



TCDIP CONNECT:

Expanding Your Network

2025-2026 Program Guide



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Welcome to TCDIP Connect!

For the next six months, you'll be part of a program designed to strengthen our inclusive legal community through authentic relationships and shared experiences.

Success in the legal profession is built on relationships—colleagues who open doors, share guidance, and champion each other's growth. TCDIP Connect exists to bring together attorneys and law students from across our member organizations in small, intentional groups that foster mentorship, belonging, and professional support.

Now in its fifth season, TCDIP Connect continues to evolve. We've streamlined the structure to make participation easier and more meaningful—and we're excited to introduce a new resource this year: professional coaching. Throughout the season, you'll have access to Ami Scott and Lane Vanderslice, who will help teams strengthen their connections, navigate challenges, and get the most out of their mentoring experience.

One thing remains constant: **TCDIP Connect is what you make it.** The time and energy you invest in your team will shape your experience and help us continue building a community where law students and attorneys can thrive together.

In this guide, you'll find:

- Program goals to help you plan and track your team's progress
- Tips and best practices for building strong mentoring relationships
- Resources to help your team get started and stay connected

Next Steps

1. Review this guide with your team to understand expectations and available resources.
2. Complete and sign your team's Commitment Statement by 10/21 to confirm participation.
3. Designate your Team Lead and coordinate your first team meeting.
4. Connect early and often: schedule your team's first gathering and start building relationships.
5. Watch for invitations from our professional coaches for team lead meetings and optional check-ins.

Thank you for your commitment to building a more connected and inclusive legal community. We're thrilled to have you in Season 5 of TCDIP Connect!

With gratitude,

Summra Shariff

Executive Director, Twin Cities Diversity in Practice



Sincerely,



Summra Shariff
TCDIP Executive Director

TCDIP Connect Core Values

TCDIP Connect is designed around three core values to ensure each person has a meaningful experience.

1. **Everyone is a leader.** There is minimal hierarchy in the program. Each person can contribute and offer value to others. Your TCDIP Connect team will include people with varying levels of professional experience and diverse viewpoints. Think about how you can personally show up as a leader, while also encouraging leadership in others.
2. **Take ownership.** You get to make TCDIP Connect what you want it to be. Meaning, **your team and overall experience are shaped by how much energy you invest in the program and in others.** Think about how you can create a sense of ownership for yourself and for your team.
3. **Be accountable.** With leadership and ownership comes accountability. In a team centered program, everyone is accountable to each other. As you start to develop relationships with your team members, think about how your actions (or inaction) may impact others and the overall team dynamic. Are the expectations that you have for others in line with what you expect from yourself?



TCDIP Connect Goals

To facilitate connections in large and small groups within your team, we have set goals for each TCDIP Connect team to complete. The chart below outlines 12 goals for your TCDIP Connect team to complete throughout the season (between October 14, 2025 through May 1, 2026).

At each check-in date (underlined below), teams that have completed at least two goals during that period will be entered into a drawing to win lunch paid for by TCDIP. Use the Goals Chart below to track your team's progress. Each period re-sets, so your team has a chance to be entered in the drawing by completing 2 goals during each check-in period.

Goals can be completed in any order. Teams that complete at least 10 goals (by any date) will earn an additional entry into the drawing at all subsequent check-ins! Teams can also earn a bonus entry for all subsequent check-ins by turning in at least 5 Individual Worksheets.

We strongly encourage you to set dates for the group meetings early! Scheduling early ensures that everyone has the meeting on their calendar and encourages people to prioritize these meetings.

Check-In Periods

- October 14 – December 5
- December 5 – February 27
- February 27 – May 1

Goals Chart

Goal	Date Completed	People Who Participated
Choose 2 or more goals to complete during each check-in period.		
Turn in your team's Commitment Statement by October 21		
5 Individual Worksheets submitted = Bonus drawing entry		
Group meeting with at least 5 people from your team (3 times throughout the season)	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
In person field trip – meet up for a meal or activity (not legal related). This goal can be combined with a group meeting.		
Small group meeting with at least 2 people from your team (6 times throughout the season)	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
	5.	
	6.	

Getting Your Connect Team Started

Commitment Statement

This is an opportunity for your team to get on the same page before the beginning of the program. All teams will sign a **Commitment Statement** that outlines TCDIP Connect core values. A **signed Commitment Statement is due October 21**. This worksheet is at the end of the guide.

