Good afternoon, everyone and welcome.

To begin today's program please welcome the Dean of Suffolk law, Andrew Perlman.

Thank you Brian.

And good afternoon everyone.

I wanna start by thanking our distinguished panelists and moderator as well as our All Rise Committee led this year by Judge Joan Feeney.

Thank you, Judge Feeney for everything you have done during such difficult times.

Thank you also to Judge Amy Nekton who chaired the All Rise Panel Planning Committee.

We're really grateful for your leadership in so many ways.

Finally I wanna thank our sponsors, particularly our platinum sponsors, Kevin Fitzgerald, Regina Sullivan, and Nina Mitchell Wells, as well as our gold sponsors, Stanton Dodge and the law firm of Nixon Peabody.

Over the past three years our sponsors and individuals like you have raised over $300,000 to support the professor Catherine Judge Scholarship, which honors honors Suffolk Law's first full-time female professor and provides essential financial support to our students so that they can pursue the nationally leading practice oriented legal education that we offer at Suffolk Law.

This academic year, we also raised money for the Law Student Emergency Assistance Fund, which provides emergency grants to law students who face unexpected financial hardship.

Thanks to many of you who have given and if you haven't given yet or would like to give more, it's not too late.

We would be very grateful for your contributions no matter the amount we will offer a link in the chat for information about how to donate.

Now the All Rise program celebrate the women who have graduated from Suffolk Law and make their mark in the world.

Right now, I have the privilege of introducing someone who will soon be making her own mark after she graduates from Suffolk Law in May.

