

# *The Art of Diversity*

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT

2021: A YEAR IN REVIEW

**Moore&VanAllen**

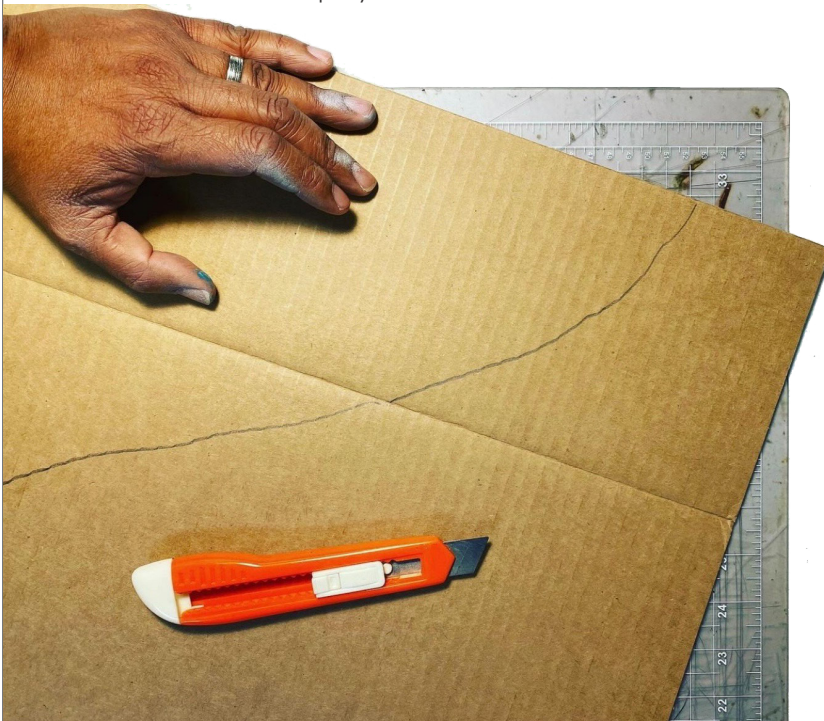
# PROGRESS IN ACTION

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

### 2021: A Year in Review

**I**n crafting this report, we wanted to demonstrate the investment the firm has made over the past year in evaluating the impact of our diversity and inclusion efforts to date. We recognize that undertaking a critical review of our commitment helps to strengthen our future actions. As such, we commissioned an artist, Stacy Utley, to capture visually our collective experience of conducting a cultural assessment and identifying strategic actions that will positively impact our colleagues, workspaces, and communities in the years ahead.

As you review this report, we hope you enjoy the images of the artist's creative process and pause to reflect on the finished painting, entitled *BRIGHTER HORIZON*. We are pleased to reveal the finished work at the end of our report, and it will be proudly displayed in our Charlotte office.





# The Art of Diversity

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

### J. STACY UTLEY

This work is inspired by Moore & Van Allen's (MVA) commitment to fostering a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging – both within the community that is their firm, as well as in the communities they serve. To achieve this culture, one must look internally to acknowledge the past, assess the present, and lay out a path of growth for the future.

An organization is a community of its own. A successful one is diverse in background and experiences that offer broad perspectives for engagement. The shared culture should be rich and fertile with diverse ideas. This artwork, *BRIGHTER HORIZON*, is an expression of community and connectivity.

The multicolored Monopoly houses represent the home, the cornerstone for each employee of MVA. When they leave their homes to come to their community, they bring their knowledge, experience, creativity, and perspective. The colors used are representative of diverse cultural flags.

Some of the homes are arranged as neighborhoods, while others stand alone at various elevations. However, they are oriented in a way leading in a common direction, a common purpose. This common goal is embellished by the gold leaf.

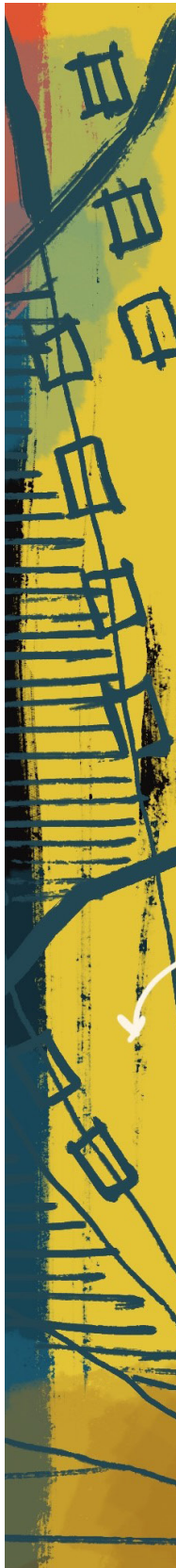
The element of twine throughout the piece expresses inclusivity as well as MVA's commitment to helping each employee reach their individual and collective goals. The twine at times is embedded or on top of the rugged cardboard and smooth wood surface to express that even though there may be challenges, MVA is steadfast in moving toward a *BRIGHTER HORIZON*.

### ABOUT J. STACY UTLEY

J. Stacy Utley is a critically acclaimed artist whose work addresses complex narratives found within the African American diaspora. Utley is limitless in his experimentation with medium, shaping his body of work in ink, watercolor, oil and chalk pastels, acrylics, and found or sourced objects. His collages, assemblages, paintings, and drawings address the topics of displacement, cultural appropriation, religion, race, mental illness and sexuality. Conversant topics of the African American community that shape identities and are not always comfortable to discuss.

Utley is a graduate of North Carolina State University, College of Design where he received a bachelor's degree in Architecture. His career as an architect/designer has both influenced and provided a rich source for his work. He went on to receive a Master of Fine Art from Lesley University College of Art and Design in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Utley has shown nationally and internationally. Exhibiting his work in solo and numerous group exhibitions that includes the 2021 Venice Biennale Architettura for his collaboration with Evoke Studio for the Five Points Plaza public artwork. His executed works can be found in private, public and university collections including North Carolina State University and Johnson C Smith University. Stacy Utley is represented by Elder Gallery of Contemporary Art.





