



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to have Alexis Yee-Garcia here with us to talk about diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. Your Law School Toolbox host today is Alison Monahan, and typically, I'm with Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. Together we're the co-creators of [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career-related website [CareerDicta](#). I also run [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can always reach us via the [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolBox.com, and we would love to hear from you. And with that, let's get started.

Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to welcome Alexis Yee-Garcia to the show to talk about diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. Welcome, Alexis.

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Thank you.

Alison Monahan: I'm so excited for you to be joining us. Well, to start us off, would you mind sharing just a little bit of your professional background, so our listeners have a bit of context here?

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Of course, sure. I'm excited to be here too. So, I came to the legal profession after a little bit of a career break. I went through undergrad and then worked for five years in higher education administration in various capacities – at admissions, residential life, a bunch of other stuff. And then from there, I decided to go to law school – so, slightly less traditional than some of the folks who go straight through. And that actually is part of how I ended up where I am now. So, when I went to law school, I did take the traditional path where you go to law school, you land in kind of a top school, and you see everyone going into BigLaw. And like all of my classmates, I went through the OCI process and took a summer associate position, and then ultimately a full-time associate position with a BigLaw firm as a securities litigator. I did that for about five years, and then decided at that point that I think a lot of mid-level associates get to: "Is this forever? Do I want to be a partner? Do I want to go in-house? What am I doing with my life?" It was at that point that I started thinking about my original career plan, which was always to go back to higher education administration – and specifically, my prior experience with D&I, or diversity and inclusion. And it just happened that the role that I was previously in, of manager of diversity and inclusion, that role was open. I applied, seemed like a great fit for my background, a great fit for my experience as a lawyer and also in law school. And so, when I got the job, it was just right. And now lo, here I am! Went from that role to the role that I'm in now, which is a regional director role, but it's basically the same thing, where I'm kind of managing diversity and inclusion programs at a BigLaw firm.



Alison Monahan: And for people who might not be so familiar with these terms, what does "diversity and inclusion" really mean in this BigLaw context?

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Absolutely, great question. So, in the BigLaw context, it can actually mean a lot of different things. I think when you think about diversity, everyone can look up "diversity" in a dictionary and know what that means. It is a mix of different characteristics, and that goes from your background – whether that's racial or ethnic background, your cultural heritage, your religious heritage, your gender identity, your sexual orientation. All of those factors kind of feed into "diversity". I think a lot of law firms are moving toward diversity, equity, and inclusion. And again, you can look all of those things up and kind of understand what they mean. They really are the same in a law firm context as they are in your law school context, or in your corporate context, or any sort of large institutional framework. So, we are interested in the diversity, equity, and inclusion department in a large law firm. We're looking at maintaining a certain level of diversity across the staffing of the firm. So, we're really interested in recruiting, retaining, and advancing diverse talent. And that again, cuts across a broad spectrum of personal traits. So, it really just depends on the firm that you're looking at, but by and large, you can think about your racial and ethnic backgrounds, veteran status, disability, again, sexual identity and gender orientation, and all of those characteristics that you kind of typically group into diversity. And then we're also looking at inclusion – so, how can we cultivate broader relationships across all of those groups? How can we integrate people who may not share under-represented traits and who are interested in being involved? So it really is something where in a good context, whether that's corporate or a law firm or a school, you should be seeing DEI across all dimensions. So, you should see it in recruiting, you should see it in events or programs or activities in a student life sort of context, you should see it in advancement – so, who are your professors in a law school context, who are your partners in a law firm context? And also leadership. You all have different diverse professors who teach different courses, but who are your department chairs? Who are the people who sit on the recruiting committee? Who are the people who are in charge of really making decisions? So again, it really is a multi-dimensional sort of consideration.

Alison Monahan: Thank you, that was very helpful. I think when you were talking about who these people are, it's like, who has power in these scenarios basically.

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Exactly, exactly.

Alison Monahan: Who can really make the change or control what's happening? Alright, well, many of our listeners are in law school, obviously, and some of them are probably doing OCI right now. And one of the big questions we get a lot is, how can they tell if a firm or another employer is really serious about this stuff,



because it seems like they often all say the same thing. Do you have any tips on that?