You're about to hear from Alexis Sores among her many accomplishments, she has won the American College of Bankruptcy, distinguished law student of the first circuit served as the president of the moot court honor board and journal of trial and appellate advocacy served as the vice-president.
for the Black Law Students Association
for the last two years
and worked as a The Marshall-Brennan
Constitutional literacy fellow.
For all of these and other accomplishments,
she recently was selected to receive Suffolk's 2021,
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Creating The Dream Award.
She will be joining Mintz as an associate
this fall after graduation.
Alexis we are excited that you will be soon taking place
your place among so many other
distinguished Suffolk Law alumni.
Please take it away.
Thank you Dean Perlman
and thank you to the All Rise Committee
for their work in putting this program together.
I've learned so much during my time at Suffolk Law,
and I'm proud to be a part of this amazing
and inclusive community.
I have the pleasure this afternoon
of introducing today's moderator
and one of my professors,
Professor Renee Landers.
Professor Landers is the faculty director
of the Law School's health and biomedical law concentration
and the master and law life sciences program.
Professor Landers was president
And she was the first woman of color
and first law professor to serve in that role.
She is also the past chair of the ABA section
of administrative law and regulatory practice.
She has worked in private practice
and has served as deputy general counsel
for the US department of health and human services.
And as deputy assistant attorney general
in the office of policy development
at the US department of justice during
the Clinton administration.
She was a member of the Supreme Judicial Court's Committee
studying gender bias and racial and ethnic bias
in the courts.
And Professor Landers has written on
racial and ethnic disparities
and healthcare racial and gender diversity
and the legal profession.
And she's also a regular commentator
for media organizations
on legal developments surrounding constitutional law,
health law, and administrative law.
Please welcome professor Renee Landers.
Alexis thank you so much
for those kind introductory remarks.
And thank you Dean Perlman for hosting us today on this very important program. Thank you also to all of the people participating in the program for taking time out of your very busy schedules and for joining us on International Women's Day. I'm glad that our conversation was scheduled for noon today because I think Hillary Clinton is doing a big program for the Washington Post starting at one O'clock. So at least we won't have that competition, but we have some really outstanding speakers and I will introduce them in a moment. According to the UN the theme of this year is Women In Leadership Achieving An Equal Future in the COVID-19 world. This theme celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping the response to the terrible pandemic that we've endured and to, and their role in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the pandemic. I'm thrilled to be joined by three alumni who are leaders in their fields and who are making an impact on advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in their professions and through their careers and mentorship of others. Today they will share lessons in leadership that support inclusion, advanced racial and gender equity and leverage thinking encompassing diverse perspectives. I will ask the panelists some questions, and then if we have time, we will take questions from the audience. If you have a question please submit it via the chat feature of the, of this Zoom platform. Our alumni panelists have a wide range of experience, both within and outside the legal protect of profession. Their accomplishments are many too many to list, but we have put their bios in the chat for you to review if you hadn't had a chance, but just to by way of introduction, I will welcome our three panelists. Judge Marcine S. Anderson JD class of 1984, who served services and appointed an elected judge with the King County District Court and the shoreline in the state of Washington. And she's been in that capacity for eight years. And she had a distinguished career in leadership in the profession before joining the bench, Jessica A Massey JD 2003 is an assistant United States Attorney for the Department of Justice in the Eastern
06:50 district of California,
06:52 where she represents the United States
06:53 in the investigation and prosecution
06:55 of complex transactional narcotics trafficking,
06:59 firearm, and gang related offenses.
07:02 And our third panelist is Tara Spann class of 1995
07:06 from the Law School,
07:08 who was the Chief People and Strategy Officer for Mentor
07:12 the national mentoring partnership,
07:14 where she is responsible for developing people,
07:16 processes and strategies with a focus
07:20 on ensuring mentors greatest organizational asset,
07:23 its staff.
07:24 And she had a distinguished career
07:26 in a variety of corporate positions
07:28 prior to taking on that role.
07:31 So let's to start off the discussion today
07:35 one hour is just not a lot of time
07:37 to deal with the complexity of the issues
07:40 that we're designed to talk about.
