



REFLECTION

Reflection on Lawyers as Leaders

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As a lawyer and a leader, I am extremely privileged and honored to have served as the first woman general counsel at two wonderful Fortune 500 companies, as a director on three leading Fortune 500 company boards, and in leadership roles with professional organizations and nonprofits whose missions and volunteers inspire me to do more. I have been very fortunate to be able to use my influence as a leader in our profession and collaborate with other leaders to encourage pro bono, champion diversity, and protect the rule of law.

I first learned to be a leader as a lawyer by observing and emulating leaders in the law. I grew up thinking most leaders were lawyers—my father is a law school professor, and I grew up knowing many incredible judges, law professors, and lawyers who used their influence to drive positive societal change and better the world. These leaders taught me about the special role of lawyers in upholding the rule of law as the cornerstone of a free and democratic society. I wanted to be like the inspirational lawyers I met who passionately advocated for equal rights and opportunities for all and fought against unfairness and human rights abuses. And I was inspired by lawyers committed to creating access to justice for those at risk in our society—people in desperate need of pro bono legal services. I saw that lawyers help solve problems and create advantage for individuals, families, businesses, governments, and organizations in numerous important ways. Lawyers as leaders have long used the law to make a real difference, to matter, and to help.

Of all the amazing lawyer role models I grew up with, one phenomenal leader in particular stands out: my father, Robert Stein. My father is the reason

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my sisters and I decided to become lawyers and why we all continue to love and practice the law to this day. As the first member of his family to go to college—let alone law school—my father has excelled as a leader in everything he has undertaken, whether as a distinguished law professor, a visionary law school dean, or as an outstanding Executive Director of the American Bar Association (ABA).¹

There are three essential leadership lessons I was privileged to learn at a young age from my father. First, leaders have a clear purpose and can make a real difference. As a law school dean, my father focused on attracting and retaining a top-quality, diverse faculty and engaging and enlisting the support of alumni, which were essential to his vision of creating an inclusive law school environment where all students learned to become excellent lawyers and to embrace the values of our profession. He was clear about his vision and his plan to get there. All his actions as a law school dean—such as creating international faculty and student exchange opportunities at leading law schools across the world to enhance learning and the rule of law or traveling the country to build a vibrant network of dedicated alumni who contributed to his law school—were in furtherance of his clear goals. Indeed, my father's purpose-led leadership is best evidenced by his long-held commitment to strengthening the rule of law, a commitment that started when he was a foreign exchange student in Berlin in the 1950s and saw first-hand the enormous human impact of communist oppression in the divided city that came to be symbolized by the Berlin Wall. As a law school dean, he focused on fostering global exchange and partnering with academics and lawyers around the globe to promote the rule of law—he even brought the first Chinese law professor to teach in the United States to his law school as part of numerous faculty exchanges he enabled. He also sent alumni of his school to China and other countries to see rule-of-law issues and opportunities first-hand. During the time he served as Executive Director of the ABA, he was substantially engaged in the development of the rule-of-law movement, which led to some of the best work ever undertaken by volunteer lawyer—providing technical legal assistance to Central and Eastern European countries needing to build their legal systems and create and train an independent judiciary after emerging from communism. My father now undertakes and fosters scholarship on the rule of law, the difference it makes in people's lives, and the meaning of the rule of law in today's challenges and context. His visionary leadership, his passion, and his own scholarship inspire progress toward his

1. See *Prof. Robert A. Stein ('61) Receives Global Engagement Award*, U. MINN. L. SCH. (June 6, 2016), <https://www.law.umn.edu/news/2016-06-06-prof-robert-stein-61-receives-global-engagement-award>; *Robert Stein*, U. MINN. L. SCH., <https://www.law.umn.edu/profiles/robert-stein> (last visited June 6, 2017).

goal of increasing scholarship dedicated to rule-of-law issues in order to support and promote the rule of law.