Alexis Yee-Garcia:

I love this question. This is definitely one that I asked myself when I was going through the OCI process, as I'm sure many of your listeners are. I was one of those law students who had the giant spreadsheet of all of the firms, and the firm name, and their office locations, and where they ranked on the different... I'm dating myself here, but the Vault ranking and all of those characteristics that I was looking at. And diversity and inclusion was a big one, but there's a ton of information out there. In theory, a lot of those big rankings factor in diversity, equity, and inclusion, and what kinds of programming firms have in place to sort of advance those values and ideals. And it does all start to look a little bit the same, so I really sympathize with the amount of confusion out there. In my personal view, I think you can really tell what a firm values by... It kind of is like a Joe Biden thing: "Show me your budget." How much are you really investing in some of these programs? Where can I see you actually putting your dollars? All law firms are businesses, they exist to make money. And so, they all have huge business development departments. They are throwing money around at clients all the time. Are they doing the same thing for their diversity and equity and inclusion programs? Are they doing the same thing specifically for diverse clients? Where can you see them investing in not only their diverse clients, but also their diverse talent? Do they have programs specifically where they can say, "Here is something that we do for all of our diverse associates. We are dedicating a certain amount of funding toward associate conferences or participation in certain programs." Whatever the things are that you think you might be interested in – again, from sort of a selfish standpoint – is the firm going to support you? Are you going to be able to go to someone and find financial support for those efforts? I think that's number one, is kind of looking at the money and where you can see the firm spending money. Obviously, in addition to your generic rankings, there's a ton of information just statistically about, going back to what you were saying earlier, who's making the decisions, who's in the leadership ranks? The [Law360 Diversity Snapshot](#) is just pure numbers. How many partners are women? How many partners are from under-represented minority status? How many partners are LGBTQ+? All of that information is captured in just kind of your pure numbers, rankings like the Law360 Snapshot. But there are other rankings out there that incorporate more. I think it's the [AmLaw](#) does the scorecard, which they've revamped a number of times. I know that it went through another revamp this year, where they're looking not only at the statistics, but they're also looking at some of the more subjective factors. Who are the folks who are sitting on your executive committees or your management committees? Who are you advancing to the practice group heads and those kinds of positions? Again, going back to those leadership roles and who's really empowered to make decisions. You want to see diverse representation there because it's just helpful to know that that's something, again, that they value and that they're getting those additional



perspectives, when they go into those behind closed doors settings where the sausage really gets made. So, I definitely encourage folks to look at those rankings, to look at that information. There's a ton that's out there, so it's just kind of a matter of looking very carefully at what factors they're considering, and deciding for yourself what you think is the most important.

Alison Monahan: That makes a lot of sense. So beyond the data, do you think it's okay to ask people maybe who've summered at this particular organization you're considering, or alums, or the HR people... If you're not getting the information you want from these standard databases, who can you talk to about this kind of stuff inside of the firm?

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Absolutely. I think it is totally appropriate to ask alumni. I think it's great to ask people who previously summered at the firm. So, when you get back to law school, you're going through OCI, all of those folks who are now 3Ls are coming back from their summer experience. Talk to them. They're the ones who have the most present information about what a summer is like at whatever firm you're looking at. And the ones who have gone into it with open eyes and have taken a really thoughtful approach, they will tell you. There is nothing that people love more than talking about themselves. And so, yeah, if you ask, they will answer and they will tell you every single good story, they will tell you every single bad story. And if you really find those trusted confidants, you can get a lot of really good information that way. When I was a 2L, that was certainly something that I took into consideration, is just talking to my friends who were 3Ls and saying, "How was it? Was it good, was it bad?" And I put a lot of weight into the folks who said, "Hey, you should really think about this firm. They were great, and here's why." There's really no substitute for that personal experience.

Alison Monahan: I remember even sometimes in interviews, when I was interviewing for summer positions and people would just tell me things and I was sort of like, "Okay." I remember one time this woman said, basically, "Can you close the door?" And I'm like, "Sure." And she just unloaded. And I was like, "Okay, good to have that information, thank you."

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Wow, yeah. If you can get someone very candid, that is always a winning position, where you can sit down and ask all those questions.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I was basically like, "Wow, I'm really surprised they have you doing interviews because you're pretty bitter right now." I think she just returned from maternity leave or something. It was just like, "This is a nightmare."