The **Individual Worksheet** is a guide for you to use as an individual to think about your personal goals for the program. You can complete the Individual Worksheet at any time; this worksheet is for your individual use only. If at least 5 people from your team submit an Individual Worksheet, your team will get a bonus entry into the first period drawing. See the end of this guide.

Your Team's First Meetings

During your first few meetings, your team should:

- Select two Team Leads
- Schedule your first group meeting. Attorneys and law students hold equal responsibility for setting up meetings and gatherings.
- Decide logistics, including:
 - What platform will you use for communication?
 - Who will circulate calendar invites?
 - What are the activities or communications for each team meeting?
- Review the playbook (this guide).
- Create a name for your team.
- Review and sign the **Commitment Statement**.
- Use the goals chart to map out when your team plans to complete each goal.

Team Activities

When choosing group activities please be mindful that people may have different comfort levels with physical activities, alcohol consumption, and different time constraints. We encourage you to have an open discussion about the various options and set the team schedule and activities accordingly. You may consider having members rank their preference of the options and/or choose one member to pick an activity/topic for each meeting. We strongly encourage teams to communicate about paid activities in advance. If attorneys with seniority can cover meal expenses for law students, clear communication can help encourage participation!

Team activities. Here are a few things your team can do together or in smaller groups. Think about how you can make these activities work for each person in your group.

- Host a discussion about a book, podcast, or movie
- Attend CLEs, industry events, or TCDIP events
- Visit a local museum or attraction (MIA, Walker, MN Zoo, etc)
- Volunteering activities, such as through a legal clinic or a community service partner

Calendar of Events

Here is a list of online calendars for you to check out – consider attending events from these groups with your team!

- [TCDIP events](#)
- Law school events: [Mitchell Hamline](#), [St. Thomas](#), [University of Minnesota](#)
- Affinity bar events
 - [Minnesota Women Lawyers](#)
 - [MNAPABA](#)
 - [MABL](#)
 - [MHBA](#)
 - [MAIBA](#)
 - [MLBA](#)

TCDIP Connect Roles

Team Leads

Each team has two Team Leads, typically an alumni or other attorney who expressed interest in the leadership role in the application. The Team Leads should organize initial communications and help the group get started. Team Leads are invited to delegate as many tasks as needed, with an eye toward including and engaging all team members. For example, the Leads can ask one or two teammates to handle social gatherings or choose discussion topics. Team Leads are expected to participate in meetings with our coaches on a periodic basis.

Participants

All team members participating in TCDIP Connect are responsible for taking ownership of their mentorship experience. Whether you are a law student or attorney, you are responsible for making your team successful. This includes active participation in group meetings, engagement in scheduling meetings, and taking initiative to reach out to Team Members if your team has not engaged with each other. We encourage participants to embrace a non-hierarchical mentorship model that invites all participants to share openly and authentically.



Agent

Liz Niemer, TCDIP's Programs Manager, will be your team's agent. The agent will be the team's liaison and can help with any administrative or program questions that may arise. The agent will also send out guided discussion agendas each month. You can reach Liz at lniemer@diversityinpractice.org.

NEW! Coaches: Ami Scott and Lane Vanderslice

This season, we are thrilled to introduce professional coaching as part of TCDIP Connect. Your coaches, **Ami Scott** and **Lane Vanderslice**, bring extensive experience in leadership development, attorney growth, and mentoring within the legal profession. Together, they will help participants strengthen communication, foster collaboration, and navigate challenges that may arise during the program.



Ami Scott

Ami Scott recently joined Hogan Lovells LLP in Washington, D.C., as a Learning & Development Senior Manager. Before that, she spent five years as a consultant and coach supporting lawyers and other legal professionals through one-on-one coaching, counseling, and programmatic initiatives.

Ami is the only lawyer in her family and spent more than two decades in private practice. She was a partner at Mayer Brown LLP in Chicago and Schiff Hardin LLP in Washington, D.C. While at Mayer Brown, she served as the firm's Partner for Associate Career Development, focusing on associate recruitment, onboarding, compensation, and training.

Ami is active in community and educational leadership, serving on The Ohio State University Fisher College of Business Dean's Advisory Council and as Board Secretary for the National Veterans Leadership Foundation.

In her coaching and leadership work, Ami focuses on helping attorneys build clarity, confidence, and intentional career paths—whether they're just starting out or stepping into leadership roles. She draws on both her legal experience and her professional coach training to help lawyers align their work with their broader aspirations.



