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## Why Are We Still Talking about Diversity?

by Lindsay Verity,  
*GAWL President, 2011-2012*

Recently, I attended a great retreat focused on diversity in the legal profession. We talked about what the bar associations in and around Atlanta could be doing to foster this diversity and I was struck when one of my friends asked, “Why are we still talking about diversity instead of DOING something?” If the business case for diversity and the moral rationale for diversity have consistently been proven, why haven’t things changed? Although I think that things have actually changed, we’re still talking about diversity because whatever we have been doing so far has not been enough.

The most positive change that has come from simply talking about diversity is the expansion of the definition of diversity itself. Diversity efforts decades ago focused on gender and race. Now we understand that diversity means recognizing the value of all of our differences including sexual orientation, physical ability, ethnicity, and religious belief. We know that a more diverse workforce has more talent from which to draw, and yields more creativity and better products. Therefore, if we can be even more diverse, we should be able to create even better products. We also know that when people of diverse backgrounds work together, they learn tolerance and acceptance, which they might not learn elsewhere.

There have certainly been other positive changes in the past few decades. We began with Title VII

of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibiting employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin and brought individuals with disabilities into the fold with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Additionally,



Lindsay Verity

women are graduating from law school in equal or greater numbers than men and have been for about the past decade. We’ve gradually seen more and more people of color and women serving on corporate boards. Numerous law firms and companies have created diversity initiatives to encourage recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce.

However, we’re still talking about diversity because things have not changed enough. In 2010, women made up about 45% of law firm associates but only about 19% of law firm partners, according to the National Association for Law Placement. Only about six percent of law firm partners are of a racial minority and less than two percent

of partners are openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). Additionally, we still do not have a law prohibiting employment discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Most importantly, diversity is still an issue because society as a whole has yet to value all people equally. The LGBT community is still fighting for basic civil rights, such as the right to get married. The entire Hispanic community suffers from discrimination due to the animosity towards people who are undocumented.

Making real change may seem like an insurmountable task and it often feels like one person cannot effectuate real systemic change. However, small steps taken by individuals can make a big difference. Joining the Atlanta Bar Association’s Multi-Bar Leadership Council’s e-mail list or checking its calendar at [www.atlantabar.org](http://www.atlantabar.org) will let you know about events being held by its fourteen member organizations. I encourage everyone to attend at least one event each month held by a minority bar organization to broaden your network and expand your “comfort zone.” Supporting each other on an individual level is what will lead to large-scale change.

*Lindsay C. Verity is the Director of the Grandparent/Relative Caregiver Project at the Atlanta Legal Aid Society. Lindsay assists relatives with adopting or gaining custody of the children in their care and trains volunteer attorneys to handle adoption cases for these long-term caregivers.*

## Prinz Debates on National TV

By Michele Bruce,  
*CPA/CFP, CFE*

Not long after her final speech as 2010-2011 GAWL President at the May 2011 GAWL Annual Dinner, Pilar Prinz was exploring new ave-

nues—including time on national television. Over the summer, Pilar connected with Nancy Grace and has already been featured on the justice debate show ten times.

CNN labels Nancy Grace “television’s only justice themed/inter-

view/debate show.” The host is a legal commentator, television journalist, and former Fulton County prosecutor. Nancy often features cases of missing persons, and her dogmatism brought the Casey

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Anthony trial to the limelight. Her website still follows the aftermath of Casey's acquittal while hotly arguing the continuing trial of Michael Jackson's doctor. To present both sides to the audience, the debate features interviews with attorneys, law enforcement, psychologists, and experts of various other fields.

'Legal commentary' is rather a tame way to describe it. Pilar likens the spotlight with Nancy to "court to the nth degree." Since all the content is breaking news, experts may receive an invitation at the last minute and will receive the material the same day as the show airs. Nancy is high-energy, and everything moves at a rapid pace. There is no telling what she will say or ask. "You need to have an opinion and

be prepared to defend it. Nancy is quick and as a former prosecutor, she is very passionate in her opinions. She is also incredibly talented at keeping the pace of the show to a level that keeps her audience's focus and interest." says Pilar. And, as in court, one can't afford to take things to heart.

Things move quickly. The time commitment for one show may be four to five hours, including review of the material, preparation backstage (imagine the minute make-over!), and air time. With the show airing out of the CNN studio in Atlanta, the location makes participation easier. Of course, add that time to a lawyer's regular schedule, and it certainly makes for a full day.

A few weeks ago, Pilar was a guest on TruTV's In Session (the

former Court TV) in the case of a former husband who attempted to place a hit on his former wife only days before their custody modification hearing. Fortunately, law enforcement officials were able to operate a sting that would bring him to justice, resulting in a conviction. In her role as family law attorney, Pilar commented on the prevalence of hostility in family law cases.

When asked how her recent stint on national TV began, she stated that getting this kind of opportunity is "not unlike how we develop business." We make ourselves available and build relationships until connections and timing create an opportunity. In fact, if she had been offered this unique opportunity in 2010 or in early 2011, while still GAWL President, the timing

would have not been in her favor.

So, should you have a moment after dinner one week night, switch to HLN at 8:00 PM and take a moment to consider – when the spotlight is on you, what would you say? Keep building relationships. You never know when networking and timing will result in the perfect opportunity.