## Inside

- 5 Leadership Message
- 6 Offering Diversity & Inclusion Billable Hour Credit Makes MVA Stronger
- 7 MVA Hosts Diversity Conference, Awards Scholarships
- 8 Firm Maintains Advocacy for Workplace Equality
- 9 MVA Allyship and Advocacy Continues
- 10 Embracing LGBTQ+ Communities
- 11 Honoring Juneteenth in the Carolinas
- 12 Court Decision Leads to Emotional Moment of Reflection
- 14 Member's Experience Brings National Hispanic Heritage Month to Life
- 15 Film Event Highlights Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month
- 16 Recognizing Black Carolinians' Journey
- 17 Event Celebrates Civil Rights Lawyer Judge Matthew Perry, Jr.
- 18 Honoring Veterans as Sponsor of Carolinas' Festival
- 19 MVA Collaborates to Mobilize Businesses in Underrepresented Communities
- 20 MVA Trailblazer Lea Johnson Reflects on Powerhouse Career and Achievements
- 22 Women of Moore & Van Allen Continues Impact
- 23 MVA Lawyers of Color Group Offers Support During Pandemic
- 24 Black Attorney Resource Group Continues to Serve its Members
- 25 Expanding the Pipeline in Collaboration with the Charlotte Legal Diversity Clerkship
- 26 Understanding Differences Through Children's' Books of Belonging
- 27 Investing in Partnerships to Improve Charlotte's Future
- 28 The Art of Diversity  
Our Diversity Statement





## LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

### Living into Our Enduring Commitment

At Moore & Van Allen (MVA), we know that promoting a diverse, inclusive community is not only the right thing to do, it makes us better at what we do — both individually and collectively.

While 2020 was a year of solemn reflection, planning, and identifying areas of need, 2021 was a year of self-evaluation and hard work. While there will always be more to do, thanks to the openness and engagement of our staff and attorneys, we were able to make some great strides this past year. On behalf of the Diversity and Management Committees, we are proud to share this report and continue to pledge to do the hard work necessary to make real progress.

*Thomas L. Mitchell*

*Valecia McDowell*

*Amy Johnson*



**Tom Mitchell**  
Chair  
Management Committee



**Valecia McDowell**  
Member, Management  
Committee/ Co-Chair, Diversity  
Committee



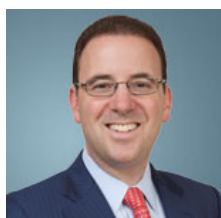
**Amy Johnson**  
Co-Chair  
Diversity Committee

# OFFERING DIVERSITY & INCLUSION BILLABLE HOUR CREDIT

Makes MVA Stronger

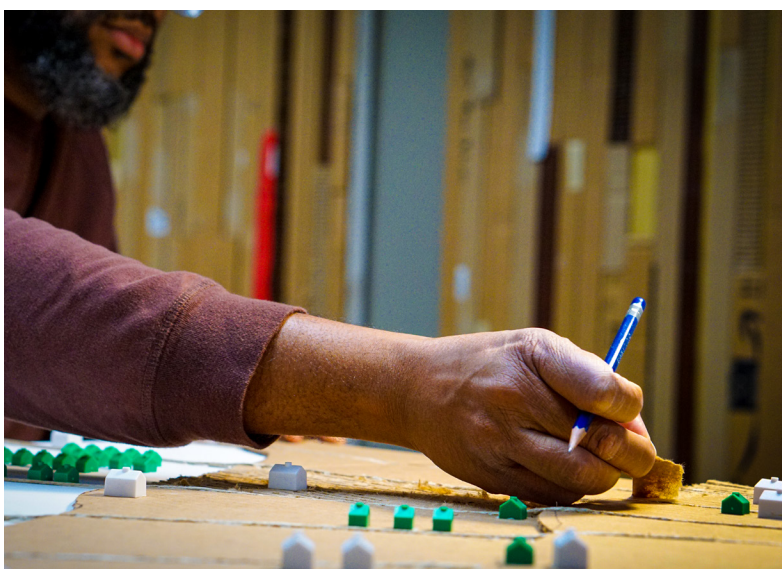
*"Our goal in establishing this policy is to further encourage our attorneys to make meaningful contributions to diversity and inclusion efforts within the legal community and the broader communities in which we live. Promoting diversity is at the core of who we are as a firm, so creating billable credit for building a more inclusive society is a natural next step for MVA."*

— **Zachary Smith**  
Bankruptcy & Restructuring Member  
and Team Leader



For diversity and inclusion related work, MVA recently established a new billable hour credit policy that provides associates, counsel, and staff attorneys with up to 50 hours of billable credit on an annual basis for such activities. The goal of the policy is to recognize our attorneys who are supporting efforts that will continue to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace and community.

Offering billable credit for diversity and inclusion efforts aligns with the firm's Diversity Statement, which recognizes that having people with different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, countries and regions of origin, genders, gender identities and expressions, generations, physical abilities, and sexual orientations is critical to the firm's ability to provide the highest level of legal services. By fostering an inclusive work environment, MVA comes together as one extraordinary team with the common purpose of providing truly outstanding legal services to our its clients.



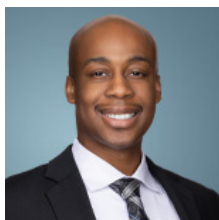


# MVA HOSTS DIVERSITY CONFERENCE

## Awards Scholarships

*"As the first recipient of the Diversity Scholarship, I am extraordinarily grateful for the resources the firm invests in this program. I remember being a wide-eyed, first-year law student, coming to Charlotte and meeting firm members and associates, and being extremely excited to hear from the general counsel of the Hornets and other attorneys. I left convinced that MVA would be an incredible place to join. I clerked at the firm during the summers of 2019 and 2020, and now, as an associate, I continue to be confident that I made the right decision. The firm is committed to doing great work for its clients while addressing issues of diversity and inclusion in the legal profession, which is very important to me."*

— **Rashaad Hamilton**  
Litigation Associate



In early 2021, MVA hosted its third annual Diversity Conference program. The effort, launched in 2019, aims to expand the firm's outreach and engagement with first and second-year students from a variety of law schools across the country, and is designed to showcase important initiatives related to diversity and inclusion in the legal profession.

The 20 law students who attended the half-day seminar gained exposure to various MVA representatives and practice groups. Attendees also participated in interactive panels and presentations from leaders at the firm, as well as from Bank of America, Brighthouse Financial, Wells Fargo, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg District Attorney's Office, the Mecklenburg County District Court, and Safe Alliance.

The program was held virtually and in conjunction with the announcement of the firm's Diversity Scholarship Program recipients, which is open to all first and second-year law students. Candidates are evaluated based on their academic performance, communication skills, demonstrated leadership qualities, work experience, community involvement, and life experiences that have shaped their values and professional goals.

**Reaghan Wooster**, of the University of North Carolina School of Law, and **Teala Volkamer**, of Wake Forest University School of Law, were selected as the firm's 2021 Diversity Scholarship recipients. Through the program, Reaghan and Teala had the opportunity to participate in the firm's 10-week summer associate program and became eligible to receive scholarship funds. Both Reaghan and Teala will return to the firm in 2022 for its summer program. Since 2019, MVA has awarded \$50,000 in scholarship funding to students accepted to the Diversity Scholars Program.

These initiatives, along with the collaborative efforts of MVA's Management, Diversity, and Recruitment Committees, demonstrate the tremendous value of working together to drive positive change.

