

Racial Equity Council

2023 Annual Report

March 7, 2024 - Private and confidential



Contents

Introduction	3
REC Members	4
Key Takeaways	5
REC Subcommittee Reports	6
Sponsorship	7
Business Services	9
Non-Partner Lawyers	11
Recruiting	13
Areas of Focus for 2024	15

Appendices	16
-------------------	-----------

Introduction

We are pleased to share the Racial Equity Council (“REC”) Annual Report for 2023. This report provides substantive updates on the programming and initiatives implemented by REC in 2023, as well as a summary of our focus areas and proposed activities for 2024.

The core mission of REC is to enhance the experience of our Black personnel and advance racial equity throughout the Firm. ***Our approach to setting and achieving measurable goals in alignment with this mission remains rooted in the collection and assessment of data from across all levels of our business.*** Equipped with this data, we worked to refine and strengthen our most impactful efforts in 2023. We increased transparency around hiring and promotion decisions, created more opportunities for organic engagement and connection, and provided targeted programming and developmental opportunities for both lawyers and non-lawyers. Most importantly, we took steps throughout the year to further embed our initiatives into the cultural and operational fabric of the Firm.

Although we continued to achieve measurable success in key areas in 2023, as reflected herein, the year also provided us with opportunities to learn and adapt in the face of new challenges. Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives within the legal profession and elsewhere are facing increased levels of scrutiny, and many organizations have opted to abandon DEI efforts altogether. REC is well positioned to respond to these challenges. Like the Firm’s other DEI initiatives, REC operates from a data-centric foundation which allows us to implement innovative and effective programming that complies with all applicable laws and regulations. We remain steadfast in our commitment to achieving racial equity, and we are focused on continuing our work responsibly to affect lasting change and shape a more equitable law firm.

As in prior years, we remain in awe of the hard work and dedication of our members and the unwavering support of Firm management. This support was and remains paramount to everything we do. No matter the challenge, we remain committed to strengthening and safeguarding our infrastructure and advancing true equity for all Firm personnel.

Ryan E. Manns and Jamila S. Mensah
Co-Chairs, Racial Equity Council

REC Members

Co-Chairs:



Ryan E. Manns
Co-Head of Financial Restructuring and
Insolvency, United States
Dallas | Houston
Tel +1 214 855 8304; +1 713 651 5151
ryan.manns@nortonrosefulbright.com



Jamila S. Mensah
Partner
Houston
Tel +1 713 651 5504
jamila.mensah@nortonrosefulbright.com



Rebecca Abou-Chedid
Partner
Washington, DC
Tel +1 202 974 5746
rebecca.abouchedid@nortonrosefulbright.com



Christine Brozynski
Partner
New York
Tel +1 212 728 4476
christine.brozynski@nortonrosefulbright.com



Kelly Charles
Manager, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
New York
Tel +1 212 408 5419
kelly.charles@nortonrosefulbright.com



Josh Lee
Co-Head of Litigation and Disputes
Chicago
Tel +1 312 964 7772
josh.lee@nortonrosefulbright.com



Vincent Dunn
Co-Partner-in-Charge
New York
Tel +1 212 408 1064
vincent.dunn@nortonrosefulbright.com



Esther Clovis
Senior Associate
New York
Tel +1 212 318 3046
esther.clovis@nortonrosefulbright.com



Debra Gattison Hatter
Partner
Houston
Tel +1 713 651 8443
debra.hatter@nortonrosefulbright.com



Chris Pelham
Head of Litigation and Disputes
Los Angeles
Tel +1 213 892 9221
christopher.pelham@nortonrosefulbright.com



Shawn Spearman
Manager, US Pro Bono
Houston
Tel +1 713 651 5646
shawn.spearman@nortonrosefulbright.com



Reginald Wilson
Partner
Houston
Tel +1 713 651 5608
reginald.wilson@nortonrosefulbright.com



