



News & Trending  
NEWS

## ABOVE THE LAW SHOWCASES SMITH ANDERSON ATTORNEYS ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES FOR LAW FIRMS

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*Above the Law*, "The Jabot" Podcast

Smith Anderson attorneys Kerry Shad and Sharita Whitaker were interviewed on *Above the Law*'s "The Jabot" podcast about how diversity and inclusion (D&I) have become crucial components of building and maintaining a successful law firm.

Kerry and Sharita co-chair Smith Anderson's Diversity and Inclusion Committee. During the podcast, "**Making Diversity Part of the Fabric Of Your Law Firm**," host Kathryn Rubino, senior editor at *Above the Law*, talked with Kerry and Sharita about what D&I means to them, what D&I initiatives are necessary for law firms, the advantages of D&I programs in mid-sized firms compared to Big Law, the impact of D&I on recruiting efforts and how recruiting efforts compare to retention efforts. Kerry and Sharita emphasized how law firms can make sure that they are working to have the pieces of the puzzle in place to create a successful, diverse and inclusive environment, which translates to better service for clients.

Kerry said at this stage in her life and career, diversity and inclusion "is all about empowering the next group of folks."

"We have extraordinary people out in the world and at Smith Anderson," she added. "It is so exciting for me to be in a position where I can help them build their own legal careers, find ways to position them so that they can be critical links to clients: let's face it, that's the name of the game in private practice, to be leaders in the community," Kerry said.

A lack of diversity and inclusion can end with a shortage of innovation and perspective, Sharita noted, and it is important that firms work to ingrain D&I goals in their cultures that are attainable in real life, not simply on check lists. Kerry said that being a mid-sized firm, Smith Anderson has "pretty significant advantages" when it comes to creating a diverse and inclusive culture.

"We are big enough that we have resources - we have the people resources and we have the money resources to devote to our D&I efforts," she said. "At the same time, were not so big that people get lost in the shuffle. We know each other."

Sharita said that D&I has a "huge impact on Smith Anderson's recruiting efforts, and Kerry said potential clients are now more concerned than ever about diversity in the firms they choose to represent them. It is crucial for firms to create a culture where people can thrive in being their "authentic selves," Kerry said.

“A link between leadership and D&I is critically important for law firms,” Kerry said. “The full weight of leadership has to be actively driving the initiative, and I feel like we are doing a really good job of that at Smith Anderson. We can always do more, and we are going to do more.”

The full podcast can be heard [here](#).

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**The Jabot Podcast** – a part of the of the Above the Law brand - focuses on the challenges women, people of color, LGBTQIA, and other diverse populations face in the legal industry. Its moniker is inspired by Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the Jabot, or decorative collar, she wore when delivering dissents from the bench of U.S. Supreme Court.

**Above the Law** takes a behind-the-scenes look at the world of law. The site provides news and insights about the profession’s most colorful personalities and powerful institutions, as well as original commentary on breaking legal developments.

## PROFESSIONALS

[Kerry A. Shad](#)

[Sharita M. Whitaker](#)