Lane Vanderslice

Lane Vanderslice brings decades of experience in leadership development, performance coaching, and organizational effectiveness within the legal industry. A former partner at Mayer Brown LLP, Lane also served as the firm's Director of Coaching and Well-Being, where he leads global initiatives focused on lawyer development, retention, and performance. He has worked with hundreds of attorneys—from associates aspiring to partnership to senior firm leaders—helping them enhance their effectiveness, resilience, and professional satisfaction.

Known for his pragmatic, strengths-based coaching style, Lane supports teams and individuals in building trust, improving communication, and fostering accountability. His approach aligns seamlessly with the collaborative and intentional mentoring framework of TCDIP Connect. This season, Lane will work alongside Ami Scott and your team to provide guidance, resources, and check-ins that help deepen mentoring relationships, sustain momentum, and inspire meaningful professional growth.

TCDIP Connect Best Practices

TCDIP Connect offers the opportunity for each participant to serve as both a mentor and a mentee. We encourage all members to consider themselves in both roles and review the following tips with that framework in mind.

Top Tips for Being a Good Mentor and Mentee.

- **Give information and advice generously.** Don't treat the mentoring relationship as a test or make team members "earn" information. Many mentees already feel anxious about asking for help or being a "burden" to their mentor. Be open, generous, and forthcoming with information that will help your mentee(s) navigate their legal career - and let them know you are happy to do so. This includes sharing your own mistakes and failures, which will help mentees with problem-solving, building trust, and encouraging them to seek advice as they encounter new professional challenges.
- **Embrace "reverse mentoring."** Mentoring doesn't have to be a one-way street. Mentees are eager to add value to the relationship and many mentors find that they learn quite a bit from their mentees! More senior team members should be ready to learn from more junior lawyers and law students, just as junior lawyers and law students should be ready to teach more senior lawyers.
- **Be present and reliable.** Attorneys and law students are busy people, and school or work needs can often send other things to the back burner. When you are meeting with a team member, close your email and silence your phone so you can really focus on the conversation. If you're swamped with billable work and don't have time to thoughtfully answer a question from a team member, consider a quick response acknowledging their message and letting them know when you can get back to them.
- **Get to know your TCDIP Connect team members as individuals.** Take some time to understand your team members' backgrounds and interests outside of their jobs. Getting to know your team members as individuals allows you to build stronger relationships and to tailor your advice to their personalities and goals. If there is a member of your group you haven't connected with through group gatherings, consider reaching out individually to get to know them.
- **Listen and ask questions.** Law students and early-career attorneys may be intimidated by a more senior team member's status and success and tend to shy away from talking "too much". Be sure to allow people to complete their full thought, take a pause, and then respond. Additionally, they may not always have enough context or professional experience to have specific career related questions. Listening carefully and asking follow-up questions will help you avoid assumptions and provide advice and guidance.

Top Tips for Working Through Interpersonal Conflict

- **Focus on building a strong relationship before conflict arises.** Strong mentoring relationships are built on mutual trust and respect, which often stems from open and frequent communication.
- **Remain calm and take the time you need to respond.** In times of conflict, it can be easy to respond quickly, letting our emotions influence how we respond. Regardless of the situation, it's helpful to focus on what you can control, which includes how you decide to respond in the moment and later.
- **Remember to see the person with whom you are having a conflict as a person.** We are all human, everyone makes mistakes, and we all need grace at times (due to circumstances which may or may not be obvious in the moment). Try to give everyone the benefit of the doubt when there is a conflict and assume that the person does not have ill intent.
- **Seek out advice from a trusted advisor.** It can be helpful, after doing self-reflection, to get the opinion of a trusted advisor to react to the situation and how you plan to respond. This includes people on your team who you trust or someone on the TCDIP staff. For law students, you may want to reach out to someone at your Career Office.
- **Consider approaching the person with whom you are having a conflict directly, subject to what your team's commitment statement provides.** It may be easier to gain additional information and resolve the conflict directly, rather than including others in the situation.