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Oh, no. Oh, no. But yes, that's the other thing too, I would say, is that I know when you are a law student, it's a little bit like returning to law school admissions, where you feel like you just have no power and you're at the mercy of just these completely arbitrary decision makers in a tower somewhere. Like,



am I going to see white smoke or black smoke? Who knows? But I think, especially once you have that offer in hand, those firms, once they've made the offer, they want you. If you have questions, they will get those questions answered. And if they won't, that is a huge red flag. They should be putting... If you want to talk to someone at the firm, scroll through that directory and say, "Hey, I noticed this person practices in this area" or, "They just worked on this case" or, "They're involved in this organization. Could I sit down with them for 15 minutes, even just to kind of pick their brain a little bit?" They should be willing to connect you with that person. And if they're not, then I personally think that presents a problem. They should be putting whoever you ask for in front of you to answer questions, unless they're on leave or available for some reason. And they should be offering people up. They should be saying, "Hey, you expressed interest in tech transactions. We've got this great partner who you didn't interview with, but we'd love for you to meet." Those are the kinds of things that really give you the opportunity to get all of that information – those little tidbits that will help feed into your process and make your decision for you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think firms expect it, almost.

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Absolutely.

Alison Monahan: Once you have that offer, that's when you start asking the hard questions, and they know that.

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Absolutely.

Alison Monahan: And if you call up and you're like, "Hey, I want to come back and have lunch with some young associates or someone who has these certain characteristics that I'm interested in, or similar to" – again, like you said, if they don't accommodate that, I would say that's a pretty big red flag.

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Yeah, 100% agree.

Alison Monahan: Do you also think it's a red flag if a firm does not have a person specifically dedicated to issues around diversity?

Alexis Yee-Garcia: I think it depends on the size of the firm. If we're talking a really tiny boutique firm, they may have someone who is wearing a lot of different hats, and maybe doing associate development and also DEI, or recruitment and also DEI, or something similar. At the larger firms, I do personally view it as a red flag if they don't have at least one person who is purely dedicated to DEI. It really reflects the value, again, of the firm, their willingness to say, "We do think this is important, and we're going to dedicate someone to making sure that it happens." That means the associates aren't the ones who are in charge of



moving forward on programs. They aren't keeping track of sponsorships, of different conferences or different affinity bar organizations. They aren't the ones who are filling out client surveys or doing some of these other things that really just take a lot of time and a lot of investment across the firm to gather all the right information and develop a proper response. I think, again, it is a matter of saying, "We are invested in the professional value of some of these things." And so, it's knowing that we have someone who, if you go to them as an associate and you say, "There's this conference I'm interested in attending. What do I do?" – that there's a DEI person who can say, "Oh yes, we sponsor that conference" or, "We don't sponsor that conference, and here's why." Whatever the case may be, it is a specialized set of knowledge, and it's really helpful to have someone who has the background, who has the experience, and whose job it is to do all of that stuff. Their job is not to bill to a client, their job is not to get out there and make sure the partner has everything they need in advance of a deposition. Their job is solely to make sure that the firm is doing everything they can to advance DEI. And so, that's where they're going to pour all of their time.

Alison Monahan: That makes a lot of sense, because let's face it, the reality is, if you don't have someone like that, those tasks are not spread equally either.

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Exactly, exactly.

Alison Monahan: It's like, "Oh, you're the minority person. Would you like to respond to every single request around this, and also do your other job? Great, here you go." You know you're not getting any credit for it.

Alexis Yee-Garcia: That actually is another really good point, and I'm sure that a lot of your law student listeners are already aware of this. It was fairly recent, I would say in the last couple of years, that law firms started giving credit for it, if you're the president of your local affinity bar association, or if you're the affinity group chair in your office. There are a lot of firms out there – I would venture to say that most firms out there are giving some kind of billable credit for that. And again, it reflects the fact that it is a lot of work.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And they never tell you.

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Exactly, exactly.

Alison Monahan: Alright. Well, let's switch gears a little bit. Can you talk to me a little bit about some ideas on actually leveraging a diverse background throughout your legal career? What steps can people take here, particularly things they maybe could start thinking about early on?