In addition to clarity of purpose, my father's second leadership example is that leaders engage and inspire their teams. With our father's influence, my sisters and I have long been committed to making a difference as lawyers through pro bono service, advocating for diversity, and enhancing the rule of law. We are not alone—for my entire life I have consistently heard from lawyers around the globe about what a positive difference my father has made in their lives through his vision, mentoring, and caring. They have told me they rely on him for advice and look to him as a role model and mentor. In fact, he was given a best professor award by the students at his law school just last year. In all his leadership roles, he has been widely known as a leader who attracts and retains the best team members and engages and inspires all stakeholders in pursuit of excellence and shared goals. His former students, faculty, employees, and alumni have stayed in close touch with him through the years, which is a testament to his impact.

The third lesson I learned from my father about being a leader is the importance of having personal traits like curiosity, compassion, optimism, and a strong predisposition for action and results. Without such personal leadership traits, people will not align to a leader's vision and will not be inspired to do more. My father is passionate about constantly learning new things—he is a prolific reader, writer, and scholar. His curiosity coupled with his deep caring about helping people, his proactivity, his positivity, and his drive to make a difference are a big part of his leadership secret sauce. In my experience, I am always inspired to do more by leaders like my father who consistently show compassion for others and who take the time to develop relationships and care about team members and their families. I have seen how leaders with strong personal leadership traits like optimism and proactivity are trusted and respected by their teams. I have sought to emulate the personal leadership traits of leaders I admire using my own voice and following my own path as a leader.

In addition to learning about how to be a leader from leaders in the legal profession like my father, my legal training has similarly helped me lead. It is critical for leaders to be led by values and principles in all decisionmaking and to be committed to transparency, fairness, and providing equal opportunity for all team members. These are tenets of a law school education, and being valued was first engrained in me in law school. It is also imperative for leaders to think of unintended consequences of potential decisions, to look around corners and expect the unexpected. The legal method of thinking and my law school training have enabled me to build these critical thinking capabilities. In leading teams, I focus on being several steps ahead of emerging trends, risks, and opportunities. Together with my teammates, we think through unintended consequences and stakeholder implications of decisions. We plan

for the worst that could happen and the art of the possible—all analytical capabilities that I started to build in law school and that I continue to hone every day for constant improvement as a leader.

In addition to continuously learning to lead from the examples set by other leaders and through my legal training, I continuously improve as a leader by simply leading—by setting stretch goals and taking smart risks; by seeking, embracing, and acting upon feedback; and by listening and learning. I realize the responsibility of leadership—I impact large numbers of stakeholders and need to do my best as I engage team members using my own personal leadership traits. As general counsel, I focus on enabling our legal team’s mission of guiding, protecting, and enhancing the reputation of our corporate client as a trusted and proactive partner to the business. We promote ethics and doing the right thing, help business partners achieve their goals in a value-led way, and solve their problems the right way. With other team leaders, I focus on attracting, retaining, developing, and engaging the tremendous talent we have on our team. We check on how this is working through engagement surveys, feedback, and more. Finally, I seek to leverage my strengths to instill trust and be courageous as we set goals and metrics to drive continuous improvement in fulfilling our mission.

As a director or officer of organizations I care about, I focus on the role of leaders in setting the strategy, overseeing the operations, and shaping the cultures of organizations. I focus on goals and actions to drive progress and engage team members. I know I need to walk the walk and to exhibit leadership traits like having a fire in my belly to do more, being optimistic, having emotional intelligence, demonstrating nimble learning, and managing through ambiguity—all competencies that it will take to get ahead and stay ahead.

