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MCCA’s Statement on Board Actions Since George Floyd

James Baldwin once wrote that “nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

One year ago, we watched in horror as the life left George Floyd’s body, and we knew, as the Board of the MCCA, that we had to say something and do something to reduce the number of similar tragedies from occurring again. We also knew that the racism we saw that day was a more insidious form of the daily racism our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) colleagues experience in our offices. That was a difficult truth, but we chose to confront it head-on—and said as much in a statement denouncing systemic racism and demanding systemic reform.

We formed a Task Force to identify the sources of the challenges our BIPOC colleagues experience in the workplace, and to increase racial awareness and equity in our profession. The Task Force found that above all, corporate and legal workplaces across the country lacked awareness of social and racial inequities, as well as of the toll these inequities enact on our BIPOC colleagues. These workplaces had allocated limited resources to address these challenges—an issue that only exacerbated existing inequities.

Once we identified these key challenges, we worked to find solutions. To address the lack of understanding about workplace inequities, we invited our community of 20,000 MCCA members together for the difficult conversations that raise awareness for advocates and allies alike. Our Town Halls provided a forum for our members to openly discuss issues that too often go undiscussed—from the emotional burden of being “the only one” to the pain that came with seeing corporate America wake up to systemic racism. Our General Counsel Roundtables continued these conversations, bringing together a more intimate group to build anti-racism skills and create a culture of inclusion and equity in their departments. And to further empower our community, we launched a new campaign, “Activating Change Together,” which equipped our members with toolkits, trainings, and other resources designed to help them effect systemic change in their companies.

Over time, we hope to see more results, but are heartened by the initial, positive responses from our community: a 505% increase in Town Hall



engagement from 2019 to 2020, a 410% increase in member downloads of our MCCA Advisory Practice toolkits over that same period. What mattered just as much were the stories we heard—of the allies who felt a fierce urgency to support their BIPOC colleagues; of the leaders who felt newly empowered to make their company’s hiring, retention, and promotion policies more equitable; and of the many members who finally felt seen and heard in their companies, some for the very first time. As one member told us, “This is the kind of intentional work that will drive the future of our legal community.”

At the same time, we know that we have more work to do—both in our organization, and across our profession. Internally, we know that we must do a better job of demanding that all of our member companies be more transparent and accountable in their data sharing. Doing anything less will result in a decline in diversity and stifle progress towards equitable and inclusive workplaces. If the past year of losses—losses of women in the workforce, declines of some underrepresented groups in our profession—teach us anything, it’s that our gains are never permanent, and that we must be vigilant in defending, and expanding upon them. As we continue on our journey as an organization, and head towards a 25th year anniversary of our founding next year, we welcome feedback from our members on how best we can do so, as well as on any other feedback they wish to share.

In the coming weeks and months, we will continue to challenge the status quo and advocate for systemic change; and support our members who are courageously pushing for more diversity, equity and inclusion in their workplaces, as well as new challenges they may encounter as we return to our offices. We will continue until systems of racism have been reduced, if not eradicated and until we are successful in building a corporate America that looks like America. We hope you will join us in the next phase of our work.

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