## FIRM MAINTAINS ADVOCACY for Workplace Equality

*M*VA is proud to have maintained its perfect score on the 2022 Corporate Equality Index (CEI), a national benchmarking survey and report administered by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRC). This distinction has earned the firm the title of “Best Places to Work” from the HRC for six consecutive years, beginning in 2017. The CEI evaluates workplace practices, including non-discrimination workplace protections, domestic partner benefits, transgender-inclusive healthcare benefits, competency programs, and public engagement with the LGBTQ+ community.

For more information about the 2022 Corporate Equality Index or to download a free copy of the report, visit [www.hrc.org/cei](http://www.hrc.org/cei).







## MVA ALLYSHIP and Advocacy Continues

*"Our goal at MVA is to create an inclusive community, both inside and outside of our firm walls. An important part of our effort is to provide firm employees with education, including discussing concepts such as pronouns. We are grateful to PFLAG Charlotte for its continued partnership in education so that we at MVA can serve as allies to the LGBTQ+ community."*

— **Amy Johnson**  
Financial Services Member

This summer, MVA hosted a seminar with PFLAG Charlotte by hosting a seminar entitled "Fostering LGBTQ+ Allyship and Advocacy" that highlighted important LGBTQ+ nomenclature and provided practical steps for creating an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ co-workers, friends, and family. Featured guests also shared their personal stories about their involvement with the LGBTQ+ community.

The presentation also provided personal perspectives from PFLAG Executive Director Karen Graci and Social Justice Advocate Devin Green, as well as an important legislative update from Equality NC Director Kendra R. Johnson. Financial Services Member **Amy Johnson** is a PFLAG Charlotte board member and provided opening remarks for the presentation.

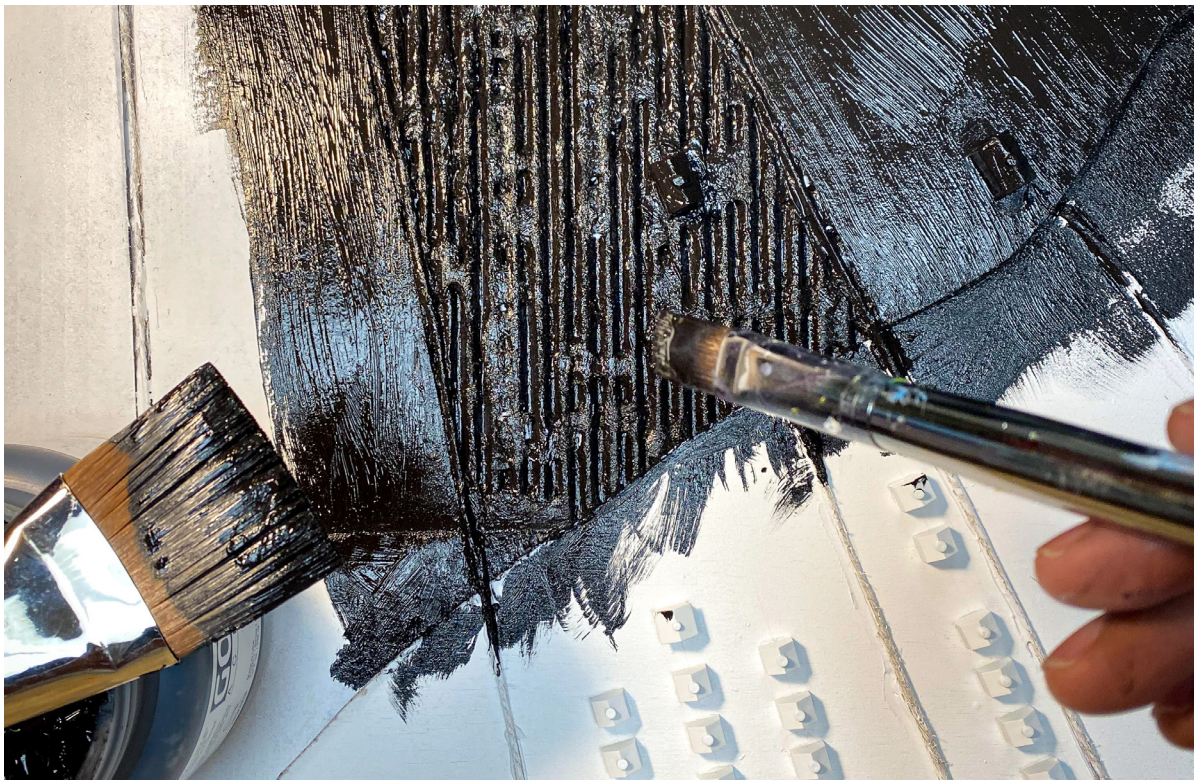


# EMBRACING LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES



As a leader in LGBTQ+ visibility, we take pride in our dedication to enrich, empower, strengthen, and make visible the unique lives and experiences of LGBTQ+ people in Charlotte and the Carolinas. MVA was proud to serve as a 2021 sponsor of Charlotte Pride. Charlotte Pride adapted to the unique challenges presented by the pandemic throughout the October and November Pride season by offering a series of virtual and small in-person events, including pop-up shops, a film festival, a job fair and community conference, and an interfaith service. MVA employees and their families showed their support by participating in a variety of activities.

The firm looks forward to when we can safely gather to walk in the annual Pride parade. Until then, we pledge to offer our allyship to our LGBTQ+ employees and community.



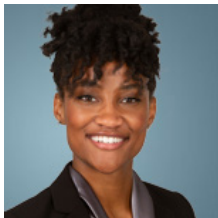


# HONORING JUNETEENTH

## in the Carolinas

*"As a Nation, our annual celebration of July 4th is supposed to mark the date that Americans were liberated from tyranny. But a celebration of freedom that commemorates that day alone does not present the full picture. After all, not every American became free that day. Juneteenth marks a date of major significance in American history and the holiday reminds us that the struggle for freedom and racial justice has always been hard-fought. Recognizing and celebrating Juneteenth prevents that struggle from being erased, correcting a major ideological inconsistency in the story of American freedom."*

— **Jules Carter**  
Litigation Associate



In June, the MVA Diversity Committee presented a webinar exploring the history and local observance of Juneteenth. Hosted by Community Historian Tom Hanchett, the presentation featured Pape Ndiaye, proprietor of Charlotte's House of Africa art salon, who highlighted the evolution of the Juneteenth festival he hosts each year on Thomas Avenue in Charlotte's Plaza Midwood neighborhood. Ndiaye spoke to the growth of the festival since its establishment in the 1990s and the festival's significance within the Charlotte community. Civic leader and history-maker Judge Shirley Fulton, Chairwoman of the Juneteenth Festival, provided an overview of the 2021 festival's featured events, including a drum circle, freedom walk, and gospel presentation, all of which were family-friendly and encouraged participation from the broader community.