*Pilar Prinz is a partner in the Atlanta firm of Lawler Green Givelber & Prinz. Pilar's practice is focused exclusively in divorce litigation and negotiation, custody and support modifications, contempt, prenuptial agreements, legitimation and paternity actions. Michele Bruce is a project manager at IAG Forensics, LLC, a CPA firm that specializes in forensic accounting, fraud investigation and litigation support.*

## Judges Honored by GAWL

The newly formed Douglas/Paulding Chapter hosted a Judicial Reception to honor the local current and retired judges of Douglas and Paulding County. The Judicial Reception was held at Sutton Hall in Douglasville the evening of September 22, 2011, and was catered by Atlanta's Finest Catering. Judges in attendance included Honorable Robert James, William McClain, James Osborne, Arthur Fudger, William Foster, Eddie Barker, Neal Dettmering, Peggy Walker, Susan Camp, Barbara Caldwell, Joel Dodson, and Keith Rollins. Douglas County Sheriff Phil Miller, Douglasville Police Chief Chris Womack and Douglas County Commissioner Tom Worthan also attended the reception.

Lois Gerstenberger, President of Douglas/Paulding GAWL, wanted the event to be a chance to learn a little more about the judges that serve the community. A short biography was also included

in the program. "We have a community of strong judges that make the court system fair and effective," said Gerstenberger. After a warm welcome from GAWL President, Lindsay Verity, each judge was presented with a print of the county courthouse by Talia Nurse, the Chapter's Vice President, and spoke for a few minutes about themselves. A short biography was also included in the program.

"This was the first such reception of its kind. GAWL plans to make an annual event to show appreciation and to honor the men and women serving on the bench. The event was a great way to say thank you and to get to know our judges a little better," said Gerstenberger.

The Douglas/Paulding Chapter of GAWL meets the 2nd Wednesday each month at Sam and Rosco's in Douglasville at noon. For more information please visit [www.gawl.org](http://www.gawl.org).



## GAWL 2011 Participation Party a Celebrated Success

On September 26th, the Georgian Terrace Hotel hosted GAWL's annual Participation Party and Wine Tasting. The event, organized by the Membership Committee, was a fun opportunity to network with fellow GAWL members. Approximately 100 women attended and GAWL added 12 new members during the party.

Participants enjoyed samples from the Georgian Club's wine selection and a friendly competition between GAWL's committees for the most creative table. The committees provided information about the various ways to participate in GAWL and arrayed their presentations with beautiful flower arrangements, candy, cookies, GAWL mouse pads, displays of sparkling lights, and even a roulette-type wheel. The Strategic Partnerships Committee won, receiving a \$100 gift certificate to the restaurant of their choice. Other lucky party participants won door and raffle prizes, including a gift certificate from Spa Sydell, a Tiffany bracelet, and a Dior gift basket from Belk.

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"GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS."  
AND  
"GAWL FOUNDATION."**

# Savannah Chapter of GAWL Jumps into 2011-2012 Year

by Lindsey Lovingwood

THE SAVANNAH CHAPTER had an amazing start to the 2011-2012 year. In August, the Savannah Chapter held its Kick-Off Luncheon to welcome back members and encourage new membership. The Chapter welcomed GAWL President, Lindsay Verity, at the luncheon, who provided an outlook on the year ahead.

The first regular, monthly luncheon was held in September at the State Bar of Georgia's Coastal Office in downtown Savannah. Lunch

was provided for Chapter members by West-law. In October, the Chapter had its luncheon at the Pirates' House, a favorite restaurant of both locals and tourists. Members and guests enjoyed southern cooking and a visit from one of Savannah's "Pirates," who regaled the Chapter with stories of Savannah and the Pirates' House long pirate history. The event was generously sponsored by ProLegal Copies.

In November, the Savannah Chapter looks forward to having its monthly meeting at

The Jepson Center for the Arts, and hosting GAWL Board members at the Chapter's overnight event on November 4th in conjunction with the Belk Charity Sale and Rock N' Roll Marathon on November 5th.

Since the beginning of the 2011-2012 year, the Savannah Chapter is proud to announce it has increased its membership by over 30%. As the Chapter continues to grow, it strives to provide Savannah women lawyers with networking possibilities locally as well as throughout Georgia.

## Gwinnett Chapter Members Enjoy R&R at Chateau Elan

The Gwinnett Chapter held its annual signature event on September 9-10, 2011, at Chateau Elan. Participants left renewed and re-energized - and with CLE credit! In addition to continuing education, the retreat included a wine tasting, cooking demonstration, and plenty of networking opportunities.

GAWL member Laura

Friedman described the event as "an excellent collection of pertinent, timely, and informative CLE speakers tucked into two lovely days.... The group of ladies was small enough to be intimate and large enough so new friends were made. This was a delightful and informative experience that I look forward to in the future."

## DRUID HILLS NNB CELEBRATES FIRST ANNIVERSARY

The first Neighborhood Networking Breakfast ("NNB") in Druid Hills was October 12, 2010. Over the past year, almost 100 attendees have attended ten networking breakfasts. In addition to sharing ideas and building relationships with neighborhood professionals, attendees benefited from guests like Bonnie Buol Ruszyk of BBR Marketing, who led a discussion about growing a practice, including effectively networking, tracking business development efforts, and maintaining an internet presence. Likewise, Cristina Leon of the Partners Group led a discussion about resumes, cover letters and interviews.

The attendees are diverse, including women that have been practicing for

one to two years to those who have been practicing for 30+ years, as well as students from Georgia State, Emory and John Marshall. Some professionals are solo practitioners; others work at small, medium, large or very large firms; and still others work for non-profit agencies like the Social Security Administration or the Atlanta Legal Aid Society. "As a group, we really try to help one another with both personal and professional development. All in all, it is a great group of women," says Druid Hills NNB Coordinator, Rebecca McFayden.

If you are interested in finding a NNB, visit [www.gawl.org/calendar.cfm](http://www.gawl.org/calendar.cfm) for dates, locations and contact information to RSVP for a breakfast near you.

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