07:42 But I'd like to ask each of you to start us off
07:44 by telling us a little bit about yourself and,
07:48 and how you come to the
07:50 this discussion of diversity inclusion and equity.
07:53 So let's start off with Judge Anderson Marcine Anderson.
08:00 <v ->Thank you so much professor</v
08:02 and good afternoon to everyone.
08:04 I'd first like to thank the sponsors of this All Rise event.
08:08 It has been an absolute pleasure
08:10 to meet my co-panelists Ms. Massey and Ms. Spann
08:13 and our moderator Professor Landers.
08:16 And as you are all probably aware the real true grit
08:18 behind the panel today
08:20 is the Suffolk law school administration who
08:22 has worked with all of us
08:25 to make sure that this presentation runs so smoothly.
08:29 If you would have had an opportunity
08:31 to view a lineup of six year olds
08:33 who might go to college law school
08:36 and then end their legal career as a judge,
08:39 I probably would have never been selected.
08:42 I grew up in a small logging town
08:44 of a hundred people in Oregon.
08:46 My mother is Japanese American from Hawaii,
08:50 and my father is a third generation Oregonian.
08:54 The area I grew up is so rural
08:56 that there used to be a forest fire lookout tower,
09:00 three miles above us above our house.
09:03 Because of the mountainous geography
09:05 and our family circumstances
09:07 we didn't even have a television
09:09 until I was about in fifth grade.
09:11 As a result, I read a lot of books.
09:14 I read about places that were far away
creating dreams and hopes that eventually led me to the life that I have today. When I was still in high school, Judge Helen Frye, then the first woman Judge in Eugene, Oregon, and later an article three Judge in Portland, Oregon spoke at an event that I attended. I had never met a lawyer and I had absolutely no intention of ever meeting a judge. Her message then was that being an attorney was possible for a woman and even being a judge was like her was imaginable. She planted a seed but it would be several more years before that seed sprouted. I put myself through college working at the US Forest Service. When I was 18 I was one of the first women to train as a forest firefighter in the Willamette National Forest. I learned then what it was really like to walk toward something really scary. I moved from Blue River Oregon to Blue Hill Ave, when I came to Suffolk Law School. I quit my drop job drove myself across Canada and moved into a home in Roxbury with the mother of a friend. I'm so thankful and grateful for my legal education at Suffolk, because you gave me the opportunity to realize my dreams and taught me how to be a lawyer. When I graduated from Suffolk, I received The Reginald Heber Smith Community Lawyer Fellowship and worked at the Southeastern Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation in New Bedford, Fall River and Taunton. I then clerked for magistrate Judge Joyce London Alexander at the US district court in Boston. I moved from there to the MBTA where I worked both in the general counsel's office, as well as the general manager's office. In 1990, I moved to Seattle sight-unseen. I just think that Seattle is the most beautiful city in this country. And upon arriving in Seattle, I worked at both large and boutique law firms before working for 15 years in the civil division of the King County Prosecutor's Office, where I practiced Technology Law. I was appointed to the bench in 2010 and then elected three times as a King County District court Judge. And good morning my name is Marcine Anderson.
Thank you.

<v ->Thank you very much.</v

That was a wonderful story.

And it's amazing all of the backgrounds from which really accomplished people emerge.

So thank you so much for sharing that with us.

Our next speaker will be Tara Spann.

Please tell us a little bit of your story.

<v ->Absolutely thank you.</v

First of all thank you to everyone at Suffolk University Law School for inviting me to this panel and for everyone who's joining today.

And this is a very hard act to follow.

Thanks, Judge Anderson for making this difficult for me,

but Tara Spann, I grew up in South Carolina.

grew up in South Carolina and went to college at

Northeastern University Law School.

took up bio electrical engineering,

graduated as an electrical engineer.

did that for quite some time for the US department of the Navy.

and also for the US department of the Navy.

And then from there, I actually,

while I was working there,

decided that I wanted to do something more.

So I ended up applying to Law School and I applied to Law School not because I actually wanted to be a lawyer,

but because it's the one thing that scared me and all of the things that I was used to in terms of being a great engineer was kind of challenged if you will, being in law school,

doing the speaking engagements, speaking out loud, being present, being seen, writing, reading all of the things that engineers typically don't like to do.

So I actually went to law school so that I could be a better person overall.

And after leaving law school,

I actually worked in Silicon valley and intellectual property at an intellectual property law firm there and doing consulting and still consulting in engineering, which was quite interesting because I always kind of resort back to my comfort zone, which is engineering.