MVA Diversity Committee Co-chair **Valecia McDowell** provided welcoming remarks and moderated the conversation with Hanchett. MVA also adopted Juneteenth as an annual, firmwide holiday.

**JUNETEENTH**  
CELEBRATE FREEDOM



# COURT DECISION LEADS

## to Emotional Moment of Reflection

*I*n response to the verdict delivery in *State of Minnesota v. Derek Michael Chauvin*, the MVA Diversity Committee invited colleagues to gather virtually and reflect on the moment. Ninety-six employees from the Charlotte and Charleston offices joined in solidarity on the morning of April 21, 2021. Attendees were greeted by MVA Diversity Committee Co-Chairs **Amy Johnson** and **Valecia McDowell**, who offered their own personal reflections, followed by the collective group participating in 9 minutes and 29 seconds of silence.

Here is a collection of anonymous responses provided by MVA employees who participated in the virtual gathering:

*"Sitting in silence for that length of time was both eye-opening and disturbing. But what was more impactful was seeing how the decision, and the case more broadly, affected my colleagues ... things like this that remind us of our community as a firm are critical."*

*"This morning's gathering was beautiful. So unscripted and raw, and just what so many of us needed."*

*"I reflected on the strength and courage it took for everyone involved or impacted by the George Floyd tragedy to stand up for what is right and see that justice was served. And to have the dedication and vision to turn this awful event into a meaningful opportunity for broader change and advocacy for all Black lives. I also reflected on my hope that the verdict, while it cannot erase years of pain inflicted on Black victims, their families, and the community, can bring some small measure of relief and healing as we continue to work together to take steps forward and build a better, more just and equitable world."*

*"My thoughts, hopes, prayers, and reflections were and are that George Floyd's death has been the tipping point for true change in this world. We must stop the hate, and I believe the only way we combat that hate is with love and kindness."*

*continued on page 12*



*continued from page 11*

*"Uncertainty.*

*Not knowing what to say. But not saying anything does not mean not wanting to say something.*



*Hope.*

*A bright light of change in the distance, but our collective memories are short, and our politics are broken, and so actual change seems still far, far off in the distance.*

*Gratitude.*

*For this opportunity to reflect, and for your leadership and presence."*

*"I want to thank the MVA Diversity Committee for bringing us together as a community within the firm, bridging the gap of all races, color, and creed. The mission of this great firm makes us stronger when we come together in unity, giving support and showing compassion to others. It makes a world of difference. Can you only imagine, 'What If'?' The realization of people being affected by direct trauma vs. indirect trauma has impacted our lives."*

*"I wept during the moment of silence. I was reminded in song by these two great artists, Bob Dylan, 'Blowing in the Wind,' and Sam Cooke, 'A Change is Gonna Come.' There is HOPE."*

*"Nine minutes and 29 seconds felt so very long, and when I tried to imagine myself in pain, and afraid, and restricted for such a long time, it felt unimaginable. What is heartbreaking is that nine and a half minutes is nothing compared to the hundreds of years that my friends, colleagues, neighbors, and fellow humans have felt this way every day. It is devastating to consider how that must feel."*

# MEMBER'S EXPERIENCE BRINGS

## National Hispanic Heritage Month to Life

*"The firm's recognition of National Hispanic Heritage Month raises awareness, celebrates heritage, and reflects our commitment to maintaining and sustaining inclusion and diversity. This community has grown dramatically over the last several decades, and it is important to appreciate the diversity within it. The Latin community — from Mexico, to the Caribbean, to Central America, to South America — shares a common language and culture, but carries different experiences and backgrounds that create the fabric of multi-culturalism."*

— **Paul Peralta**  
Employment & Labor Member



In recognition and celebration of National Hispanic Heritage Month, the MVA Diversity Committee hosted a virtual presentation and discussion led by Darryl White, Assistant Dean of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement at Queen's University. The program provided an overview of the significance of Hispanic Heritage Month and its mission to recognize the achievements and contributions of Hispanic American champions who have inspired others to achieve success. Guests also learned about the evolution of Hispanic-Latin cultural definitions, as well as the overlap and intersectionality among labels defining Hispanic-Latin cultures, languages, and ethnicities.

The highlight of the program came when White hosted a facilitated dialogue with MVA Litigation Member **Paul Peralta**, who reflected on his family's experiences in the Charlotte community. Paul is a Charlotte native whose parents emigrated to the United States in 1954 from Ecuador. His father, from Quito, and his mother, from Cuenca, spoke no English when they arrived in Charlotte, and were the fourth Hispanic family in the city. Like all first-generation children of Latin immigrants, Paul's first language was Spanish. In time, with the arrival of his relatives and others, the local Hispanic community grew and greatly diversified with families hailing from Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, South America, and Central America.

More than 40 guests from the firm's Charlotte and Charleston locations joined the presentation.

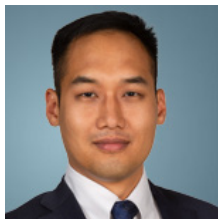


# FILM EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

## Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

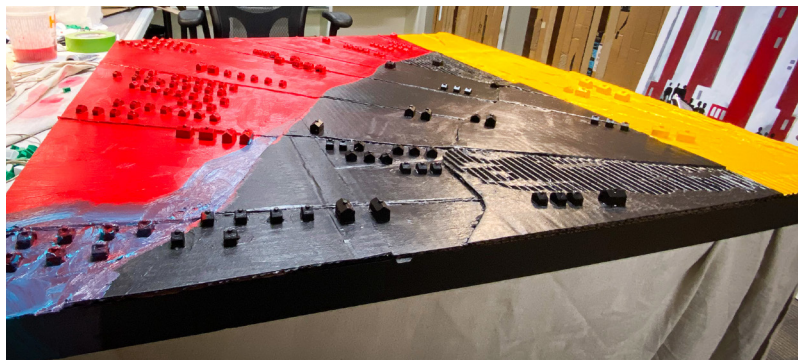
*"At the time that we watched and discussed 'Minari,' there was a string of incidents of violence against Asian Americans, which made it an opportune time for a conversation about race and the experiences of Asian Americans. It is good to have these conversations so that we can learn to relate to one another on a personal level. Our summer associates participated in the program, which was a great way for them to understand that on a firm level, we are committed to promoting diversity and respecting people's differences."*

— Sangwan "Sonny" Ha  
Financial Services Member



In recognition and celebration of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, the MVA Diversity Committee hosted a virtual presentation and discussion reflecting on the themes of the Oscar-nominated movie "Minari." The film follows a Korean American family that moves to an Arkansas farm in search of their own American dream. Amidst the instability and challenges of this new life, "Minari" shows the undeniable resilience of family and what really makes a home.