Kimberlyn Alford
Legal Project Manager
Washington, DC
Tel +1 202 662 4658
kimberlyn.alford@nortonrosefulbright.com



Kim Caine
Partner
Washington, DC
Tel +1 202 662 0394
kim.caine@nortonrosefulbright.com



Tanya Charles
Specialist, Events and Special Projects
New York
Tel +1 212 408 5377
tanya.charles@nortonrosefulbright.com



Beau Cox
Partner
Dallas
Tel +1 214 855 7494
beau.cox@nortonrosefulbright.com



S. Jamal Faleel
Head of Litigation and Disputes, Minneapolis
Minneapolis
Tel +1 612 321 2271
jamal.faleel@nortonrosefulbright.com



Charles Graham, Jr.
Associate
Houston
Tel +1 713 651 3688
charles.graham@nortonrosefulbright.com



Ryan Meltzer
Partner
Austin
Tel +1 512 536 5234
ryan.meltzer@nortonrosefulbright.com



Carlos R. Rainer
Partner
Houston
Tel +1 713 651 3673
carlos.rainer@nortonrosefulbright.com



Jamal Abdulrasheed
Associate
Chicago
Tel +1 312 964 7745
jamal.abdulrasheed@nortonrosefulbright.com



Nikki Wright-Smith
Director, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Houston
Tel +1 713 651 3694
nikki.wright-smith@nortonrosefulbright.com



Noam Ayali
Partner
Washington, DC
Tel +1 202 974 5623
noam.ayali@nortonrosefulbright.com



Dominique Caple
Manager, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
New York
Tel +1 212 318 3098
dominique.caple@nortonrosefulbright.com



Shauna Johnson Clark
US Chair; Head of Employment and Labor,
United States
Houston
Tel +1 713 651 5601
shauna.clark@nortonrosefulbright.com



Alesha Dominique
Partner
Los Angeles
Tel +1 213 892 9255
alesha.dominique@nortonrosefulbright.com



Jacqueline Feick
Senior Associate
Los Angeles
Tel +1 213 892 9295
jackie.feick@nortonrosefulbright.com



Alicia M. Grant
Senior Associate
San Antonio
Tel +1 210 270 7152
alicia.grant@nortonrosefulbright.com



Olivia Roberts
Associate
Houston
Tel +1 713 651 5625
olivia.roberts@nortonrosefulbright.com



Natasha Robertson
Partner
New York
Tel +1 212 408 5511
natasha.robertson@nortonrosefulbright.com



Warren Walker
Manager, Information Technology
Houston
Tel +1 713 651 8256
warren.walker@nortonrosefulbright.com



Tamika Gary
Director, Human Resources
Houston
Tel +1 713 651 5239
tamika.gary@nortonrosefulbright.com

Key Takeaways

After multiple additions and departures throughout 2023, the REC now sits at 32 members: 18 partners, 6 associates, and 8 Business Services personnel. The REC general body continues to meet monthly, and the REC co-chairs meet on a bi-weekly basis with Jeff Cody (Managing Partner), Gina Shishima (Chief Strategy and Operations Partner), Katherine Tapley (US Chair, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee), and Nikki Wright-Smith (Director, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion). The Business Services Subcommittee (“BSS”) and Non-Partner Lawyers also meet regularly to plan and implement their respective initiatives.

Throughout 2023, we remained intentional in our efforts to promote racial equity while aiming to improve the individual experiences of Black personnel. Some of our most significant activities and achievements in 2023 included:

- successful implementation of the restructured Sponsorship Program, where we continued to see sustained improvement in Protégé utilization;
- consistently positive outcomes in recruitment, including a 90% acceptance rate on offers to Black summer associates; and
- continued dialogue between Business Services and Firm management regarding hiring, retention, and promotion trends and data.

We will continue to build on these results in 2024 with a focus on partner engagement, developmental opportunities for non-partner lawyers and Business Services personnel, and increased collaboration across the Firm’s DEI councils and networks.