After doing that,

I ended up going back into engineering and being a senior engineer.

Worked many different jobs as a couple of different jobs as an engineer.
And then from there ended up getting myself into supplier diversity I went to Harvard University Law, Harvard university, and ended up doing, being responsible for so supplier diversity as a contract manager there, and also a seeing software licensing negotiator. And from there it, my trajectory just took off in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion, mostly on the supply chain side, but I also had some experience.

And just recently in the past few years, really focused on the human capital side of diversity equity and inclusion. So that's kind of where my trajectory has taken me today. <v>Thank you very much.</v> I think it's probably the first time I've heard anyone say that going to law school made them a better person, I've heard anyone say that going to law school made them a better person, but I think that it's, that's not usually the image, but I think that in fact it's probably true for a lot of us.

So thank you so much for sharing that. And our third panelist this afternoon Jessica Massey, who you will see from her bio in addition to her tremendous professional accomplishments has also served the university as a Suffolk university trustee. So Jessica, welcome to the program today. Thank you so much for having me professor Landers and to my other panelists it's great to be here. So my background is sort of, I guess the Suffolk background for a lot of folks, I grew up in a small town in Rhode Island. My dad was in the army, so I was born down in Virginia and then my folks relocated back up north. My folks who are working class people, my dad was a mailman and my mom worked at a bunch of different government agencies doing clerical work. And I'm the first in my family to go to college. I'm the only one in my family to go to grad school. So to me, that's sort of the epitome of a lot of the folks that end up at Suffolk are people like me. I went to Holy Cross to get my undergrad degree in political science, with a concentration in African-American studies. And then I went directly to Suffolk after that for law school,
16:21 I put myself through college and law school.
16:23 So I worked many, many jobs all through school.
16:28 When I was in law school,
16:30 I got the opportunity to do some
16:32 really cool summer internships.
16:34 My One L summer I clerked
16:36 for a federal judge in Rhode Island.
16:39 And my second summer, I clerked
16:41 for the organized crime drug enforcement task force
16:46 at the US attorney's office in Massachusetts.
16:48 After graduation I got my first opportunity
16:51 from another Suffolk alum to work
16:53 at the Suffolk County DA's office.
16:55 I was an assistant DA there for a little over four years,
16:59 and I did a variety of cases there.
17:02 I started out in the domestic violence unit,
17:05 transferred over to Chelsea district court
17:07 to do the safe neighborhood initiative project there.
17:11 And then ultimately was promoted to do juvenile
17:14 and youthful offender cases.
17:16 I left there to go to the Attorney General's office.
17:18 I started off doing special investigations in narcotics.
17:22 I did that for about three years
17:24 and then went over to the white collar side
17:26 of the criminal bureau and did a variety
17:28 of corruption and fraud cases there.
17:32 I was at the AG's office about seven years,
17:34 and then I was recruited to join Walmart.
17:37 So I picked up and left everything I knew
17:40 in Massachusetts to move to Arkansas,
17:44 which I still have a hard time believing I did.
17:46 And I was at a Walmart for about five years.
17:50 I was doing corruption and fraud investigations
17:54 for the company,
17:55 primarily focused on violations
17:57 of the United States Foreign Corrupt Practices act.
18:00 And I also acted as legal counsel
18:02 for the global ethics department for the company.
18:06 So after about five years,
18:07 I finally got the opportunity to
18:09 take my dream job at the US Attorney's office.
18:12 I was hoping it would be in Massachusetts,
18:14 but it ended up being in California.
18:16 So I am out here on the west coast right now.
18:20 And as professor Landers indicated
18:22 in the criminal bureau doing narcotics
18:24 violent crime gang cases
18:26 and things of that nature.
18:28 So that's my background.
18:35 Thank you so much, Jessica for sharing that.
18:38 There are so many overlapping intersections
18:41 with my career and my life growing up
18:44 with everything that the panelists have said so far.
18:47 So it's always very interesting
to hear people talk about themselves
and you realize the extent
to which you have things in common.
We often do not have a television
when I was growing up my parents,
neither of them ever owned a car during their lives.
And the and my father was a career enlisted person
in the army.
So there are these overlaps between
our understanding of the world
and how we came to be in the legal profession today.
Now it's no secret that many of the
programs and the discussions
focused on diversity, equity and inclusion
that are taking place right now
are grew out of grow out of the
recent public reaction to some of the
police violence against African-American men
and others, people of color in the country that,
ocurred earlier this year with the
death of George Floyd and then
proceeded with different kinds of discussions and protests
about those events over the summer.
And one of the frustrations for me,
always about this whole set of issues
is the episodic attention span
of the American public on these issues.
And if actually a lot of professions and
corporate organizations in the country.
In 2006, I wrote what turned out to be
the cover article for it
and the issue of the Boston Bar Journal
about the advance of women and people of color,
or the lack of progress really in the profession
and focused really on the greater Boston area.
And one of the things I learned
in the process of doing that article is that
I graduated from law school in the mid 1980s,
and there had been progress, some progress made,
but in the space of,
I don't know, 10 year period
from say 1996 to 2006 progress seemed to have stalled.
And then if we were to look at the numbers today,
the percentage of women who are partners in law firms
is about the same as it was then in 1996.
People of color are represented more at entry levels
of the legal profession than they were at that time.
But still this progression to partner
remains in the single digits.
And I think that if we were to look at
generally you would see that the people
who are represented on this panel today
are almost remarkable exceptions
to what has happened. And I know that they probably wouldn't wanna characterize themselves this way, but my point is that the overall numbers remain incredibly disappointing. And so what questions should leaders be asking themselves in order for their organizations to implement change and really shift this trajectory that really has not shown as much progress as all the effort in diversity and inclusion programs which should suggest, should have been the result. And maybe I will start with maybe I'll start with judge Anderson again, and then we'll shift up the order a little bit going forward, or maybe Tara why don't we start with you? I'll change that. <v ->Yeah thank you for changing that</v cause judge Anderson just makes me look just bad. Thank you so much. But yeah, the when I look at this and I look at organizations, I always ask the question is the organization a welcoming and inclusive environment? Primarily because oftentimes the work is done and it fails or people get frustrated and leave. So that's one of the questions I would definitely ask the organization as well as are they really ready for meaningful change? Once again I've been engaged with some organizations who say they're ready and they think they're ready, but when you push them to change, there's a lot of, people just don't, they don't people don't wanna change and they don't really want to change the organization. So are they really ready for meaningful change? Also do they truly understand and believe in the impact that diversity has on their business outcomes? And once again, oftentimes they are not informed or they just don't want to believe this, but if they don't believe this, then why don't they believe this? Because these organizations can always refer to numerous sources of data to inform them. So that's a given and will decision makers and leaders be advocates and sponsors, by equalizing the racial and gender representation on their boards, in their boardrooms and in the C-suites. So then I would ask that question.
These are questions that I've actually asked when I've gone from organization to organization before I've actually accepted positions. And the other thing I'd ask is what resources do they allocate to this change and are those resources adequate?