Communication Best Practices

- When deciding on a communication platform, consider each person's access and familiarity with each platform. Choose a platform that is easily accessible to everyone or offer to help team members who may not be as familiar with a platform.
- Solicit input from all team members on scheduling. Be sensitive to competing scheduling demands and consider rotating times to ensure meetings are convenient for all.
- Create an agenda and send in advance. Include a topic for discussion which can be a mixture of group activities (see below) and specific discussion topics.
- Build in time for recognition and connection. This could be a space for participants to highlight key accomplishments and allows for team members to celebrate their successes.
- Alert attendees of their need to contribute. What, if anything, do participants need to do in advance? This also allows people who need time to "noodle" a specific topic before speaking up, the time to do this in advance.
- Identify a person to lead the meeting. Consider rotating this role. Begin with introductions every time.

Exiting TCDIP Connect Before the End of the Program

It is our hope that each participant will have an outstanding experience. However, we know that life happens and sometimes people may get overwhelmed or feel that they can no longer participate for a myriad of reasons. In these times, first turn to the expectations that your team set for supporting each other during the tough times. Each team should discuss at the beginning of the program how to lean on your group during tough times. Relying on your network is a great way to manage those issues.

We want everyone to get the full experience of the entire program. Thus, before you decide that you can no longer participate in the program, we hope that you will reach out to TCDIP Staff for support.

If after speaking with TCDIP Staff, you decide that leaving the program is in your best interest, we ask you to reach out to your team and let them know that you need to take a step back. If you are not comfortable sending such a message, TCDIP staff will do their best to communicate the news to the group on your behalf and with your professional interest in mind.

2025 TCDIP Connect Group Commitment Statement

Group Name:

Team Lead:

Team Lead Email Address:

Commitment Statement: We are entering into a mentoring group from **October 14, 2025 through May 1, 2026**. All team members commit to making the best effort possible to participate fully by being responsive to communications, attending meetings, actively participating in discussions, and supporting team members.

We agree to the following values:

- *Accountability:* Each member is an equal, contributing member of the team. Each member takes responsibility for participating and getting what they need out of the team. Law students and attorneys hold the same responsibility to schedule meetings and activities.
- *Show Professionalism.* Uphold a high standard of professionalism. Promptly return telephone calls and e-mails. Be present, no multi-tasking during meetings.
- *Maintain Confidentiality:* When discussing what you've learned from TCDIP Connect with people outside of your team, you should use "I" statements and talk about your own experience. Keep any personal information shared at meetings confidential.
- *Be an Active and Engaged Listener.* Listen to team members and provide an accepting and supportive atmosphere.
- *Development & Guidance.* Provide perspective and advice on career related topics and offer suggestions, feedback and encouragement to our team members.
- *Facilitate Networking.* Serve as a resource for our team and help facilitate connections with other professionals. These professionals may be internal or external to your organization and can be at any level.
- *Be Prepared.* Ensure that goals are established, topics are identified, agendas are created, and questions are prepared for each meeting.
- *Be Receptive to Feedback.* Accept feedback and suggestions from our team.

Does your TCDIP Connect group want to set any other expectations? List them here.

By signing below, we agree to fully participate in the TCDIP Connect as outlined in the TCDIP Connect Program Guide.

Individual Team Member's Goal Statement

Your Name:

You are invited to use this worksheet as an individual resource to set your goals. At the beginning of the program, each team member is asked to think about their goals and expectations on an individual basis. Each team can decide whether members will be asked to share individual statements with each other, or whether the team would prefer to keep statements private. If at least 5 members of your team return Individual Goal Statements to TCDIP, your team will win an extra entry into the drawing for lunch on TCDIP!

- 1. What are your goals for participating in TCDIP Connect?**
 - a. What skills do you want to build?
 - b. What connections or experiences would help?

- 2. What do you plan to contribute to the team?**
 - a. What skills or expertise can you offer?
 - b. What connections or experiences can you offer to your team?

- 3. Where do you see yourself in one year? 3 years? 5 years? What will you be doing professionally? How is it different from today?**

- 4. Based on your response to No. 3, what are your longer-term goals?**

- 5. What will it take to achieve these goals? What are your needs along the way? What will you need to learn? Who will you need to know? What experiences will you need to have had?**



Anti-Racist Mentorship

Turning Good Intentions into Meaningful Change

BY J. RYANN PEYTON

The legal profession has struggled for a lifetime to create equity within the profession. In recent years, numerous scholarly and opinion articles have recognized cross-race legal mentorship as a necessary component of achieving this goal.¹ But while these authors, researchers, and academics are correct in their assessment of the necessity and benefit of cross-race mentoring relationships in the legal profession, it is imperative to understand that such relationships are a result of centuries of social stratification within the profession.