REC Subcommittee Reports

Sponsorship

Overview

The mission of the REC Sponsorship Program is to maximize the opportunities for Black non-partner lawyers to succeed at the Firm through strategic career development initiatives and personalized support from senior lawyers. Each non-partner lawyer participating in the Program (“Protégé”) is paired with one or two established partners who serve as Sponsors. Each Protégé is also assigned a REC Partner Advocate to serve as a resource and facilitator for the Sponsor/Protégé relationships. The Management Committee, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, the DEI team, Legal Talent Management, and Learning and Development all provide support for the program.

Members

The 2023 Sponsorship subcommittee members are Ryan Manns (Dallas), Jamila Mensah (Houston), Noam Ayali (DC), Shauna Clark (Houston), and Debra Hatter (Houston).

2023 Year in Review

Over the past year, we achieved our goal of implementing the enhanced REC Sponsorship Program. Each Protégé (non-partner lawyers with two or more years at the Firm or laterals who have been with the Firm for at least three months¹) is matched with a Sponsor and a REC Advocate tasked with helping the Protégés achieve key career development goals and obtain increased visibility within the Firm and with clients. The program also provides formal training opportunities for both Protégés and Sponsors designed to enhance the Protégé’s overall career development.

The foundational pillar of the Sponsorship Program is the critical assessment of utilization data for all non-partner lawyers. Accordingly, the REC Advocates meet with the PGL’s, Firm management, and the DEI and LTM teams on a quarterly basis to review attorney utilization data and identify areas for improvement or intervention. Additionally, select members of the Sponsorship subcommittee are tasked with monitoring the utilization and development of the Black attorneys not yet eligible for the Sponsorship Program. These partners meet regularly with their cohort to solicit feedback used to improve the Sponsorship Program.

Protégés transition out of the formal program upon completion of a two-year tenure. However, any Protégé who expresses the need for additional support can opt to remain connected to their REC Advocate beyond the completion of the program.

In furtherance of our efforts to provide the Protégés with meaningful career development opportunities, we presented a Corporate Leaders Roundtable in November where Black in-house attorneys discussed their experiences with and expectations for external counsel. We also hosted a holiday celebration and panel event in December 2023 where clients and Firm alumni spoke candidly about their career success and the importance of sponsorship and relationship development.

¹ The Sponsorship Program is limited to Associates, Senior Associates, Counsel, and Senior Counsel.

Feedback

REC Protégés continue to report an increased sense of support and connection within the Firm, and utilization for REC Proteges has steadily improved since the inception of the Program. Additional feedback indicated that the Sponsorship Program continues to play a key role in recruiting. Nearly all 2023 Black summer associates identified the Program as a key factor in choosing to join the Firm.

Areas of Focus for 2024

For 2024, the Sponsorship subcommittee will remain focused on maintaining the stability and effectiveness of the program for all Protégés and pipeline candidates. The subcommittee will also continue to closely monitor Protégé utilization data as part of the ongoing effort to ensure equity across the non-partner lawyer population.

Business Services

Overview

The Business Services Subcommittee (“BSS”) works to achieve equity in the experiences and developmental opportunities for Black non-attorney personnel. The BSS works closely with the REC and Firm management on recruitment, promotion, and retention initiatives, including activities and events designed to improve engagement for Black Business Services employees throughout the firm.

Members

The 2023 BSS members are Kimberlyn Alford (Washington, DC), Kelly Charles (New York), Tanya Charles (New York), Shawn Spearman (Houston) and Warren Walker (Houston).

2023 Year in Review

In 2023, BSS continued to work with Stacey Martinez, Chief Operating Officer, and other members of Firm management to explore hiring, promotion, and departure data and to identify and address obstacles to development and advancement for Black Business Services professionals.