So I would ask the leaders themselves to really truly hold themselves accountable and ask themselves what can I do to close the gap and make a difference and then do it.

Can I ask you one follow-up question Tara about that?

I noticed that California has an activist statute, establishing requirements for representation on corporate boards for women and people of color. And the EU has had a, that kind of requirement for corporate boards for women for a long time.

What do you think about government roles like that and kind of pushing the change a little bit to make organizations actually have to, include, incorporate more diversity into the organizational leadership.

Yeah, I support it but I support it with there needs to be a plan. There needs to be something behind just reaching a number. They have to do it the right way. So I do support it because again, what's getting measured gets done. But yeah I support that and I think it's a step in the right direction, but there's more that needs to be done.

All right thanks.

Any thoughts about this study?

First of all, Tara, you're fabulous.

And the only thing I would add to what she said is that one of the most important things is first of all, letting people in the front door that's important, but also making sure that there's an environment to encourage someone to stay at that organization once they've been allowed through the front door.

Because so many times, and I think this is the problem with law firms. So many times people get there, they're encouraged they're encouraged to apply. There's a lot of fanfare when they get there. And then the work environment is not a hospitable place where it, the front door is open, but the back doors is people are really happy to leave.
because the environment isn't what they were, they thought it was going to be when they walked in the door. And so I think cultivating an environment that's just as accepting on the front end through someone's career is so very important to retention of people of color and women in the legal profession, no matter where it is that they're being hired. So just a follow up for you on that point. One of the things about law firms is that it's sort of very common to say, well that person had their personal reason for leaving, right? and there's no kind of sort of like attribution to this aggregation of the personal reasons that maybe there actually really is something that can be changed about the culture and make it a place where people could find resiliency and stay. Do you think that that's an issue and what should, how should organizations respond, to what appears to be kind of idiosyncratic individualized decisions? Well, just like Tara said, I think that people have to do the law firms and any kind of business that is hiring lawyers, which is just about everybody has to really look at their own culture and look at what that environment is for people who are there. So the people at the front door might be the most welcoming and warm people, but the people in the day to day life, the people who, make a comment about their child being sick. And so if your child's sick is that why everybody here is sick? Making comments about someone couldn't get something, not getting certain assignments because they have a small child at home. When what I know as a mom is that when my child went to sleep is when I did all my work after hours. And I've heard so many stories from women who have been told, well you have a baby or you have a toddler or you have a teenager and so you're not gonna get you must not be able to travel and so you must not be able to do this kind of work, whatever that kind of work is. And so I think that people have to examine, what the rules are for everybody
28:36 and make the rules and let that attorney
28:39 let that woman make a decision as to whether or not she
28:42 could actually do that assignment
28:44 and whether she wants to do it.
28:46 And I think that a real good, hard look at the rules,
28:50 making sure that the rules apply to everybody
28:53 at this at an equitable basis.
28:57 <v ->Thank you.</v
28:58 Jessica, let's bring you into this conversation
29:00 because you've had experience
29:02 in both the private sector and in government,
29:05 and then maybe Judge Anderson
29:06 has some comments about whether the public sector
29:09 might have some differences
29:10 or some advantages in this realm.
29:13 What are your thoughts about how leaders of organizations
29:17 can really commit to change
29:20 and to changing this trajectory?
29:23 <v ->So I think what Tara said</v
29:25 is spot on that companies,
29:28 whether it be actual
29:29 private companies or law firms
29:31 really need to take a look inside and see,
29:35 what are they actually doing?
29:37 Are they doing anything,
29:38 is what they're doing sufficient,
29:42 boardrooms companies should look like
29:46 the people that they're serving right?
29:48 So that was a big thing
29:49 when I went to Walmart,
29:51 I had a lot of friends that didn't love the idea
29:54 that I was even interviewing there
29:55 because of the reputation that Walmart had
29:58 and so I did my due diligence
30:00 and asked those questions.
30:02 I went all over the internet scouring for information
30:05 about the diversity efforts that Walmart
30:09 at the time had been doing
30:11 and asked those types of questions when I was there,
30:13 I made it very clear that
30:15 that was an important thing for me.
30:17 When I was at the Attorney General's office,
30:19 I was in the criminal bureau
30:21 and there were about a hundred people in that bureau
30:23 and I was the only Hispanic at all.
30:27 Only Hispanic lawyer there were no staff.
30:29 I mean, it was a extremely,
30:32 extremely white and predominantly male.
30:35 And so when I was making the decision to move
30:38 from there to Walmart, I was looking at that
30:40 am I gonna be in the same
30:42 type of situation that I was in at the AG's office?
30:44 Or am I gonna be in a place that actually
30:47 sees the business case for diversity,
not just the social reasons,
to have equality within the ranks,
but that it actually makes business sense to do that.
And I came to the determination that Walmart had that.
And so that was a huge piece
in me deciding to leave the government
and to go over there.
And what I loved about it is when I got there,
I realized that everything that I had learned about
was actually true and was actually happening.
And so over the course of the time that I was there,
obviously because I'm addicted to volunteering,
I dove right in and started doing
all these different things within the legal department
and sort of crossover things with other departments.
And I learned about all the efforts that Walmart was making
internally that quite frankly
I think they did a bad job of advertising.
A lot of people didn't know all the stuff
that they were doing to try to make things
better and more equitable and more inclusive.
One of the great things
that I got to do when I was there,
Walmart would send us to all sorts of conferences
all over the place.
And one of the ones I went to
was for NAMWOLF and I'd never heard of this organization,
the National Association of Minority
and Women Owned Law Firms.
And it was a targeted approach.
Walmart sponsored it every year
depending on the year,
they would send half a dozen or more of us to go there,
literally with the purpose of networking
with minority and women owned law firm partners
so that we could be conscious
about giving business to those types of places,
to make sure that our outside counsel
across the company were diverse,
which is fantastic.
One of the other great things that Walmart did
when I was there
and a number of other very large companies
like HP and others,
that they basically said to law firms like look,
you keep telling us
that that you're diverse
and that you have all these diverse people that work there.
But when you come to our offices
to meet with us about our cases,
you send white men,
like where are all these people that you say exist?
We don't believe it.
And so they actually developed,
a mandate and created a software program where outside counsel firms if they wanted to continue to get Walmart business had to report their numbers, which is crazy. I mean people thought it was insane that they had to do this, but Walmart said, look give us this information commit to staffing our matters with your diverse people and we'll pay you what we said we would. And if not we're gonna dock your pay I think it was 10 or 15%. So it basically put the ball in the law firms courts, to show us that you really mean that you have this commitment to diversity like we do as a company. And so I think people need to ask those tough questions and take those tough stances in order to motivate law firms to do the right thing. Another thing that they did was develop a program, basically a mentoring program, where they were teaming up women and minority law firm members, not partners, but senior counsel pairing them up in a mentoring program with executives in the company. And so that really gave those people an opportunity to be right in the mix and have that direct relationship with the decision makers at the company. And that's hugely important, simply staffing people on a matter and not giving them the opportunity to develop those relationships is not going to help them advance in their firm. And so I think that is another fantastic way to basically hold the law firms feet to the fire and ensure that they're actually doing what they say they truly believe in. <v -->So I think that those examples were really excellent ones because they demonstrate, and I think some of the examples that Tara had given previously, they demonstrate an intentionality about pursuing this objective that organizations tend to apply to all their other business objectives. So why not this one too? And I think that that really those examples really illustrate the need to focus in that really kind of concentrated way. One of the other things that you mentioned Jessica, was your addiction to volunteering, which I could probably everyone
on this panel has that same problem.

Every time suffering from a little bit myself,

my over-scheduled day today.

And the fact that all of you on the west coast

were willing to get up and join this panel,

which is lunchtime midday day here on the east coast.

So I appreciate that.

But you all impressive accomplishments

as leaders in community organizations,

as well as in your professional lives.