Alexis Yee-Garcia: Sure. So, I think you start to see it very early, even as an undergraduate. All of those affinity experiences – the Black Students Association, the Latinx Student Association, OutLaw, once you get to law school – all of those organizations are an opportunity to sort of flex your networking muscles. Some of the things that you will start to hear basically immediately when you get into a law firm, is how important it is to establish your business network. Congratulations, every single friend you made in law school is part of your business network now.

Alison Monahan: I knew all those bar review nights were going to pay off.

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Exactly, exactly. And so, your affinity bar associations, your affinity student organizations, all of those things become part of your professional network. These are the folks who are going to be in the same industry as you, they're going to be moving the same sort of industries and businesses and everything else. It's totally true that everything they say about your friend who is in your study group who goes on to be the GC of some start-up, it's 100% true. That cuts across the board of, again, all of those affinity organizations. And when you do those things in law school, it really is a chance to start, like I said, flexing those networking muscles. So, learning what it's like to take a leadership role in an affinity organization in your law school is just like taking a leadership role in an affinity bar association when you become a lawyer. Those organizations all cut across law firms, legal departments, regions. It's a great chance to network and kind of meet other people who may or may not be interested in the same practice as you even. But to just kind of find that commonality immediately when you join NAPABA – the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association. Immediately, you know, "Okay, I'm networking with other Asian lawyers. We are going to be able to relate across certain dynamics or experiences" or what have you. Those are all really good opportunities, again, to just kind of start building on your existing commonalities. I think sometimes you hear hesitation sometimes about, "Am I pigeonholing myself, am I going to be just the NAPABA girl for the rest of my life?" And I don't think that that's true. Just in my experience, I would say as much as you can, to release whatever hesitation you may have on that front. To be a leader in any organization, to be a leader in any sort of visible role across the legal industry, I think has value. And so, whether that's happening in your practice organization or in your affinity organization, I absolutely think that you should embrace those experiences across the board. It's not the kind of thing that I have ever seen redound negatively to anyone. It really is only something that I've ever seen have a positive impact on people's careers. And so, I think leveraging your diverse background by finding those common affinity experiences is helpful, starting very early on.

Alison Monahan: I want to follow up a little bit on something you kind of alluded to, because sometimes students, I think, feel weird or uncomfortable about participating in, say, a minority career fair or a summer program, or something along those lines. What are your thoughts around that?



Alexis Yee-Garcia: I think I understand the hesitation, to a degree. It's the kind of thing where if you have always been the minority in the room, you are tired of being, "Oh, there's Alexis. She's the ambiguous ethnic girl." You get used to it, but it's not something that you necessarily want to live with and embrace every single day. It can have potentially negative impacts on your own mental health if you're kind of engaged in this code-switching or covering process every single time you go into a classroom or into a meeting, or what have you. However, those minority career fairs, those summer programs – those are opportunities that the legal industry is sort of embracing to do better. And so, to leave those opportunities on the table, I think, is a mistake. You have the chance to apply for, for example, a diversity scholarship, just because you have a diverse background. Yes, that's true. But at the end of the day, that is free money.

Alison Monahan: Free money is free money.

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Yeah, free money is free money. If you've ever applied for any scholarship... There is a Girl Scout scholarship, there are baseball scholarships, there are scholarships for people who are solely from Iowa. I mean, there's a scholarship for everything. And so to say, "Well, I'm just going to cut this one out entirely because I don't necessarily want to be associated with that part of my identity" – I don't know. Again, it's a personal choice that you're welcome to make, but it is something that I am an enthusiastic proponent of, because I do think that it's the legal industry's attempt to embrace something that will move toward equity. It's something that everyone is trying to do, in part because there have been so many structural barriers for people who have traditionally been under-represented in the legal field. And that's not anyone's fault, that's not anyone's responsibility to take on. It's the responsibility of the industry. And so, I view those career fairs, those scholarships, all of those things as the legal industry saying, "Hey, we have some catchup here to do, and we're all going to try to play our part."

Alison Monahan: I think that makes a lot of sense. Alright, well, let's talk now about a few specific scenarios before we wrap up. So, I'm a law student who is non-binary, and I have no idea what to wear to in-person interviews, or even at work. I want to be comfortable, but I also worry about how my decisions might be perceived. Is this something law firms can kind of roll with at this point? And what can I do if I get pushback?