Darryl White, the Assistant Dean of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement at Queens University of Charlotte, facilitated an interactive dialogue featuring MVA Financial Services Members **John Chinundet** and **Sonny Ha**, who reflected on their families' immigration stories, and their experiences growing up in rural America. Audience members also had the opportunity to participate in breakout sessions to share their reactions to the movie and the various themes it presented.





# RECOGNIZING BLACK CAROLINIANS' JOURNEY

**I**n recognition of Black History Month, the MVA Diversity Committee hosted a virtual presentation, "Carolina Civil Rights Journey," highlighting the Levine Museum of the New South's "Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers" exhibit. The centerpiece of the Levine Museum, the award-winning exhibit includes more than 1,000 artifacts, images, video clips, music, and oral histories that illustrate the profound changes in the South since the Civil War, including the triumphs and challenges faced by African Americans in the New South after the end of slavery, and how Black North Carolinians fought for the promises of the New South to be kept.

Attendees were able to virtually walk through the exhibit with Levine Program Manager Lindsay Fairbrother-Henige to view historic sites such as Good Samaritans Hospital Chapel, one of the first African American hospitals in the South. The program also highlighted influential Black North Carolinians, including civil rights activist, ordained minister, veteran, and attorney Dovey Johnson Roundtree. Born in Charlotte on April 17, 1914, Roundtree played an important role in the desegregation of interstate bus travel and mentored several generations of Black attorneys.

Guests from MVA's Charlotte and Charleston offices attended the program and MVA Financial Services Member and Diversity Committee Co-Chair **Amy Johnson** provided opening remarks for the event.



# EVENT CELEBRATES CIVIL RIGHTS LAWYER JUDGE MATTHEW PERRY, JR.

## Hosted in Recognition of Julius L. Chambers

*"When we created MVA's Diversity Committee back in 2000, our very first speaker was Julius Chambers because we felt it was important to ground our work around diversity by understanding the history of Charlotte. We can't make progress forward without examining where we are, understanding the sacrifices of the people who came before us, and having them to be an inspiration to us to make courageous choices and live in our principles. That's why we established and continue to invest in this series. Every time we produce a program like this, we hear from our attorneys and staff that it energizes and encourages them to be more intentional in their work."*

— **Valecia McDowell**  
White Collar, Regulatory Defense,  
& Investigations Co-Head

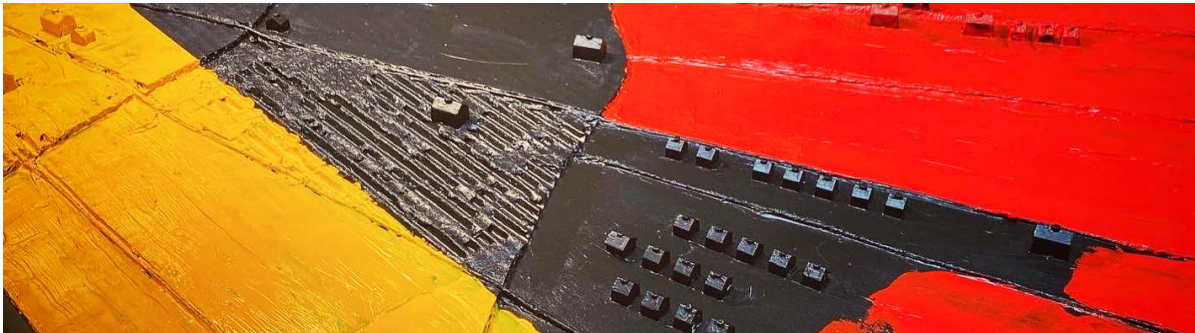


In 2020, the MVA Diversity Committee launched an inaugural program celebrating the legacy of Charlotte civil rights attorney Julius L. Chambers. The committee selected the month of October in recognition of Julius' October 6 birthday. The event serves as an annual opportunity for MVA employees and clients to convene in honor of Julius' significant work and to give visibility to other civil rights champions in the legal profession.

This year, MVA employees were invited to learn about the life and legacy of South Carolina civil rights lawyer and leader Judge Matthew Perry, Jr., who would have turned 100 in August 2021. Perry aspired to change the law in areas affecting basic human and civil rights, racial injustices, and equal opportunities. His many professional accolades include his success in the case of *Edwards v. South Carolina*, in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that South Carolina had violated students' First Amendment rights when police disbanded a peaceful protest against segregation. The case highlights one of the roles played by the First Amendment in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Perry considered the case and the ruling one of his most important legal legacies.

Dr. Bobby Donaldson, Associate Professor of History and Director of the Center for Civil Rights History and Research at the University of South Carolina-Columbia, provided an overview of Perry's extraordinary career and the impact *Edwards v. South Carolina* had on both the legal profession and community. Dorris "Dee Dee" Wright, who became one of the plaintiffs in the landmark *Edwards v. South Carolina* decision, joined the conversation to share her experiences as a student activist and life-long civil rights champion.

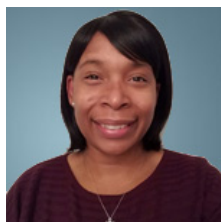
More than 70 guests attended the virtual presentation from both the Charlotte and Charleston offices. MVA Diversity Committee Co-Chairs **Amy Johnson** and **Valecia McDowell** provided opening remarks, noting the firm's early ties to Chambers and the firm's commitment to honoring his legacy.



## HONORING VETERANS AS SPONSOR of Carolinas' Festival

*"The Veterans Day Festival provided us with the opportunity to connect with the veterans in the community. We were able to use this platform to tell people that MVA looks for support staff in all shapes and sizes and share stories about how other veterans have been successful in transitioning out of the military and into a law firm setting. It was really nice to get out and meet people who we otherwise do not come into contact within the office."*

— **LaWanda Stevens**  
Employment Specialist



Veterans Bridge Home – an organization dedicated to supporting veterans and their transition into civilian life – hosted the inaugural Carolinas' Veterans Day Festival on November 11. MVA was a proud participant and sponsor of the event along with the Charlotte Knights, Lowe's, and Truist among others.

The family-friendly event was open to the entire community and focused on celebrating those who served in the U.S. Armed Forces and their families. The program also featured a Veteran Business Expo, which highlighted veteran-owned businesses and recognized contributions to the local veteran community.

MVA Employment Specialist **LaWanda Stevens** attended the event, along with MVA employees **John Allen**, **Travis Bakken**, and **Dennis Robinson**, who are also veterans. The team met with attendees to discuss employment opportunities and had the chance to enjoy the event as well.





