



NEW YORK CITY BAR DIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

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LEAD DIRECTOR & ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL, AXA

FELLOW AT PROSKAUER: SUMMER 1998

What is your current role?

I am the Lead Director & Associate General Counsel for AXA, where I have been for the past ten years. In my current role, I manage a group of 4 lawyers and 2 paralegals. We provide legal counsel for commercial transactions, including

reviewing matters concerning FINRA, intellectual property, patent, trademark, and marketing initiatives. We practice primarily in the areas of commercial transactions, investments, and third party selling agreements. We also review corporate compliance requirements and work with government relations and other corporate attorneys.

Can you describe your career path? Were there any surprises?

Just being here is a surprise to me. All I see in the mirror is Darryl – I don't see who other people see – the Lead Director and Associate General Counsel. Knowing who I was 20 years ago and looking at this guy now is a surprise. It took me twelve years to receive my undergraduate degree. I then attended St. John's University for law school where I applied for, and received, the Diversity Fellowship, which placed me at Proskauer. I received an offer to return as a summer associate for my second summer and ultimately received a full-time offer. After a year and a half at Proskauer, I left to work at a small firm, started freelancing, doing real estate closing and refinancing, and some entertainment work representing rappers, and volunteering at film festivals. After that, I worked as the Assistant General Counsel at Safe Horizons for three years while continuing to do some entertainment and real estate work on the side. I then saw a position listed in the New York Times for AXA and interviewed. Eight months later, I was running the group.

What was your experience as a Diversity Fellow like? Did being a Diversity Fellow prepare you for your career path and your current role?

Being a diversity fellow gave me an opportunity to get a peek in behind the curtain. I had no idea what it meant to work at a law firm – I did not know what big law was – the fellowship gave me a clue. Initially, I was overwhelmed; but, the summer provided me with insight into what it is and how it is done. It also provided me with insight into what I need to do for people coming behind me – to make sure they understand what it is and what they need to do.

What is your advice to current Diversity Fellows, career or otherwise?

My advice would be to seek advice – some people tend to shy away from experiences or being involved in the entire experience – they don't want to take a chance. Those people just sit in their offices and work very hard and think just working hard is going to get everything done – they don't know how to network, interact, and relate. They need advice for that. Then there are others who come from great schools – really smart and really talented – their smarts and poise always carried them. They are a bit arrogant and entitled and don't think they need advice. That's not good either – they need advice also. Everyone needs someone inside and someone outside of the organization to talk to and receive advice.

Any parting words?



I realized after several years that I needed to bring all of me to the table – my upbringing in Queens, as the youngest of 9 children and the only one from my family to go to college – along with my experience in corporate America. Once I put Darryl from the neighborhood with Darryl from corporate America that's when it started to work. Everything else is fun – let's have some fun, get this done, and make this happen.