With respect to advancement and promotion, the 2023 data reflects a slight increase in the overall number of Manager and Director positions held by Black Business Services professionals in comparison to the prior year. The data also indicates that 2023 Business Services hires were down overall from 2022, with the number of new Black business services personnel essentially remaining flat.

The BSS conducted its first in-person Strategic Planning Meeting in Houston in November 2023 to evaluate progress and accomplishments to date and to identify strategic initiatives for 2024. The sessions included meetings with the following Firm leaders:

- Tamika Gary, Director of Human Resources
- Nikki Wright-Smith, Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Olivia Roberts and Shawn Spearman, Chairs of Black Affinity Network
- Shauna Johnson Clark, Ryan Manns, and Jamila Mensah – REC Leadership

In addition to the above, the BSS continued to meet regularly throughout the year and engaged in the following events and activities focused on the group’s strategic goals:

- identifying and attending job fairs and recruiting events for high potential candidates;
- meeting regularly with regional and local Human Resources managers to discuss workplace culture across Firm offices; and
- continued collaboration with REC members to identify and explore new initiatives.

Areas of Focus for 2024

In 2024, the BSS will continue to collaborate with Firm management to periodically assess hiring and promotion data for Black employees and to implement initiatives focused on achieving equity for all Business Services personnel. The BSS will also work to identify strategic professional development initiatives designed to serve personnel at various levels, including targeted training, mentorship, and networking opportunities.

Non-Partner Lawyers

Overview

The Non-Partner Lawyers Subcommittee (“NPL”) develops and hosts networking opportunities and social events for the Firm’s Black non-partner lawyers. The NPL also provides a forum through which non-partner lawyers engage in substantive discussions with each other and with Firm leadership regarding their experiences.

Members

The 2023 NPL subcommittee members are Esther Clovis (New York), Alicia Grant (San Antonio), Esha Kamboj (Washington)², Jackie Feick (Los Angeles), and David Moore (Houston).

2023 Year in Review

- **Partner Roundtable (February 2023):** The NPL hosted a roundtable discussion with Shauna Clark, Jamila Mensah, and Ryan Manns. The NPL collected questions in advance of the call, and the speakers addressed each question and closed with a Q&A session. This event was well received as attendees appreciated the opportunity to speak directly with partners.
- **Black History Month LinkedIn Features (February 2023):** In a repeat of the campaign first launched in 2022, the NPL profiled a different non-partner lawyer or Business Services colleague through Alicia Grant’s LinkedIn account every day in February in honor of Black History month. The posts collectively garnered more than 500,000 views and at least 40 reshares. In addition to highlighting the background and achievements of the featured personnel, the posts served as an effective business development and cross-selling tool, garnering positive comments from both clients and Firm personnel.
- **Billing Practices Discussion (April 2023):** Discussion for non-partner lawyers led by senior associates regarding best practices for billing.
- **Book Club (May 2023):** Lauryn Robinson and Ryan Meltzer led a discussion based on the book *Fair Play: A Game-Changing Solution for When You Have Too Much to Do (and More Life to Live)* by Eve Rodsky.
- **Evaluations: Best Practices and Lessons Learned (September 2023):** The NPL hosted a discussion with non-partners regarding the annual evaluation process. Panellists shared their personal experiences related to evaluations and provided practical guidance for navigating the process. The NPL encouraged non-partners to participate in the peer-to-peer evaluations and to submit evaluations for Business Services personnel. The session also addressed questions received in advance of the call and closed with Q&A.
- **Holiday Party (December 2023):** The NPL hosted a virtual event celebrating 2023 accomplishments and personal successes.
- **Virtual Happy Hours (March 2023, November 2023):** During these casual events, non-partner lawyers socialized over drinks and snacks. The May event included an introduction of new non-partner lawyers and an overview of the REC. The November event celebrated milestones of the non-partners and solicited input for 2024 programming.

² Esha Kamboj resigned from the Firm in February 2024.