The relationship between a white mentor and a mentee of color is predicated on years

of historical practices, political decisions, and attitudes that have unequally distributed economic and intellectual resources within the legal profession.² Successfully navigating legal institutions (law firms, bar associations, etc.) is based on colonialist notions of social hierarchy, assimilation, and credentialing, about which the white mentor is supposed to have some insight to provide a lawyer of color.³ Yet we know that success in the legal profession is not merely a navigational issue and is predicated instead on matters of access and opportunity.

This article contains lessons I have learned as a well-intentioned white mentor seeking to move beyond merely helping lawyers of color

survive the profession to actually eliminating the social, political, and economic arrangements and practices that necessitate these survival tactics in the first place.⁴ I specifically call on my white colleagues to learn from and teach one another. We are responsible for creating and maintaining the privilege we hold in this profession, and as such, we bear responsibility for ending it. We cannot be anti-racist lawyers and mentors in a vacuum. It will take many of us to step into the role of an anti-racist mentor to change the structures within the profession that continue to perpetuate the ongoing disparities for lawyers of color. If enough of us are willing to engage in this journey of anti-racism, we can rapidly transform our awareness into meaningful action.

What is Anti-Racism?

The current national conversation on race, justice, and policing has focused attention on the role of the legal profession in perpetuating white supremacy and racism in America.⁵ People often think of white supremacy and racism in terms of individual actions. These words may conjure up images of people in white cloaks or neo-Nazis with shaved heads. But racial discrimination is not always so overt. Structural and systemic racism is all around us. We are born into it. It is deeply embedded in our culture and our communities, including the legal profession. It is so pervasive that lawyers often don't even notice how policies, institutions, and systems disproportionately favor some while disadvantaging others.

"White supremacy" is the existence of racial power that denotes a system of structural or societal racism that privileges white people over others, regardless of the presence or absence of racial hatred.⁶ White racial advantages occur at both a collective and an individual level, and white supremacy denotes that white people and white ways of being—of beauty, of working, of thinking, and so on—are treated as the baseline, the norm, and all other ways are treated as deviations on that norm.⁷

People often mistakenly believe that simply being "not racist" is enough to eliminate racial discrimination and white supremacy. The problem with this perspective is that many

people are not only unaware of their own unconscious biases about race, but also don't fully understand the institutional and structural issues that uphold white supremacy and contribute to racist behaviors, attitudes, and policies.⁸

The concept of anti-racism has its roots in abolition and has been around throughout the 20th-century civil rights movements. More recently, thanks to the work of Ibram X. Kendi and other scholars, activists have used the term "anti-racist" specifically to make the point that it is not sufficient to merely be non-racist. As Kendi explains in his 2019 book *How to Be an Antiracist*:

The opposite of racist isn't "not racist." It is "anti-racist." What's the difference? One endorses either the idea of a racial hierarchy as a racist, or racial equality as an anti-racist. One either believes problems are rooted in groups of people, as a racist, or locates the roots of problems in power and policies, as an anti-racist. One either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an anti-racist. There is no in-between safe space of "not racist."⁹

To be an anti-racist, Kendi and others say, requires an understanding of history—an understanding that racial disparities in America have their roots, not in some failing by people of color, but in policies that serve to prop up white supremacy.

The legal profession and its institutions are not exempt from the influence of white supremacy and the racist systems, structures, and false meritocracies that perpetuate such supremacy. As a result, legal mentors are also influenced by these factors and as leaders within the profession have an obligation to confront the racial inequities of our profession as an anti-racist.

Educate Yourself and Do Your Own Work

It might be uncomfortable to acknowledge white supremacy within ourselves and our profession's institutions. Such acknowledgement may cause feelings of guilt, shame, and defensiveness. This fragility, however, does little to create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive legal profession.

Part of becoming an anti-racist mentor is acknowledging our own positions of power in a white supremacist system. I acknowledge that I am a white person, and as such, I cannot talk about what it feels like to experience racism or to fight against it as a person of color. But it's also not the responsibility of the lawyers of color in our profession to fix racism or explain to white lawyers how not to be racist. As such, self-reflection must coincide with the external work of dismantling structural white supremacy within the profession.¹⁰

To be an anti-racist, Kendi and others say, requires an understanding of history—an understanding that racial disparities in America have their roots, not in some failing by people of color, but in policies that serve to prop up white supremacy.

