

LATHAM & WATKINS



WHY BAME CANDIDATES SHOULD CHOOSE LATHAM & WATKINS

What would you tell a young BAME or female candidate considering applying to Latham & Watkins?

I'd tell them it's a fantastic place to work! It's a great place to learn and develop into an all-round successful lawyer. We are focused on creating a truly inclusive culture at our firm, where you can bring your authentic self to work and where your unique perspectives are valued.

We also are focused on building a strong sense of community at our firm, and we do this through our various affinity groups. I'm a member of our Black Lawyers Group (BLG), which provides a firm-wide platform for black lawyers to establish and maintain broader networks and relationships; attract, retain and promote top talent; and foster an inclusive culture, which supports the

long-term success of black lawyers. BLG membership comprises African, African-American, Afro-Caribbean and multi-racial lawyers, and is open to all who support the BLG mission. There are seven other affinity groups at Latham, including Asian & Middle Eastern Lawyers, First Generational Professional Lawyers, Hispanic/Latin American Lawyers, Women Lawyers, and LGBTQ Lawyers, which offer similar types of opportunities for their members.

What advice would you give to any BAME employees that are looking to progress to a more senior role or to make partner at the firm?

It's a marathon not a sprint. One of the best things about life as a lawyer is that it evolves. The curve sometimes feels very steep, then it plateaus and just when you have

found your feet, the incline starts again! I try to embrace that, and I constantly feel like I am learning. If you focus on working hard getting to know your colleagues and your counterparts in the City and building your skills, opportunities will come your way.

My other tips would be:

- **Seek feedback - knowing the things that supervisors have identified as areas of improvement gives the opportunity to seek ways of improving or developing skills. No one is born knowing how to do all of the things that make a great lawyer, take opportunities to grow as a lawyer on an ongoing basis rather than waiting until the formal appraisals to hear how you are doing.**

- **Get involved - business development, preparation for pitches, knowledge management materials, internal training presentations, attend socials, departmental meetings. There is more to being a great lawyer than billable hours.**

- **Be consistent - being brilliant on one deal with a supervisor isn't enough if you are not also delivering quality work to the other supervisors you are working with. Be well prepared, be on time, and deliver work to deadline.**

- **Try to have a positive attitude even in the difficult times - it is no secret that this job can be demanding. Working with people that have a can-do attitude can feel much easier. Displaying enthusiasm for the job, no matter the project, goes a long way and it also just makes your work more enjoyable.**

What is Latham & Watkins doing to help manage diverse talent? What programmes are in place?

We have a wide-ranging set of initiatives to advance the recruitment, retention and promotion of diverse talent. Recruitment programs include investing in pipeline initiatives and providing scholarships to law students who share our strong commitment to diversity and inclusion. Retention and promotion programs also take a variety of forms, including multi-day, in-person professional development programs tailored for diverse associates, our robust global affinity groups (of which over 1,500 of our lawyers are members), unconscious bias training for all of our lawyers

(including for key decision makers at our firm) and innovative workplace policies to help our lawyers balance work and life better, and initiatives to give our attorneys tools to build a stronger culture of inclusion at the firm.

One of my favourite programmes is our Diversity Leadership Academy, which is an annual, in-person professional development programme that we hold for mid-level associates who self-identify as diverse or are allies.

“THIS ACADEMY PROVIDES TAILORED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING TO SUPPORT OUR ASSOCIATES’ SUCCESS, INCLUDING COMMUNICATIONS, BUILDING YOUR BRAND AND EXECUTIVE PRESENCE.”

Diverse partners and counsel attend, serving as faculty and sharing their strategies for success. Ample mentoring and community building opportunities are also built into the programme. As well as the other great BLG initiatives, every two years, BLG members are invited to a global firm-sponsored retreat. There are engaging and inspiring discussions with firm leaders

and other stakeholders in the communities we visit. Not only is it a perfect chance to catch up with colleagues and friends around the globe, and meet new ones, we also strategically plan how we can best achieve the BLG's overall aims of recruitment, retention and promotion of black talent across the firm's network.

Do you think the legal industry is inclusive of BAME students, and what steps could the industry take to make it more so?

While I still think there is a way to go, there are some great industry wide programmes that help promote diversity and inclusion of BAME students in the legal profession. An example is PRIME, an alliance of more than 60 law firms across the UK that are committed to improving access to the legal profession through work experience. The objective is to help make the legal sector open to talent from all economic backgrounds. At Latham, we regularly host PRIME students for networking sessions, career advice, talks explaining the different roles at our firm, and to discuss why diversity and inclusion is important to us.

We also work with Rare Recruitment, which helps firms hire diverse students through a range of development programmes, sponsoring the Rare Rising Star Awards that identify the UK's top 10 black students.

There is also the IFLA Flagship Secondment Programme, which provides opportunities for African lawyers to participate in international secondments in London, Paris, Lisbon and Dubai.

LATHAM & WATKINS

LINZI THOMAS,
partner at Latham & Watkins

✉ linzi.thomas@lw.com

☎ +44 20 7710 4625

➔ www.lw.com