- **NPL City Dine Arounds (throughout 2023):** NPL members hosted dinner/lunch events in the Austin, Dallas, Houston, and New York offices in connection with business travel.
- **NPL Check-Ins (throughout 2023):** NPL members contacted non-partner lawyers individually to check in and collect feedback.

Feedback and Areas of Focus for 2024

While the improved hiring and retention data for Black non-partners has been a source of encouragement, fostering stronger connections and fellowship across offices continues to be a challenge for the NPL. This difficulty is attributable in part to the lingering effects of the pandemic as well as the siloed nature of the Firm's office-based engagement efforts. The NPL will continue to address this obstacle in 2024 through both virtual and in-person events, including office visits, one-on-one contacts, and coordinated attendance at industry conferences and related events. To this end, the NPL has scheduled virtual meetings for the first Wednesday of every month in 2024 (with the exception of January and the summer months). Additionally, the NPL will coordinate a mix of social events and substantive discussions throughout 2024 designed to improve engagement and connectivity for Black non-partners.

Recruiting

Overview

The mission of the Recruiting subcommittee is to address obstacles to achieving equity in the Firm's law school and lateral recruiting. The subcommittee engages directly with office hiring committees and the Firm's Recruiting team to implement innovative and personalized initiatives designed to identify and recruit the best available non-partner talent in the country.

Members

The 2023 Recruiting subcommittee members are Esha Kamboj (Washington)³, Ryan Manns (Dallas), Jamila Mensah (Houston), Carlos Rainer (Houston), and Reginald Wilson (Houston).

2023 Year in Review

Summer Program

As in other summers, the Recruiting subcommittee hosted several virtual and in-person events as part of the broader Firm summer program, including:

- a firm-wide REC overview;
- a virtual fireside chat with Jeff Cody;
- a virtual multi-office happy hour;
- small group lunches, dinners, and happy hours; and
- a farewell social event.

REC members also served as individual resources for the Black summer associates to discuss the summer program and answer questions about REC initiatives and life at the Firm.

Additional Activities

The Recruiting subcommittee also remains engaged in the following efforts outside of the summer program:

- collaboration with targeted law schools to identify and pursue recruiting opportunities;
- expanding the number of opportunities to connect with Black candidates through programs such as the Southwest Black Law Students Association; and
- working directly with office hiring committees to interview, track, and advocate for outstanding candidates through the OCI and callback process.

³ Esha Kamboj resigned from the Firm in February 2024.

Feedback and Areas of Focus for 2024

Feedback with respect to the REC's recruiting efforts remains overwhelmingly positive. Summer associates consistently express appreciation for opportunities to connect directly with members of leadership and attorneys from diverse backgrounds to gain valuable insight about life in the Firm. The impact of these efforts is clear: ***approximately 17% of the 2023 summer associate class (11/63) identified as Black, and the Firm extended offers to 10 of those students and achieved a 90% acceptance rate (9/10)***. Our targeted law school engagement efforts have also borne fruit, as we continue to see increases in the number of highly qualified Black applicants from schools where we have at least one Black summer associate or first year attorney.

In 2024, the Recruiting subcommittee will remain vigilant in our efforts to identify and recruit top Black talent at the law school and lateral levels as part of the Firm's overall recruiting strategy. We will continue to work closely with the Recruiting teams to ensure the prioritization of equity and inclusion at every step of the recruiting process.

Areas of Focus for 2024

We continue to evaluate the efficacy and impact of the various REC initiatives against the backdrop of the Firm's business objectives and the ever-evolving demands of the global legal industry. To this end, we are implementing the following changes to the REC Subcommittee structure for 2024:

- The **Recruiting/Pipeline** subcommittee replaces the former Recruiting and Law Student Scholarship subcommittees, with the goal of streamlining the REC's recruiting efforts, including the exploration of strategic partnerships or other initiatives aimed at pipeline development and raising the Firm's profile among the country's elite Black law students.
- The **Partner Development and Engagement** subcommittee replaces the former Forum/Programming and Partner Practice Development subcommittees, with the goal of creating promotion and development opportunities for partners through organic collaboration and engagement both within and outside the Firm.