Anti-racism requires looking at your own beliefs and actions critically. Research has shown that even people who support racial equality often unknowingly hold racist attitudes.¹¹ This discrepancy is often explained by the existence of implicit biases, or attitudes that are largely unconscious but nevertheless influence behavior. For example:

- While people may consciously support racial justice, they can still hold subtle

beliefs about different races, often based on internalized stereotypes.

- Data from the Implicit Association Test (IAT) has found that while nearly 70% of white respondents claim to have no preference between Black and white, almost the same percentage of respondents showed some type of preference toward whites on the test.¹²

While it is impossible to rid yourself of your cognitive biases entirely, it is possible to develop critical thinking skills that allow you to challenge your assumptions. Doing the work to understand your implicit biases will assist you in building the skill to challenge the schemas, stereotypes, and assumptions that underlie those biases. If you are interested in learning more about your own implicit biases, you can take the IAT for free through Project Implicit.¹³

In addition to understanding your own beliefs and biases, take time to educate yourself about the history and effects of racism on the systems, structures, and institutions of our country. Learn how racism continues to shape our social, economic, legal, and political institutions. Seek to understand how racism influenced the construction of the legal profession, including its institutions, hierarchies, and disparities to access. There are many ways to learn more about the history and societal effects of racism. Some recommended¹⁴ books and online resources include:

- *How to Be an Antiracist*, by Ibram X. Kendi¹⁵
- *So You Want to Talk About Race*, by Ijeoma Oluo¹⁶
- *An Antiracist Reading List*, compiled by Ibram X. Kendi for *The New York Times*¹⁷
- Code Switch, a podcast series from NPR¹⁸
- Racial Equity Tools.¹⁹

Finally, it is critical to listen to what BIPOC (Black, indigenous and people of color) lawyers have to say about racist behaviors, policies, and systems within the profession. Remember that just because you have never experienced or witnessed these things doesn't mean they don't happen. Reflect on the systems and structures within the profession that may have benefited you in your career but may be rooted in racism or create disparities for lawyers of color.

Also recognize that race intersects with many other aspects of a person's identity, including sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, and disability. Not all people are impacted by race in the same way. Black women, for example, are affected by both racial discrimination and sexism.²⁰ Listening to these experiences and contemplating how systems, policies, and structures may affect people differently can help legal mentors adopt an anti-racist approach to mentoring lawyers of color.

Have Courageous Conversations

The historical hierarchies and power imbalances of the legal profession make it difficult for lawyers of color, as well as allied lawyers without influence, to call out racist behavior and structures when they encounter it. In your journey to become an anti-racist mentor, you must be willing to replace polite conversations about unconscious bias with courageous conversations about race and racism. A courageous conversation is necessary but often difficult to have, yet when done effectively, it can have a dramatic impact on racial equity within the legal profession and its institutions.²¹

Courageous conversations require us to step out of our comfort zones to discuss a topic that might well cause an emotional response. Lawyers tend to avoid courageous conversations, but they can be instrumental to anti-racist mentoring. To work, they require an atmosphere of trust and respect. Participants must feel free to share their views openly and truthfully. All participants must come with an openness to learn and a desire to understand others' perspectives.

A courageous conversation can happen in both informal and formal settings. Informally, it can happen when you speak to a colleague to discuss a discriminatory behavior or comment. It can also happen in more formal, organized settings, such as when you are engaging in a strategic planning meeting, evaluating hiring, compensation, and promotion systems and policies in your workplace, or identifying systemic issues that create barriers to inclusion for lawyers of color within the profession and developing solutions to mitigate or eliminate those hidden barriers.

Those who engage in courageous conversations about race must admit that they may not know all they have claimed to know or honestly believed they knew. Because we are—individually and collectively—constantly being socialized into racialized points of view, it is likely that we will discover places of intense disagreement and experience new levels of cognitive dissonance as we unpack the various perspectives we have absorbed.

We must not retreat from the conversation when our opinions do not align with opinions of others or opinions we previously held as individuals. Through normalizing the presence of multiple perspectives, we can avoid a situation in which one dominant way of understanding race invalidates all other experiences and different points of view.

Finally, when having courageous conversations with other members of the profession, we should expect and accept a lack of closure. As much as lawyers appreciate definitive answers, conversations about race usually provide no resolution. There is no such thing as perfection in anti-racism work. There is only progress. Racism is not a topic that has achieved closure in the broader world. As such, we should accept that our courageous conversations will be ongoing within the profession as well.

