



Vanessa L. Jackson



Ashok Ramani

Authenticity at Davis Polk

Finance partner Vanessa L. Jackson and IP Litigation partner Ashok Ramani serve as Co-Chairs of Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee

What characterizes diversity, equity and inclusion at Davis Polk?

VJ: Diversity, equity and inclusion permeates everything we do at Davis Polk. These values are a vital part of who we are as a firm. You can come to Davis Polk and simply be your most authentic self. No matter who you are or what background you come from, you have an equal opportunity to be a respected and valued team member.

AR: I echo Vanessa’s sentiment – diversity, equity and inclusion means that everyone should feel confident to be themselves. This aligns with the firm’s vision of DEI, which is that all should feel welcomed at Davis Polk. DEI efforts really make their way into all facets of life at the firm, and these policies and initiatives are not just for the lawyers, but our business services professionals as well.

What was your pathway to joining the firm’s DEI Committee?

VJ: As a woman of color, issues relating to DEI have been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. Since joining Davis Polk, I have really enjoyed focusing on the recruitment and development of diverse attorneys, as well as my involvement in the firm’s Black Affinity Group. Those things made me feel like I had found a home at Davis Polk. So when I was asked to join the DEI Committee, it seemed like the logical next step. I already had a seat at the table, but as co-chair of a formal committee, I have the platform

to ensure things are getting done and the right conversations are being had.

AR: When I first joined Davis Polk four years ago, there was a reasonably sized cohort of diverse lawyers in the Northern California office, where I am based. However, there wasn’t a formalized way to get together. So I helped create an informal mentoring group called “Lawyers of Color,” and it was well-received in the office. My involvement with this mentoring group signaled to senior leadership that I was interested in championing DEI at the firm.

Are there any initiatives the DEI Committee has sponsored that you are particularly proud of?

AR: A recent initiative I am particularly proud of is the firm’s commitment to achieving Mansfield Rule Certification, which involves a process focused on increasing diversity in law firm leadership by broadening candidate pools. The firm is metrics-oriented, and the Mansfield Rule is very much in line with our approach of prioritizing and measuring progress. In the last five years, 42% of partner promotions at Davis Polk were diverse lawyers. The Mansfield Rule process ensures that we continue to expand our pipeline for diverse talent across the firm, so that our lawyers and leadership reflect our communities, our clients and the world.

How do you see DEI policies as being impactful to or aligning with business imperatives?

VJ: Our DEI efforts and business objectives are completely aligned, which is the icing on the cake. Not only is our focus on DEI simply the right thing to do, but clients are now demanding it. Clients want to see that women and lawyers of color are at the forefront of their most significant transactions and matters. As a result, there are some nice synergies between how the firm and our clients prioritize DEI, and this results in a lot of opportunities to work together – for example, through roundtables, CLE trainings and other events – and build even stronger relationships. **S**