# MVA COLLABORATES TO MOBILIZE BUSINESSES

## in Unrepresented Communities

*"We are extremely proud of the CLIMB initiative. It gives us the opportunity to offer transactional pro bono legal services to low-income entrepreneurs and small businesses and hopefully make a difference in improving economic equality in Charlotte. We are not reinventing the wheel, but rather we are just doing what we do best for those who need our services the most.."*

— **Tom Mitchell**  
Management Committee Chair



In the wake of George Floyd's murder in May 2020, a collaboration of 24 law firm leaders in Charlotte, including MVA Managing Member **Tom Mitchell**, gathered to discuss how the legal industry could harness its energy and resources to address racial disparities and social injustices. This group eventually formed the Carolinas Social Impact Initiative (CSI). The first program, the Charlotte Legal Initiative to Mobilize Businesses (CLIMB), launched in September of 2021 by MVA and Robinson Bradshaw, provides volunteer legal services to low-income entrepreneurs and small businesses in the Charlotte area.

CLIMB, which is led in part by MVA Financial Services Attorneys **Kimberly Zirkle** and **Kaitlin Powers**, provides eligible entrepreneurs and small-business owners with full-service representation on non-litigation business law matters, prioritizing applications from historically under-resourced groups (BIPOC, female, LGBTQ+, veteran, and disabled entrepreneurs), and works with referral sources that serve individuals and businesses in those groups.

The goal of CLIMB is to create a sustainable program that engages volunteer lawyers to make the broadest possible impact in Charlotte and its surrounding communities. By providing access to legal services at no cost, CLIMB seeks to assist clients in building and sustaining thriving businesses; support commercial activity in historically under-resourced communities in the Charlotte area; and foster economic mobility and opportunity.

For more information, visit [www.climbnc.org](http://www.climbnc.org).

# CLIMB

CHARLOTTE LEGAL INITIATIVE TO MOBILIZE BUSINESSES

# MVA TRAILBLAZER

## LEA JOHNSON REFLECTS

### on Powerhouse Career and Achievements

After a 36-year career at MVA and being one of the first women to achieve partnership at the firm, Financial Services Member **Lea Johnson (LJ)** is retired at the end of 2021. Financial Services Associate **Kaitlin Powers (KP)** had the opportunity to speak with Lea about her career and the impact she has had on women attorneys.

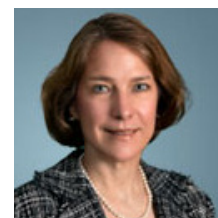
**KP: We credit you with starting the early gatherings for our women lawyers — today, that group is formally known as WoMVA and has more than 130 members. Why did you think it was important early on in your career to connect with other women at the firm?**

**LJ:** When I was a summer clerk, there were no other women in my class of summers. When I came to the firm as an attorney, I was the only woman in the Finance Group. There were two female partners at the time, Julia Jones, who was in Litigation — she subsequently became a judge, and Christy Reed, who was in Trusts & Estates. There were no other female associates in Finance and very few other female associates in general. There were not a lot of us, so occasionally we would informally say, “Let’s all go have lunch,” and we could fit in a single booth. I have been so happy to see how WoMVA has grown to include mentoring, new mother issues, and the book club. It has been great to see these outlets for women to connect if they choose to participate.

**KP: You were among the first women at MVA to join its membership ranks and have provided mentorship to so many at the firm. What’s your advice to women seeking to achieve membership?**

**LJ:** What I try to tell young lawyers is not to be afraid to ask questions when you do not understand something. A lot of us who go into the legal profession tend to be perfectionists. We think we can figure everything out on our own, or we don’t want to appear as if we can’t figure something out. It is important for young people, but especially for women, to discern what they should know versus when to ask for help. Do the best work you can do, be responsive, try to build relationships with the people you are working with, and have personal interaction beyond emails. At the end of the day, you must do quality work; be dependable; and be a decent, likeable person.

**KP: You have built an incredible practice here at the firm and served as an invaluable resource to your clients. What would you say are some of your best practices in building such a successful law practice?**



**Lea Johnson**  
Financial Services  
Member



**Kaitlin Powers**  
Financial Services  
Associate

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**LJ:** It is important to always be responsive to make clients feel valued. Even if I can't get to something right away, responding quickly and setting an honest expectation for when they can expect a deliverable is important. I have been lucky to have had great clients over the years. It is important to have face-to-face interactions (COVID aside) because when you sit down and have lunch and dinner, you get beyond an email or a phone call. You create a deeper relationship. I have clients who I know I will still see after retirement because they have become friends. Being deliberate in making clients feel important to you can go a long way.

**KP: Over the course of your career, how did you seek support when needed and who served in that role? How did these relationships make an impact?**

**LJ:** I was fortunate in the Finance Group that **Jim Hovis**, who was our team leader for a long time, was incredibly supportive. If we had any client issue, any kind of work-related issue, even a personal issue, we knew we could go to Jim and talk to him about it. My female friends who were in other groups were also a big support. We would go out to lunch and just be there for each other to provide stress relief. Having friends who I could feel safe sharing with and knowing they would keep matters confidential was very important to me.

**KP: What was the most challenging part of your career?**

**LJ:** The biggest challenge is the age-old thing that we have heard forever: balancing a professional career and the demands it necessitates while being a good mother and wife. Community service has also always been important to me; since coming to Charlotte, I have been involved in various nonprofits and groups. I knew without that I would be a really unbalanced person and not the person I wanted to be. I was fortunate that my husband was very supportive even though he was also a lawyer. If I had to work late, he would cover things at home and vice versa. In a lot of ways, as a lawyer, he understood when I couldn't come home because he also had similar situations. Trying to balance is not unique to the legal profession — all working women, whether they are mothers or not, deal with this issue.

**KP: What advice do you have for other working parents?**

**LJ:** I would encourage them to find something outside of work that they are interested in, whether it is a nonprofit, a sports team, or something else. People in the workplace understand. If I had to go to a board meeting during the day, unless there was a closing or a pressing matter, it was always fine. We want young people to be doing other things. When you have your community obligations, as long as you let people know your timeframe, it is worth doing. If you just focus on work, you will be an unhappy person. You need other outlets. MVA is big enough now that other people can help if you need it. It is not easy, but it is important to try to do it.

**KP: When you reflect on the breadth and length of your career, what are you most proud of and why?**

**LJ:** I am most proud that I have practiced law at MVA for 36 years and served my clients well. I am not sure when I started out that I would have thought I would be here this long. I am proud of my legal career and my role as a mentor to younger women attorneys. I enjoyed mentoring and hope that I made a positive impact.