Work Toward Systemic Change

The effects of bias and racism are especially damaging when they are woven into the law, legal profession, and justice system, where they can weaken the ability of these systems to safeguard equity and justice under the rule of law. As lawyers, we have an obligation to ensure that all members of society have meaningful access to the law, justice systems, and the legal profession. More specifically, legal mentors, with their access to the profession and technical expertise within it, must lend their skills and access toward proactively supporting anti-racist policies, practices, and movements within the profession. For those seeking to use their privilege in the profession to work toward systemic change, consider the following opportunities for engagement:

1. Assess and address the structures, systems, and policies where you work and lead.

There is a well-documented lack of diversity in the legal profession, at all levels of the bench and bar. Whenever and however you are involved in the profession, seek to strengthen equity, diversity, and inclusion by addressing the structural roots of this disparity within organizational policies, hierarchies, systems, and processes.

2. Elevate, but don't exploit, the voices of people of color within the profession. Consider the people you most trust and respect within the profession. What is their race, gender, class, ability, religion, and so on? Not surprisingly, the people on this list are likely very similar to you and reveal how homogeneous your most trusted professional connections are. In a profession still overwhelmingly dominated by lawyers who are white and male, it is not absurd to assume that those most "trusted" within the profession are also white and male. As an anti-racist mentor, think critically about how you can both break down barriers for and elevate the voices of BIPOC lawyers within the profession. At the same time, balance the elevation of BIPOC voices with the tendency to place the burden of reform on them. Remember it is not the sole job of BIPOC lawyers within our profession to educate us on the impact and disparities of structural racism. You can still request feedback and create an opportunity to engage or collaborate with BIPOC individuals in elevating lawyers of color, but do not expect them to take on the extra emotional and time-consuming burden of systemic change.
3. Identify possible partners who are committed to helping BIPOC and other underrepresented lawyers find success in the legal profession and begin to build relationships with those people and entities. In building relationships with other anti-racist lawyers and organizations within the profession, you can further your own learning and more intentionally make connections and introductions in safe and inclusive spaces for BIPOC mentees seeking to grow their networks and influence within the legal community.

4. Individualize your engagement with mentees of color. If you're not focused on racial justice, mentoring essentially amounts to bringing lawyers of color into a profession that you know is precarious for them and including them in a culture where the only way they can survive is assimilation. When providing mentoring guidance to BIPOC mentees, consider your advice through an anti-racist lens. For instance, when it comes to overcoming professional setbacks, resilience is a multilayered and complex concept, particularly for BIPOC lawyers. As Justice Sonia Sotomayor has so eloquently stated, "not everyone can pull themselves up by their bootstraps . . . sometimes no matter how tall the heel on your boot is, the barrier is so high, you need a small lift."²² Your advice and guidance to mentees should consider what that "small lift" might be to ensure that you are not simply instructing a mentee of color to achieve their goals by assimilating to the predominantly white culture of the legal profession.
5. Acknowledge the ongoing racial justice reckoning in America. As an anti-racist mentor, you must acknowledge America's racial justice reckoning and the ways in which the current events directly impact BIPOC members of our legal community. Recognize that the experiences they're having might be painful, isolating, and frustrating in ways that you could never imagine. Acknowledge the trauma and grief at play and take the opportunity to continue to educate yourself and do the work to be an effective ally and accomplice to your BIPOC colleagues.

Conclusion

As we think about how to transform our profession and organizations to be inclusive, just, and equitable, we need to understand that this is a collective effort. Making privilege visible and interrupting racism requires partnership with lawyers of color. Otherwise, we may do more harm than good. If we charge ahead, eager to impose our solutions and interventions, we replicate old patterns and run the risk of

jeopardizing the progress our colleagues of color have been working toward long before we sought to become involved.²³

The responsibilities of being an anti-racist mentor and ally include being willing to take risks, speak up, and increase our own and others' awareness to show the impact of racism, white supremacy, and privilege on the structural, practical, and individual levels of our profession. Our work as allies must always and everywhere be grounded in humility, collaboration, and accountability.

If you resonate with the notion of being a well-intentioned white lawyer seeking to do more to break down the systemic and structural

inequities of our profession, I invite you to join me on this journey and engage in a collective effort to improve mentorship through anti-racism work. 



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NOTES

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