Alexis Yee-Garcia: This is a really great question, and I think it's one I completely understand. I have seen it in the workplace, and I know it can be tough. But I will say, especially as you get into your second year law school classes, there is case law on this, and so you are on firm legal ground to wear what makes you feel comfortable, as long as it is professionally acceptable. And so, if your non-binary professional face is one that wears makeup but wears a suit and tie, I think



that's completely fine. Again, it is a matter of figuring out what is professional dress for the workplace, not professional dress for a particular gender identity. As far as whether or not you would get pushback or whether you would be perceived differently, I do think that varies from firm to firm, office to office, region to region, quite frankly. You can get away with a lot more, for example, in Los Angeles than maybe you could get away with in Washington, DC or in New York. And I think that's something that as you go into the job search process, you should certainly pay attention to. Again, that's one of the values of doing those callback interviews in the office, or taking the opportunity when law firms offer, "Hey, we'd love to have you in for an additional office visit if you want one." Go. Go and see what other people are wearing. Wear what makes you feel comfortable, especially if you have an offer, and see if you do feel like people are looking at you askance. In my experience, that is not something that people do. I have worked with a number of people who are non-binary, both in associate roles, partner roles, staff roles, and that's not something that I've ever had anyone have a negative experience with. But again, I would say that there is some variance there from firm to firm or location to location. So, it really is something that you should take into account – you want to be comfortable. Again, it goes back to that you don't want to have to be covering or coat-switching every time you go into the office. The office is where you are going to spend a lot of your time.

Alison Monahan: A lot.

Alexis Yee-Garcia: And so, you want to be as comfortable as possible. Embrace that opportunity to ask a lot of questions, so that you can develop that level of comfort.

Alison Monahan: Definitely. Alright, next question: I'm a minority law student and some of my classmates have made it clear they think I don't belong here and have gotten unfair advantages. I personally think this is ridiculous, but it still hurts my feelings. Any suggestions on handling these types of statements?

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Ugh, this one is so hard. I know that this comes up. It is horrible that it comes up. I think this is a place actually where having really strong allies, having really close allies is so helpful. I think especially when you are in a situation where it feels very personal. It is very personal when someone makes snide comments, when someone does things to you to make it clear that they think of you as less than or feel that your experience or background is somehow worse than or less than their own. I think it's very, very hard to come up with a response in the moment. It's the famous clip from every movie or TV show where you come up with that zinger the next day. Not helpful.

Alison Monahan: Or maybe in the shower.



- Alexis Yee-Garcia: Exactly, exactly. And so, finding and cultivating and really surrounding yourself with people who are allies to you, who know you, who know your value, who appreciate who you are and know how smart you are, how hardworking you are, how much you are bringing to the table, in terms of your own personal experience. Having those folks around you, I really don't think there's a substitute for that, because those are the people who, especially after you know them for a while, they will jump into your defense, whether you are in the room or outside of the room. They're the ones who are leaping up and saying something when you're not around, to the people who are being rude and unprofessional and everything else. Those are the folks who you really want to look at and find and surround yourself with. As far as in the moment and everything else, it sounds like just based on this question, it's ridiculous. It is ridiculous. You know your worth. I think impostor syndrome and everything else, it's something that there are programs out there, there are resources out there to kind of help you establish your own personal confidence and really embrace your own self-worth and embrace your own confidence in the moment. But really having those allies who you can always look to and just kind of... Even just being able to roll your eyes together is helpful.
- Alison Monahan: Always a fan of the raised eyebrow, like, "Seriously? Did you really just say that to me?"
- Alexis Yee-Garcia: Right, right.
- Alison Monahan: Like, "Really?"
- Alexis Yee-Garcia: And even better if you've got someone right there who can be like, "Come on."
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, "Look, like no. No, just no. Next."
- Alexis Yee-Garcia: Exactly.
- Alison Monahan: Alright, our next question: I just finished my summer associate experience and I was subject to a fair number of microaggressions and some generally kind of unsupportive behavior from some attorneys I worked with. But other people were great. Is this a sign I should look elsewhere, or are there other steps I can take to figure out if I need to talk to someone before I accept my offer? Or what can I do as an associate if I do go back, to make this better?
- Alexis Yee-Garcia: Yeah, this is a really good question too. I think, as with any organization, an organization is a group of people, and each individual may bring something different to the table, and sometimes that is good, and sometimes that is not so good. And so, it's hard to say, were these folks who were unsupportive, are they representative of the group or are they outliers? And vice versa, for the folks who were more supportive. I think, sad but true, there is a fair degree of