So I guess maybe it would be helpful

to our audience

to talk about ways that these roles

have presented opportunities

for you to have an impact on the future of the profession,

and of your communities beyond just your work for clients,

or the institutions, where you've been employed.

So let's maybe start with why don't we start with

Judge Anderson with Marcine again,

and then work around.

<v ->Sure thank you.</v

And I have had some great opportunities to volunteer

and sometimes I didn't even know

the extent to where that opportunity would take me.

And so I'm gonna give you one example.

I did some volunteer work for

the Washington State Bar Association

and assisted the bar with some technology matters

and it was completely volunteer time.

I was okay with the prosecutor's office

and then they liked the work

and they got a good result.

And so when a leadership position opened up

on the board of governors,

the executive director at the time

encouraged me to apply

for that leadership position.

It wasn't a shoe-in, there was

five immensely qualified candidates.

Three of them are, let me see.

Two of them went on to become president

of the bar association.

So it was a really competitive process,

but I got selected and I got selected to fill

it was called an at-large position

on the board of governors.

And the at-large position was to take a person of color,

a woman, someone from

a place in the legal community that

didn't necessarily look for leaders.

And so I had that filled that at large position.

When I was on the board of governors,

I was on one of the founding members

of the Washington state bar association
leadership Institute, which was the brainchild of the then president Ron Ward of the Washington State Bar Association. And I don't know if any of you know Ron, but he is amazing. He is the first African-American president of the Washington State Bar Association, and it's then a hundred and something to your history. So I was on that board for 10 years and I'm gonna just cause I'm so proud of the work that this board continues to do. I'm gonna tell you just a little bit about it. The purpose of the Washington State Association Leadership Institute was to take attorneys who were from between three and five years from passing three and 10 years from passing the bar from marginalized communities or from communities who would not necessarily be looked to at the bar like Washington State Bar Association for leaders. They applied to be in program. They had to have the commitment from their employers and they also, it was free but they had to also commit not only to attending once a month, sometimes on Friday, sometimes on Friday and Saturday. And then they also had to do a community service project in that nine-month program. And they had to commit to take on a leadership position in an organization, didn't have to be the Washington State Bar Association. It could be in their minority or specialty bar association in their local PTA or anything else that, but they had to take on a leadership position. And that organization has just done wonders for the legal community. Every time I turn around I see somebody brand new, like recently one of the leadership Institute fellows from when I was on the board. Cause I haven't been on the board for about 10 let me see yeah, 11 years. But one of our fellows just became a Court of Appeals Judge. And it just it's just rippled all through the legal community. And I can point to individuals of color, LGBTQ women, who were just grown in leadership abilities and leadership potential throughout the entire legal system in the state of Washington. So I would always say, you don't know what you might be getting into,
but I am so very proud to have been involved in something that it looks like it does today. And it all started out by volunteering to do technology law, who would have guessed right. Tara, would you like to add something on that?

Just very quickly I've sat on the corporate advisory boards of many different organizations that support communities primarily in economic inclusion. And I've also been a part of, and probably met you Jessica at NAMWOLF conferences. That was basically my work for about 14 years in supplier diversity and ensuring that organizations are doing business with diverse owned businesses and small businesses and that they are practicing inclusion in the supply chain. So I sat on the advisory boards of organizations like the national gay and lesbian chamber of commerce, national minority supplier development council, the women's business enterprise national council, and many international organizations as well.

And through my work really these organizations.... Through the work with these organizations, I was really able to have a direct line of sight into the impact that my efforts made on people who look like me and my family. So it just really helped me to have a confidence and to move forward in the strength and the power to move forward, even through many challenges to make a difference. And that I knew that the work that I was doing was making a difference. So sitting on these boards being not even, not just having a direct line of sight, of being really in the communities and seeing how much change I made by doing by large companies that I worked for doing business with these small organizations, hiring from the community in many cases, even lowering the crime rate because of it because more people are, have jobs. And so just really in, in seeing people who have actually previously been incarcerated, working in these organizations, being provided an opportunity and being one of the most loyal employees that these organizations have. So I've seen a lot I've and my work continues because of all of the things that I've seen.
Thank you that really is a great testament to how the synergies between what we do in the day jobs and how we are able to affect change in other sectors is really a real thing.

Jessica, what would you like to add to this conversation?

You've been very involved in the Hispanic Bar Association. How has that affected your approach to these issues?

So I've been extremely fortunate to have had tons of opportunities to be involved in all different types of organizations. I'm currently the chief compliance officer at the Hispanic National Bar Association. I've had countless positions within that organization. And then when I was still back in Massachusetts, I was pretty involved in the Boston Bar Association, the women's bar, the mass bar all sorts of things. And the thing that I love about all of these organizations is their actual, real commitment to creating change, right? So they're not just saying, oh we really wish that there were more diverse people in this profession.