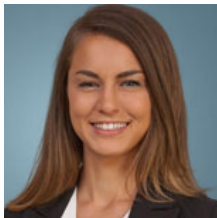
# WOMEN OF MOORE & VAN ALLEN

## Continues Impact



*"WoMVA has impacted me personally by connecting me with other female attorneys who are also mothers. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to ask advice and get recommendations from others who are balancing work life and motherhood, knowing I am not the only one going through this."*

— **Sarah Negus**  
Employment & Labor Member



Women of Moore & Van Allen (WoMVA) continued to support its members through a variety of both virtual and safely distanced in-person events over the course of the past year. The group found creative ways to make virtual gatherings engaging. From book clubs to wine tastings, each opportunity offered new ways to connect through different activities.

Throughout the year, WoMVA continued to lend support to expecting mothers through the WoMVA Advocate Program, a peer-to-peer mentoring initiative that offers encouragement and guidance to women before, during, and after their parental leave. Topics vary depending on individual needs, and include finding reliable childcare, communicating pre- and post- parental leave needs to team members, and in-office lactation needs and support.

This summer, WoMVA hosted 15 small in-person, neighborhood-based gatherings around Charlotte so attorneys could reconnect face-to-face. Held at various outdoor venues for coffee or lunch, the casual pop-in events were well-received and conveniently located throughout the city. The events culminated at the close of summer with an outdoor reception at the Mint Museum Uptown in mid-August.

The group also hosted a small pop-up shop experience, coordinated by Litigation Staff Attorney **Jennifer Braccia**, at the Social Shop, a woman-owned boutique in South Charlotte. A portion of the proceeds went to MVA's long-time community partner, Safe Alliance. WoMVA closed out the year with a holiday reception and retirement celebration honoring Financial Services Member **Lea Johnson**.

Led by MVA Financial Services Member **Meredith Reedy**, WoMVA brings together female professionals at our firm for mentoring, networking, and career development opportunities devoted to promoting the interests and progress of women lawyers and female non-legal professionals. The subgroup strives to support its members in their efforts to achieve leadership positions within the firm and the community.

# MVA LAWYERS OF COLOR GROUP

## Offers Support During Pandemic



*"The firm's LOC programming provides opportunities for our younger attorneys to connect with attorneys outside their own practice groups. The small-group intimate environment allows members to expand internal connections, seek career advice, and build personal relationships."*

— **Joe Fernandez**  
Corporate Group Co-Head



The MVA Lawyers of Color (LOC) group continued to stay in touch through a series of virtual happy hours and small in-person gatherings to provide support to one another throughout the pandemic. In early 2021, LOC members gathered virtually for an interactive session with Co-head of the Investment Group **John Chinundet** and Co-head of White Collar, Regulatory Defense, & Investigations **Valecia McDowell** to discuss best practices for client development. Over the summer months, LOC hosted both a virtual luncheon and a small outdoor in-person gathering at Brewers at 4001 Yancey with the MVA summer associate class.

"It's important for us as an affinity group and as a firm to connect with our lawyers of color early on in their careers at MVA, particularly as the firm continues to grow," said Litigation Member and LOC Chair **Nader Raja**. "Our objective is to make sure our LOC attorneys not only feel connected and supported, but that they also have a trusted outlet to ask questions that they might not otherwise feel comfortable sharing."

Founded in 2013 by Supervising Investigations Counsel **Tania Archer**, the LOC group provides peer-to-peer support, leadership development, and networking opportunities for attorneys of color. The group operates with three core goals in mind: increase cohesiveness among current LOC members; enrich members' practices and firm relationships through a variety of networking and leadership development opportunities; and increase community outreach efforts to the legal community and community at large.



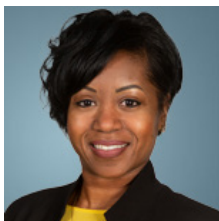


## BLACK ATTORNEY RESOURCE GROUP

### Continues to Serve its Members

*"BARG has become my touchstone for professional support and development at MVA, and its members have become a part of my work family. By sponsoring cultural, educational, networking, and social events, BARG furthers its vision for a more inclusive environment at MVA."*

— **Tania Archer**  
Litigation Counsel



As MVA adjusted to a hybrid workforce model over the past year, MVA's Black Attorney Resource Group (BARG) was still able to meet frequently, both virtually and in person, to create and nourish connections among firm attorneys. Founded in 2020, the affinity group has placed building fellowship among members at the center of its resource-building strategy. BARG members are also engaged in a process of outlining the group's central mission and broader strategic goals to ensure that its future will reflect the vision of its members.

Over the summer, the group hosted an in-person outdoor Juneteenth celebration at Leah and Louise. The event served as an opportunity to recognize and honor the holiday, as well as to reconnect with colleagues and meet new BARG members who joined the firm during the pandemic. BARG members also connected with the summer associates throughout their time with the firm, offering guidance and informal mentorship.

With its dedication to supporting the personal and professional development of Black attorneys, BARG serves as a symbol of the firm's commitment to diversity. The group is currently led by Litigation Associate **Jules Carter**.



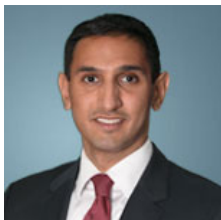
# EXPANDING THE PIPELINE

in Collaboration with the  
Charlotte Legal Diversity Clerkship

CHARLOTTE  
LEGAL  
DIVERSITY  
CLERKSHIP

*"But for my participation in the CLDC in 2008, I would never have learned about Charlotte or MVA, especially being a non-native North Carolinian. The CLDC provides an incredible opportunity to connect and network not only with the firm to which you are assigned, but also the broader leadership of the Mecklenburg County Bar. I am constantly reminded of the cordial nature of the bar here, and that despite working for different organizations, we all have a common goal to further diversity in the legal profession."*

— **Nader Raja**  
Litigation Member

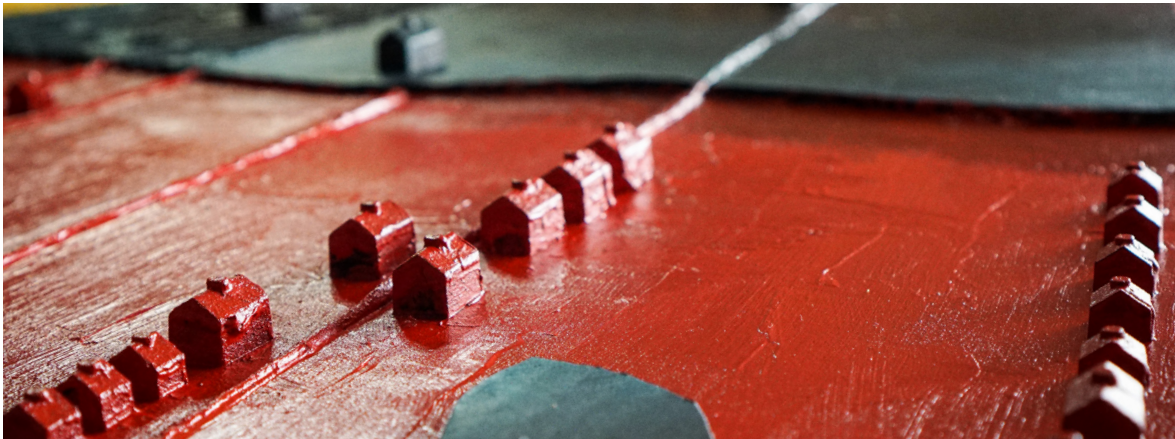


**Z**achary Smith, Bankruptcy & Restructuring Member and Team Leader, has assumed the role of co-chair of the Charlotte Legal Diversity Clerkship (CLDC), a highly competitive summer program for first-year law students who advance the value of diversity. Zach will share the CLDC leadership responsibilities with Caleb Holloway, Associate General Counsel at Atrium Health. Zach and Caleb will oversee the recruitment of summer associates and employers to the program, as well as craft a summer programming schedule that highlights the benefits of living and working in Charlotte.