As a leader, I also realize that I should work together with other leaders to share best practices, talk about what is working, share what is getting in the way, and problem-solve against those roadblocks. It is important for organizations to come together and try to make a difference collectively. An important opportunity area we are addressing together is the issue of diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. For decades, about half of new lawyers in the United States have been women, but fewer than 25% of law firm partners and general counsel are women. And the number of minority lawyers in leadership positions is similarly not reflective of our society. We should all care very much about the insufficient number of women, minorities, and other underrepresented lawyers in leadership positions in our profession. In the legal profession, we are guardians of the rule of law, freedom, and democracy. The legal profession needs to mirror the population at large or it will lose legitimacy for its special role in society. Women hold up half the sky and for

many years have represented about half of U.S. law school graduates,² yet they make up only about one in three judges,³ about one in five general counsel,⁴ and fewer than one in five law firm leaders.⁵ These numbers are even lower for minority lawyers and clearly do not mirror the population or support the special role lawyers play in society.⁶

Currently, I am the chair of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD), where general counsel of leading companies in this country, together with managing partners of leading law firms, are working to try to change the face of the legal profession. Through leadership development, we work to promote inclusiveness in our organizations and influence change in our communities and our society, with the ultimate goal of building a more diverse and inclusive legal profession.

As a leader of the LCLD, I have learned that we must collaborate to create opportunities and inspire diverse talent in the pipeline. Mentoring and nurturing the next generation to develop as strong leaders is also important. That is what will keep enabling everyone to thrive—but we need to do it together. Although there has been progress in certain areas, we continue to face challenges. Women and minority leaders are still not represented in the legal profession and in organizations as they are in our community in general, especially in certain leadership roles—in board seats, as CEOs, and as other senior leaders. Just as we need more diverse leader role models, we need to focus on creating environments and cultures where everyone has opportunities to thrive. We need to work together to eliminate barriers like inadequate support systems and implicit bias (and even well-intentioned but unhelpful benevolent bias). As I lead the board of the LCLD in fulfilling our critical mission, I keep in mind how leaders I greatly admire have been purpose-led in driving diversity in the legal profession—leaders like Rick Palmore, a top general counsel, board member, and now executive coach, who founded the LCLD through his passion and vision to bring together the leaders of the legal profession to collaboratively drive positive change and advance diversity. I am

2. Elizabeth Olson, *Women Make Up Majority of U.S. Law Students for First Time*, N.Y. TIMES: DEALBOOK (Dec. 16, 2016), <https://nyti.ms/2ktYncL>.

3. COMM'N ON WOMEN IN THE PROFESSION, AM. BAR ASS'N, A CURRENT GLANCE AT WOMEN IN THE LAW 5 (2017), http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/marketing/women/current_glance_statistics_january2017.authcheckdam.pdf.

4. *Id.* at 3.

5. *Id.* at 2.

6. See, e.g., NAT'L ASS'N FOR LAW PLACEMENT, INC., 2016 REPORT ON DIVERSITY IN U.S. LAW FIRMS 5-6 (2017), <http://www.nalp.org/uploads/Membership/2016NALPReportonDiversityinUSLawFirms.pdf> (describing underrepresentation of minorities in law firms); Deborah L. Rhode, *Law Is the Least Diverse Profession in the Nation. And Lawyers Aren't Doing Enough to Change That.*, WASH. POST (May 27, 2015), http://wapo.st/1LHfQWe?tid=ss_tw.

Reflection on Lawyers as Leaders
69 STAN. L. REV. 1841 (2017)

similarly motivated to do more by Brad Smith, the president and chief legal officer of a Fortune 500 company and my predecessor as LCLD chair, who helped create the vision and inspiration that the LCLD could create 10,000 diverse role models to drive needed change.

Lawyers as leaders also collaborate to address another critical societal problem: addressing the desperate need of the most vulnerable members of our society for pro bono legal services. Esther Lardent, another incredibly amazing lawyer-leader who will always be a hero to me and so many others, had the vision of founding the Pro Bono Institute and Corporate Pro Bono. Her strategy was to bring leading lawyers together and encourage us to use our legal training to create pro bono solutions. She inspired me and countless lawyers to lead in efforts to increase pro bono services and to encourage others to lead in increasing access to justice. Through her passionate leadership and her infectious personality, many people's lives have been improved and she has lifted up countless at-risk members of society.

Leaders like my father, Rick Palmore, Brad Smith, and Esther Lardent show us how lawyers lead. They are but a few examples of the giants in our profession who are lawyers and leaders and who make an important difference in people's lives.