They're actually putting in the work. And so a lot of these organizations HNBA, the BBA, the mass bar, the ABA, where I'm also involved, they all have different pipeline programs and mentoring programs. And those are my favorite things to do. So at the HNBA we do a ton of younger student pipeline programming. So anywhere from elementary through college, we're not so concerned about the law students because they have an amazing law student division and they're kind of doing their own programming. And they've already got there, right? Like that's the biggest first step is getting to law school. So our focus is really like, how do we get younger generations of kids to think about being a lawyer as a career choice for them. Many of them are from backgrounds like mine, where their parents didn't get to go to school. Many of them also like mine have a parent who was first in their family to grow up in the United States. So these are the types of kids that we're trying to focus on to let them know that look, we made it we came from a similar background that you have and you can do it too. And so we had different outreach initiatives all over the country.
We're teaming up with other organizations as well. We just had a meeting last week with the federal bar association to try to put a little bit more of a federal spin as one of our focuses to get students involved, which is great because obviously I'm in the federal system now and we definitely needed some help diversifying that practice area. So I would say to anyone who's interested in these types of issues, joining a bar association or another similar organization that has these types of programming is really a way to make a direct impact on students that will come up after you. Yeah, I think that's a really good point. The Boston Bar Association to Jessica's point has actually a similar leadership program focused on public service where there needs to be employer buy in. But I mean it brings together new lawyers where there needs to be employer buy in. to advance further in community organizations, and in the profession as well. And one of the things that Jessica actually all of your comments have sort of sparked in my mind, is this connection between, well how individualized all of these programs are, right? That the there's no like sort of magic bullet, there's no scaling of the impact of some of these mentorship activities, leadership training activities on people it really is one person at a time. So one question I would ask of you all is how do the actions or encouragement of others really contribute to your success? What are the examples that you would cite to about this? And so maybe we'll start with Marcine and go around again. Thank you. Well first of all, I have had great mentors. And what I would say about mentorship is that it doesn't mean that you meet with somebody for that same person for the rest of your life every day or every week. My mentors are sometimes the person who doesn't even know that they're mentoring you.
I put Judge Helen Frye in that category. She probably had absolutely no idea of the impact she had on my life. But mentors are there when to give you a high five when something really fabulous happens and to celebrate and to celebrate with you on that. And also tell you, I'm really sorry that that happened when things don't work out that great. And then just knowing that someone has been there, sort of having my back a little bit has given me the courage to walking towards something that is really, really scary. I would say one of the most important, especially given the panel today, one of the most important actions that happened was in the early 1980s, when we had the economic downturn professor Landers this is when you went to law school too. And I was looking around, I was working, I worked for four years and I was looking around my boss was just a few years older than me. And one of my friends was applying to law school and she goes, "You should apply too." And so I did and I got a letter from took the LSAT and then there's some sort of mashup they take the LSAT scores and they take your GPA's and people send you letters and Suffolk sent me one of those letters. And then professor and current professor Bob Ward, who's at Suffolk right now sent me one of those letters. And so I applied to Suffolk and I think that had I not received that letter, I wouldn't have even known about Suffolk. I lived in Eugene, Oregon and this was far, far away from Boston, but that letter encouraging me to apply to Suffolk has created a lifelong friendship between professor Ward and me and his family and my family. And I've gotten to know more about Suffolk as a result of his continued involvement with Suffolk law school. So I think that is probably one of the biggest actions of encouragement that helped me be where I am today. Well as we're always thinking about sending these letters out,
people in the next generations of law students
is actually great to know that they are,
that they do have an impact
on people on regardless of whether
domino to Suffolk or not it's really good.
I think that that sort of affirmation
that the person is valued.
I think it's a really a good aspect of that program.
So I realized that
it looks like we had plenty of time
and now suddenly we're getting near the end of the hour
as is the way with all of these programs.
And I just want to encourage people who are listening in.
If they have questions,
please put them in the chat
and we're gonna keep talking,
but I'm gonna keep an eye on the chat
and I hope to ask some of those questions.
But in the meantime,
one question that has arisen is
what kinds of concluding advice,
one to three steps would you give each individual,
each Suffolk University law school alum.
One step that a person could take
to exercise leadership and reorienting society
and societal institutions toward
greater equity and inclusion.
What kinds of things could the ordinary person
who doesn't see themselves as
in the category of Martin Luther King Jr,
or any of these great leaders that we seek to emulate,
what would you suggest?
So maybe Tara starting with you on that one.
Sure I would say,
just learn as much about true history as you can.
And while you may not be able to
write the wrongs of those before us,
you have complete power to incrementally change
the systems that have been formed because of them.
So I would just say really
looking at how you can change unjust policies
and processes is probably the
one of the biggest things that you can do
to create some incremental change right now.
And the important thing is to identify
those policies where they exist,
because we can't change them unless we know
what they are.
Exactly.
Jessica, did you wanna add anything on that score?
So I think that the easiest thing
you can do is raise your hand, right?
Just start somewhere,
find an organization whose mission you believe in
that aligns with your views on equity and inclusion, right?
So there are countless organizations
that you could volunteer with.
It doesn't have to be a bar association.
You could do something as simple as volunteer at Suffolk,
be on a panel at Suffolk.
I've done plenty of them over the years
they're always looking for people.
One of the other great things
since I am on the Suffolk tangent now,
things that we can do when we were talking to judges,
j ust talking about how outreach
was so important to her decision
to go to law school or which law school to go to
we have an admissions outreach committee
as part of the alumni association at Suffolk.
And I used to chair that committee
when I was on the alumni board a thousand years ago,
but it's super easy.
You get assigned a list of a handful of students
that have been accepted to Suffolk
and you reach out to them,
send them an email and say,
"Hey, congratulations."
"I went to Suffolk, it's a great school."
"I'm here to answer any questions."
It takes minutes of your time,
and it'll have a huge impact on people down the road.
And if for some reason,
you're the busiest lawyer in the world
and you don't have time to give even that little
feel free to give money.
There are plenty of programs that Suffolk does
that they can use funding for.
One of the programs that I year mark my contributions for
is the accelerator to practice program
that actually launched gosh,
probably about five years ago now,
where they basically built a law firm inside the law school
to provide pro bono and low bono services
for people that need civil attorneys.
So time, talent, and treasure
whichever one you're willing to give,
there are plenty of organizations willing to accept.
<Right Jessica is talking about the accelerator to practice program at Suffolk law school.>
And I know that Dean Perlman,
even though his camera's off
and I'm sure he's smiling about her reminder
to all present about the opportunity
to make financial contributions to the law school,
which actually does help in myriad, myriad ways.
We have one question that I wanna get to quickly
that I think is actually important in addition to, I set that discussion up as focused on some of the racial issues that have arisen that continue to plague our country. And that really came to a sad focus this past year. But another question is the gender question, which is the question is as a young lawyer do any of you have to deal with bullying or sexual harassment. And what advice can you give women on dealing with those kinds of issues, which is a in a different way in which organizations have excluded people. Does anybody want to take that one, even if you haven't had this issue? So I definitely have experienced that over the years, sort of all sorts of different issues. Being a woman in this profession is difficult it still is. Even though our numbers have been going up significantly over the last, 20 or 30 years. There are predominantly in the criminal world anyway, when I started, it's mostly older white men that are opposing counsel in your cases, and they frequently assume that you are not there as a lawyer. As a Hispanic woman I often got the assumption questions about whether I was there as an interpreter for the defendant, or I was told I could not come to the front of the courtroom because family members had to sit in the back. These are all things that unfortunately still exist and are rampant in this profession and in other professions I'm sure as well. I think it's a fine line that you have to walk, right? You don't want to ostracize yourself by speaking up, but at the same time what's happening isn't right. So I think probably the best thing to do is talk with someone about it. Talk to a supervisor, talk to a mentor, someone that you trust and get their advice, give them sort of the rundown of what the facts are in that specific situation and plot out what the best course of action is. But I think a course of action is appropriate. I think doing nothing is not helpful for anyone. Yeah I think that that's right. And I think in my own experience the we are in a legal profession where we are supposed to be advocates for people who are not necessarily able to use.
their own voices to solve problems.
And so I think the most important thing is
to realize that no one wants a wimp for a lawyer
and that you have to be able to speak up for yourself
as well as your clients.
I think that's an important lesson.