We have also identified the following areas of focus for 2024 as we continue our efforts to achieve a more equitable law firm:

- **Collaborative Leadership.** The Firm's strategic fortification of the DEI team, including the addition of Nikki Wright-Smith (Director – Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion) and other key personnel, facilitated the REC's ability to better execute and monitor our most critical initiatives. The additional resources also enabled the enhancement of other equity and inclusive initiatives like the Multicultural Equity Council ("MEC"), WiN, PRIDE, and the Veterans Network. In the upcoming year, with guidance from the DEI team, REC will increase its collaboration with these groups in order to achieve shared goals and objectives in the areas of equity and inclusion.
- **REC Partner Roundtables.** In conjunction with the Sponsorship Program, the REC Partners will conduct a series of panel discussions and roundtables designed to provide direct, practical guidance and advice to REC Proteges on specific areas of interest. The REC Partners will work with the DEI team and the NPL subcommittee to identify topics/subject matter areas for each session.
- **Enhanced Opportunities for REC Partners.** Given our sustained progress on initiatives for the non-partner lawyer and Business Services populations, we will aim to refocus time and resources towards cultivating an equitable playing field at the partnership level. This initiative will be led by the newly formed Partner Development and Engagement subcommittee and will involve collaboration with the Practice Group Leaders and other members of Firm management.

Appendices

Appendix A

2024 REC Membership and Subcommittees

Sponsorship

1. Jamila Mensah (*Chair*)
2. Rebecca Abou-Chedid
3. Noam Ayali
4. Vincent Dunn
5. Ryan Manns
6. Christine Brozynski (*Pre-Sponsorship Cohort*)
7. Natasha Robertson (*Pre-Sponsorship Cohort*)
8. Reginald Wilson (*Pre-Sponsorship Cohort*)

Law School Recruiting/Pipeline

1. Beau Cox (*Co-Chair*)
2. Christopher Pelham (*Co-Chair*)
3. Ryan Meltzer
4. Carlos Rainer
5. Esther Clovis
6. Charles Graham

Non-partner Lawyers

1. Alicia Grant (*Co-Chair*)
2. Esther Clovis (*Co-Chair*)
3. Jamal Abdulrasheed
4. Charles Graham
5. Jackie (Karama) Feick
6. Olivia Roberts

Business Services

1. Kimberlyn Alford (*Co-Chair*)
2. Shawn Spearman (*Co-Chair*)
3. Dominique Caple
4. Kelly Charles
5. Tanya Charles
6. Tamika Gary
7. Warren Walker
8. Nikki Wright-Smith

Partner Development and Engagement

1. S. Jamal Faleel (*Co-Chair*)
2. Debra Hatter (*Co-Chair*)
3. Kim Caine
4. Shauna Clark
5. Alesha Dominique
6. Josh Lee

Appendix B

2024 Calendar of Events

Q1 (January – March)

- Monthly – NPL Meetings
- January – Quarterly Sponsorship Program Update Meeting
- February – Black History Month LinkedIn Profiles
- February – High School Pipeline Event (in collaboration with the Black Affinity Network)
- March – Black Women Partners Virtual Happy Hour

Q2 (April – June)

- Monthly – NPL Meetings
- April – Quarterly Sponsorship Program Update Meeting
- May – Welcome Event for Summer Associates
- June – Combined NPL/Summer Associate event

Q3 (July – September)

- Monthly – NPL Meetings
- July – BSS Summer Event
- July – Summer Associate Roundtable with Jeff Cody
- July – Farewell Event for Summer Associates
- September – Quarterly Sponsorship Program Update Meeting

Q4 (October – December)

- Monthly – NPL Meetings
- Monthly – NPL Meetings
- December – Holiday Events (NPL, BSS, all REC)