole, merging concerns that had been largely historically separate.”

Dorothy Height’s life, in which she played an historically significant role in advancing civil rights from the 1930’s until her passing, also was summarized by the Wall Street Journal as one in which she “sought a bigger role for women.” Her role may have been as a “largely unsung giant of the civil rights era” (NY Times), but Dorothy Height’s legacy was so much more than that.

Like Ms. Height, our roles should neither be characterized nor limited solely by race or gender. We are all so much more than that. Similarly, issues of diversity in the legal profession cannot fairly be limited to those involving attorneys of color, although those issues are certainly at the core of diversity. There are historical differences in the way that the legal profession has viewed women lawyers, just as there are historical differences in the way that a person’s darker complexion is perceived in our society. Nevertheless, in the spirit of Dorothy Height, we have to appreciate the interrelationship between the issues affecting attorneys of color and women lawyers to enable us to evolve into a stronger and more vibrant legal profession. May we all do so with the dignity, dedication, sense of humor and forcefulness that Dorothy Height demonstrated to the world. She was not afforded the opportunity to address the crowd in September 1963 in Washington, D.C.; yet her actions and words throughout her life spoke volumes towards advancing the goals of racial and gender equality.

Burt Cohen

*Burt Cohen*

Diversity Committee Chairperson

#### MURTHA CULLINA ATTORNEYS GETTING INVOLVED

On February 18, **Cherie Gabrielle Phoenix** attended the Mock Interview Program, sponsored by the Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity (LCD).

On March 25, **Burt Cohen, Andrew W. Lord, Derek T. Werner, Cherie Gabrielle Phoenix, Meredith C. Burns and Diane C. Bellantoni** attended the Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity (LCD) Creating Best Practices event, hosted by Murtha Cullina LLP.

On April 13, **Keri L. Wintle, John C. Wyman, Michael E. McDonough, James F. Radke and Thomas S. Vangel** attended the Boston Lawyers Group (BLG) Mock Interview Program.

On April 23, **Cherie Gabrielle Phoenix, Burt Cohen, Michael E. McDonough, Paul Knag, and Genea O. Bell** attended the George W. Crawford Black Bar Association Annual Dinner. That evening marked the start of **Ms. Phoenix’s** term as Secretary for 2010-2011.



Murtha Table at Crawford Black Bar Association Annual Dinner

On May 5, **Cherie Gabrielle Phoenix, Burt Cohen, Thomas M. Daniells and Francis J. Brady** attended the Edwin Archer Randolph 2010 LCD Diversity Award, sponsored by the Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity. As of June 1, **Ms. Phoenix** became co-chair of the LCD Associates Advisory Committee.

On May 20, **Taruna Garg, Sara A. Decatur, Michael E. McDonough, Paul Marshall Harris, Burt Cohen, Susan J. Baronoff and Elizabeth A. Kowal** attended the Excellence in the Law event presented by Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly and the Massachusetts Bar Association, at which **Taruna Garg** was honored as a Diversity Hero.

#### TARUNA GARG CHOSEN AS DIVERSITY HERO

Taruna Garg, an associate in our Boston office, was chosen as a 2010 Diversity Hero by Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly, a legal publication widely circulated among the Commonwealth’s legal community. Each year, the Lawyers Weekly recognizes four attorneys or judges as “Diversity Heroes,” individuals committed to fostering and mentoring young minority lawyers in the state’s legal and judicial communities. Diversity Heroes share a common mission to promote diversity in the legal community.

“Giving back to my community has always been something about which I feel very strongly,” said Ms. Garg, who coaches immigrants in improving their English skills and teaches financial literacy to high school students. “I want to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others, and I’m thankful that I’m in a position that gives me that opportunity.”

Ms. Garg is also a recipient of the 2009 Unsung Heroine Award presented by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, a Governor’s Citation for Commitment to Community and the 2009 Murtha Award for Community Impact, given by the firm to the individual who makes noteworthy contributions to the local community.

Ms. Garg was honored on May 20 at the Excellence in the Law event present by Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly and the Massachusetts Bar Association.

#### WOMEN EXPANDING BUSINESS (WEB) INITIATIVE KICKS-OFF WITH STYLE

By: **Meredith C. Burns**

On, May 21, 2010, the Diversity Committee presented the first in a series of events in support of Murtha Cullina’s Women Expanding Business (“WEB”) initiative, which aims



to encourage and support the professional growth of women at Murtha Cullina. WEB events will focus on practice development, client development, marketing, and ways to promote the success and retention of female professionals.

The theme of the WEB kick-off event was "Successful Strategies for Developing Business." The event featured three of the firm's partners, Sara Stadler, Martha Everett Meng and Alena Gfeller, and was attended by approximately 35 attorneys and staff from the firm's Connecticut and Massachusetts offices. Elizabeth Stewart, Murtha Cullina's Managing Partner, moderated questions and commentary from the audience. As each panelist described her journey into the law and personal experiences developing a successful practice, clear themes emerged:

1. There is no substitute for hard work and perseverance;
2. Become knowledgeable in your field by researching, writing, and presenting; and
3. Network and build relationships.

The panelists agreed that the path to success was difficult at times. They candidly discussed the challenges they faced throughout their careers, including balancing the demands of work and family, the difficulties inherent in working a flexible time schedule, and finding appropriate mentors. For the panelists, however, the ability to help others achieve their goals outweighs these obstacles, and is the true definition of success.

For the attendees, the event was a wonderful learning opportunity. Event coordinator Diane Bellantoni stated, "In addition to being informative and interesting, this event was a great first step in developing our community. We hope to build on the enthusiasm and energy of this experience to plan additional activities that provide support to women in the firm." The Diversity Committee would like to thank Sara Stadler, Martha Meng and Alena Gfeller for their participation and looks forward to future WEB events.

