
From: McNamara, Mike
Sent: Sunday, May 31, 2020 10:07 PM
To: *All.US.DUS
Subject: A Reflection as We Turn to June

In regular times, June would be my favorite month.

Great weather as summer starts. School is out. Daylight at its longest. Year still on the upswing. My birthday and more importantly wedding anniversary – this year our 20th. A sense of carefreeness with family and friends.

How differently we begin this June.

Over 100,000 Americans lost to the pandemic, and rising, including loved ones and friends in our Firm family.

One in four workers filed for unemployment, including colleagues among us.

Polarization that momentarily receded in the pandemic’s initial response now resurging in the unsteady reemergence.

Fear for our health, social well-being, economy and national identity.

And as if all that were not enough, against the backdrop of this continuing apprehension and toll, countless communities across the Nation in which we live and work are now in turmoil.

The tragic and cruel death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the nationwide demonstrations and violent aftermath we are witnessing reminds us that our commitment to the foundational pillars of our Firm, the importance of inclusion and respect across our Firm and our communities, and the role that we play – individually and as an institution – in equality and justice have never come with greater responsibility.

Mr. Floyd’s death in the custody of those sworn to protect is not the only disturbing headline our people are grappling to reconcile in recent days. The murder of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia. Abuse heaped on Asian Americans. Homophobic scapegoating. Divisiveness emanating from political leaders at every level.

This is a peculiar and extraordinary time, one where the risk to and disaffection of underrepresented populations could not be clearer.

And it is not only the underrepresented who are searching for meaning among this most recent racial divide.

Yesterday my family took a weather-perfect bike ride along the National Mall. From the literal steps of the Lincoln Memorial and the very spot where Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech, to the east plaza of the Capitol and the Supreme Court.

Right outside the shuttered National Archives, with our Constitution inside, my 15 year old son turned and asked, likely without appreciating the significance of what was housed nearby, “Dad, has America ever been this big a mess?”

A tough question to hear from my beloved son. One I am glad he is asking, but an even tougher question to answer.

I am deeply sorry to see the pain, including that of my own colleagues, caused by grievous actions where race is an undeniable factor. This pain should not haunt our communities, and we will work with our Diversity and Inclusion

Committee, Black Professional Alliance and many others to provide whatever support possible and needed during this very difficult moment for our people across our Firm.

And yet I remain optimistic, as we must, because through our own awareness and action we can continue to inspire a different path.

For us as lawyers, alongside those who have been attracted to work in the legal profession, the obligations that we have to our communities in preventing and rectifying injustice, including racial discrimination, are grounded not only in the oaths that lawyers take, but also in the ethos that we have committed to live as a Firm.

As we move into June, I am proud of how we are supporting each other in uncertain and often challenging times, having transformed into a remote work environment that will continue for many even as we regain access to offices in the days ahead. This pride extends to how each of you is supporting and serving our clients as they face unprecedented business, legal and personal challenges, including pro bono clients who but through our engagement would not have access to justice and redress.

And despite our lack of physical community at the moment, as current events glaringly and painfully remind, we must continue to make intentional efforts to be aware and driven toward action if we are to advance our foundational commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Through individual and collective steps, we have been working earnestly to address, both within our Firm and in our communities, the negative impacts of historically economic, racial and social challenges on diverse and women colleagues. We strive, albeit imperfectly, to give meaning to our commitment every day by embedding it into every decision we make.

This includes our commitment to increase the number of women and diverse lawyers and colleagues across our Firm, with a particular urgency on increasing the number of and retention of African American lawyers. To do so, we are augmenting our actions to ensure all of our colleagues have equal opportunities to develop and succeed at Dentons.

One way we intend to progress this is through our new Practice Group Diversity Partner Initiative, which will accelerate diversity and inclusion at the practice group level, the business units through which we guide our Firm.

Our Practice Group Leaders together with the new Practice Group Diversity Partners will review and give transparency and equity around how work is assigned, decisions around hiring and transition, who is selected for client development opportunities, and who is promoted. Practice Group Diversity Partners will monitor metrics on a regular basis to make sure we are achieving our goals and importantly meeting our clients' and own expectations.

To be clear, the priority to strengthen our diversity and inclusion efforts is not merely the responsibility of our Practice Group Diversity Partners or our impacted colleagues. Each of us plays an essential role in these efforts. But our Practice Group Diversity Partners working together with our Leadership Partners – members of our Board, Practice Leadership, Office Managing Partners, Mary and me – will provide critical thought and guidance needed to support the success of our diverse talent, which ultimately contributes to greater success for the Firm and for the communities and clients we serve.

This initiative has been long in the making, and while I am pleased to share it with you today as one element in how we remain steadfast in our desire to empower the success of our people, I wish it were on a day when empowerment felt accessible to a far broader swatch of those underrepresented in our Nation.

We are at a pivotal moment in history, and people will remember the decisions that were made and how they were treated when times were tough. For our part, we are committed to making the best decisions possible now to emerge as a stronger, more diverse and inclusive Firm, and through that example help inspire others along this journey.

We know we have work to do, both as a Nation and as a Firm. This should be a priority for all of us, and it will be as part of our responsibility.

I thank you for all of your efforts as we move our Firm forward together.

Mike



Mike McNamara
Chief Executive Officer

Our [COVID-19 Client Resources Hub](#) is available to the public, part of Dentons' global commitment to help our clients and our communities navigate this pandemic's legal and business challenges.

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