Well, I think
I'm hearing that we are getting the hook here,
that we are running out of time.
I just wanted to end with a
a couple of thoughts about some of the themes
that have come through this conversation today.
There is a woman named Mamphela Ramphele
who was the first black person to lead
the university of Cape town in South Africa.
And she was a physician and a PhD anthropologist.
And in her autobiography called "The Cross Boundaries",
she describes the commitment that organizations
need to make to achieve real diversity.
Sort of what Tara was talking about
at the beginning of our conversation.
First access must be broadened
which involves reaching out to underrepresented groups,
addressing perceptions,
which can lead to self-exclusion
and using relevant criteria
to measure individual potential and accomplishment.
Second organizations must recognize
that once individuals are hired,
their ability to succeed depends
not only on their own efforts and skill,
but how much support is provided for the development
and how much value institutions place on their presence.
And so in third finally,
the chances of long-term success diminish
if the culture doesn't change
in to adapt to the presence of new people in the culture.
And then finally,
to what all of you have been saying throughout
is that Marian Wright Edelman,
who is the founder of the Children's Defense Fund
actually has some great advice.
"A lot of people think you have to be big dogs"
"to make a difference that's not true."
"You just need to be a flea for justice,"
"bent on building a more decent home,"
"life, neighborhood, workplace, in America."
"Enough committed fleas biting strategically"
"can make even the biggest dog uncomfortable"
"and transform the biggest station."
So thank you very much for sharing your wisdom
and your experiences with us today.
It has I agree that it has been a pleasure
to get to know all of you through the process of preparing for this panel. I also wanna give out a shout out to Alexis Sores my former student who introduced me today. She obviously was an exceptional student when she was a first year law student and everything we noticed better then, her promise is certainly on trajectory to being fulfilled. So we have great young people who can give us confidence about the future of our country in our profession. So thank you very much.
And we hope that all of you, Suffolk alumni will continue to be engaged with the university.