CLDC clerks spend 10 weeks in the Queen City, splitting their time with a law firm and a corporate legal department. CLDC employers provide each clerk with an unparalleled level of experience and exposure to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg legal profession. Participating students work in a variety of practice areas; expand their professional networks; and participate in an assortment of legal proceedings that may include, but are not limited to, hearings, closings, depositions, and trials.

MVA served as a founding employer of the initiative and is proud to continue its relationship with the program. In addition, MVA Litigation Attorneys **Nader Raja** and **Raquel Macgregor Pearkes** participated in the CLDC while in law school and remain active in the CLDC today as valued alumni.

Founded in 2006, the CLDC program operates with one basic goal: to improve diversity in the Charlotte Bar by attracting top first-year law students with diverse backgrounds. To date, the CLDC program has hosted 131 students from law schools around the country.



## UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES

### Through Children's Books of Belonging

*"My boys (5 and 7 years old) and I have really enjoyed the Books of Belonging that we have read so far. It has been fun to explore the different stories, relate to characters and discuss the importance of celebrating differences – both visible and invisible. Thank you for providing these books and the many opportunities they present for awareness and discussion."*

— **Alyssa McLean**  
Commercial Real Estate  
Paralegal



In the summer of 2021, the MVA Diversity Committee launched the Books of Belonging program in the firm's Charlotte office, offering MVA employees the chance to borrow various children's books focusing on stories covering topics such as socioeconomic differences, race and culture, physical and invisible differences, LGBTQ, and overall kindness and inclusion. The MVA effort was inspired by programming offered at Trinity Episcopal School and was designed to support MVA employees and their families in their personal desire to celebrate and understand differences.

The larger Books of Belonging program was created so all children have an opportunity to learn, explore, and ask questions about the many differences our human race embodies. Books included in the MVA bookstands offered a small sampling of the larger Books of Belonging resource list.

To learn more about the Books of Belonging program and to view the entire suggested reading list, visit [www.booksofbelonging.org](http://www.booksofbelonging.org).

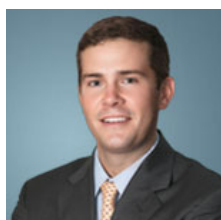


# INVESTING IN PARTNERSHIPS

## to Improve Charlotte's Future

*"As a CBI 'Leaders Under 40' graduate and a Charlotte native, I am very proud of MVA's support of CBI and appreciative of the work that CBI is doing to not only raise awareness of the racial issues that Charlotte faces, but also to equip its citizens with tools to combat those issues. MVA's support of this organization speaks volumes about the firm's place in the community and its commitment to confronting these challenges and being a force for positive change in Charlotte. The bus tour is a great way to get a baseline understanding of why Charlotte has grown the way it has, from both a socioeconomic and racial perspective, and learn about the conscious and unconscious decisions that were made to get us where we are today. As Dr. Hanchett said, these decisions were made by individuals, so as individuals, we can now make decisions that confront the layers of racism that we see in our city today."*

— **Cowden Rayburn**  
Corporate Associate



COMMUNITY  
BUILDING  
INITIATIVE

Over the summer, MVA employees were invited to "get on the virtual bus" to learn about Charlotte's history and how past decisions continue to influence our community.

Hosted in partnership with MVA's long-time community partner, the Community Building Initiative (CBI), the "Charlotte in Black & White ... and More" bus tour is an innovative, interactive approach to bringing the history of Charlotte to life. The program explores how our shared history and what is deeply ingrained in our community affects the present and future.

Led by Community Historian Dr. Tom Hanchett, the virtual session also highlighted critical elements that shaped Charlotte's foundations and asked attendees to consider how race and ethnicity influenced key decisions that still affect our community today. Hanchett provided important historical details — including deed restrictions and the uprising of immigrant-owned businesses — that gave shape to Charlotte as we know it today.

Founded in 1997, CBI's mission is to provide people and organizations with the knowledge, skills, and courage to fight bias, remove barriers to opportunity, and build a more equitable and just Charlotte-Mecklenburg. CBI's flagship programs — the Leadership Development Institute (LDI) and Leaders Under 40 (LU40) — develop, connect, and guide diverse groups of leaders in increasing their awareness of and ability to influence for inclusion and equity.

To date, MVA Litigation Team Leader **John Fagg**, Senior Manager of Diversity and Community Initiatives **Stephanie Gryder**, Wealth Transfer Member **Caitlin Horne**, Litigation Associate **Elena Mitchell**, Corporate Associate **Cowden Rayburn**, Intellectual Property Associate **Sam Skains-Menchaca**, Financial Services Member **Stacey Vandiford**, and Corporate Member **Bill Zimmern** have participated in the LU40 program. In addition, MVA Litigation Members **Valecia McDowell** and **Josh Lanning** have supported the organization through service on the CBI Board of Directors, and Josh is currently participating in the Class 2021 of CBI's Leadership Development Institute.

MVA is proud to support and celebrate CBI's legacy of success and looks forward to deepening its relationship in 2022.





DISPLAY OF ARTWORK

*The original Brighter Horizon can be viewed at  
Moore & Van Allen's office at 100 North Tryon Street,  
Suite 4700, Charlotte, NC.*

J. STACY UTLEY  
BRIGHTER HORIZON  
2021

**OUR DIVERSITY STATEMENT**

**A**t Moore & Van Allen, we recognize that having people with different racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds, countries and regions of origin, genders, gender identities and expressions, generations, physical abilities and sexual orientations is critical to our ability to provide the highest level of legal services. By fostering an inclusive work environment, we come together as one extraordinary team with the common purpose of providing truly outstanding legal services to our clients. Our commitment to diversity goes beyond our firm to the communities we serve through extensive outreach initiatives. These core principles are embraced by the firm's leadership.

**Moore & Van Allen**  
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