## MURTHA CULLINA SPONSORS 7TH ANNUAL NASABA CONVENTION

Murtha Cullina LLP was a proud sponsor of the Seventh Annual Convention organized by the North American South Asian bar Association (NASABA) and the South Asian Bar Association of Greater Boston (SABA GB) held on June 25 - 27 at the InterContinental Hotel in Boston. Taruna Garg, an associate of the firm, has served on the SABA GB Executive Committee since 2007 and played an active role in supporting Convention planning. The Convention was held in Boston, one of America's most historic cities, and offered substantive, cultural, civic and social programs of the highest caliber in the tradition that NASABA has established over previous years.

The theme for NASABA's 2010 Convention was "Making History." Boston, known as the "Cradle of Liberty," has a rich tradition of public service and celebrating civil liberties and a well-deserved reputation as a sophisticated financial and legal center. This year's Convention promised outstanding programming, diverse culture, and a beautiful waterfront venue - and it delivered! The Convention featured a variety of

seminars, workshops, panel discussions, and networking opportunities, including a gala banquet honoring the South Asian community's most accomplished attorneys. The keynote speaker for this year's gala dinner was Preet Bharara, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York. In his role as US Attorney, Mr. Bharara has prosecuted some of the most ground-breaking financial fraud and insider trading cases of recent times.

In addition, this year's Convention offered the first NASABA Diversity Bazaar, an opportunity for corporate legal departments committed to diversity to expand their outside counsel panels and for diverse attorney pitch teams to develop business with these companies. Also for the first time ever, the Convention uniquely featured a mock re-argument and court deliberation of the historic Supreme Court case U.S. vs. Bhagat Singh Thind (1923), in which the Supreme Court deemed Asian Indians ineligible for citizenship because U.S. law allowed only free whites to become naturalized citizens. The re-argument took place in Boston's Old Faneuil Hall, the site at which meetings and protests have been held since the birth of our nation.

Murtha Cullina was also well represented in the presentations at the convention. Umar F. Moghul, a partner in our Hartford office, participated in one of the Friday panels, entitled "Masters Class on Islamic Finance," in which panelists discussed GCC and MENA markets, accessing and serving regional capital, as well as the basics of Islamic Finance.

Over the years, the Convention has averaged 400 attendees. Given the large South Asian legal community on the East Coast, Boston could be considered the most successful Convention yet.

## OPENING DOORS AND IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING: "LET'S TALK" DISCUSSIONS

By: Elizabeth Neuwirth

Recently, I was visiting a hospital client and was in the transcription area, where typists transcribe physician dictation into patient medical records. A young woman had been reprimanded by her supervisor (who was a good twenty years older) for listening to her iPod while transcribing. The young woman agreed not to listen to the iPod anymore, but it was clear that this demand made absolutely no sense to her. As she put it: "I thought it would be all right because I was not disturbing anyone and I only listen to my music through one earphone-- I can listen to the transcription with the other ear. It helps me concentrate" She believed absolutely in her ability to multi-task and could see no negative impact on her work. Her supervisor clearly thought it displayed a negligent, even disrespectful attitude to the work and the workplace.

Law firms traditionally confer a great deal of affectionate respect on older partners--they are addressed by all but their age peers as Mr. \_\_\_\_ or Ms. \_\_\_\_; but what about our most senior staff? Junior associates are often treated like very young adults--and yet some of them enter the workplace as second careerists, and confuse the usual age order. Our perspective depends as much on **when** we were raised as it



does on how or where. At one time or another, we have all been both the typist and the doctor; we sometimes forget that the way we do things is not necessarily the best way.

A number of us have discovered that simply sitting down and having a conversation about subjects that aren't usually discussed in the workplace can be enormously helpful in breaking down barriers. This type of informal but open communication offers us the opportunity to ask questions we wanted to ask but didn't, to view the world through other's perspectives, and to build workplace relationships we might not otherwise have had.

So, a group of us came up with the idea of a lunchtime series called "Let's Talk" for everyone at the firm. The firm provides a light lunch in one of our offices, someone agrees to find an article relevant to the topic and to facilitate discussion, and we talk and eat. Our first meeting was called "Let's Talk: Wait, You're How Old?" and focused on the range of generations in our firm. We have very young partners whose secretaries have been here for more than thirty years, managerial staff who are younger than those they supervise, and associates who are the same age as partners--and every possible permutation of ages.

The context of our inaugural discussion was how differences become more open, and hopefully less on an uncomfortable obstacle, when people feel free to speak about them with each other. To use a much-abused cliché, it helps when people walk a mile in someone else's shoes (or at least look closely at the shoes for the first time).

There was a good mix of staff and attorneys at all levels. People spoke about how they experience age differences in the workplace: young associates uncomfortable with managing staff many years their senior; the communication and information divide technology has created between younger attorneys and older ones ("Here's the URL for the article" vs. "Print the article out for me"); how traditional secretarial skills and roles have been impacted by associates accustomed to online drafting and using e-mail rather than letters. Different generations may have radically different work styles and expectations of the workplace, and the traditional seniority hierarchies of law firms are not necessarily acceptable to younger attorneys and staff.

In summary, the discussion was excellent, suggestions were made, and the conversation ran productively for an hour and a half instead of the expected hour. At the end, there was a feeling of "Where do we go next?"; and that's a question to which we don't have a clear answer. What we do know is that the discussion presented a great opportunity to share, learn and communicate in a way that we often shy away from. Stay tuned for more on our "Let's Talk" discussions.

**Connecticut Member, Lex Mundi A Global Association of Independent Law Firms**

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