turnover from when you're a summer associate to when you ultimately join a firm as an associate. And so, if you feel really comfortable with the general vibe of the place and you feel like you are supported, I don't think it's necessarily a reason to just throw everything out wholesale. It is an opportunity, as the question states, to come back and say, "Okay, well, I think this should be better. What can I do to make it better?" And I think that's one of the things in the DEI profession that we actually see a lot of, is that the junior talent as they come through, at the end of the day, their standards are higher. And so, they are really out there asking for more and not being afraid to ask for more, talking to partners about what they see as problematic behavior or places where the firm can be doing a better job to support their diverse talent. I think that most firms have some kind of training in place for unconscious bias or other sort of provisions to deal with bias and microaggressions and things as they come up, both in the workplace and in, for example, recruiting, or in the review process or what have you. But I think the day-to-day stuff is, in many ways, a little bit harder. When you're going into a meeting and you feel like you're the subject of microaggressions, that is not something that I think people are really great at training on, in part because I think it is a little bit of just personal dynamics and kind of figuring out, "Okay, well, what is this person doing that is a microaggression?" At the end of the day, most of the time, you can talk to your peer associates and say, "Oh yeah, we know. That's the guy who when you go into a meeting, X, Y, Z thing happens and it makes everyone really uncomfortable." And it's like, "Yes, what is that thing? What is happening that is making everyone have that sort of reaction?"

And so I think, again, developing those allies and kind of figuring out who those people are, who you can confide in and get that support – that's really something that you can do to make it better, as you say in the question. I think you've got an offer, talking to folks at the firm before accepting, 100%. Just like in the OCI context, it's an opportunity to really ask those questions and keep trying to figure out, "What is the firm doing? Have they identified any places where there are problems like this, and if so, how did they respond? What are they planning to do in the future to deal with additional trainings? Do they have unconscious bias training in place, and is it mandatory, is it optional? Who do they send to those trainings, who gives the training? All of those things are places where the firm is trying to respond, or potentially not. And so, it's an opportunity to kind of get those questions answered before you say, "Yes, I'm definitely in."

Alison Monahan: Yes, "I'm signing up for 40 hours of my life every week in this place."

Alexis Yee-Garcia: Exactly, exactly. The other thing to consider is, it's not permanent. I know it feels permanent, but it's not. People change firms all the time.



- Alison Monahan: I summered three different places, and I didn't work at any of those places permanently.
- Alexis Yee-Garcia: There you go. And people start as a first year associate and leave before the year is even over. That happens all the time. I know it can feel like you're signing your soul away forever and ever, amen, but that is definitely not the case.
- Alison Monahan: But that being said, I think it's worth trying to find something that might be a good fit, so you're not leaving for reasons that don't have to do with things like, you hate the work or you hate your course.
- Alexis Yee-Garcia: For sure, for sure.
- Alison Monahan: Alright, we're running short on time, and one more specific scenario for you: I'm working on my resume for BigLaw jobs, and I'm wondering about including clubs or other activities that highlight different aspects of my diverse background. Do you think this is a good or a bad idea? And then what about maybe for clerkships, for judges who might have different political leanings?
- Alexis Yee-Garcia: Good question. I'm not comfortable talking about clerkships, because I did not clerk and I don't know enough about clerkships to say whether it redounds to your benefit or not. In the law firm context, however, as I said previously, these are all sort of business networking opportunities. That is certainly how they're viewed in the legal context. When I look at, for example, a lateral associate resume, that's how I view them. I say, "Oh, this person is a leader with the Vietnamese Bar Association of Northern California. That's amazing. They're going to bring all of these additional connections. They already know what it's like to lead an organization. They've been endorsed by their peers as someone who is influential and a hard worker and knows how to do good work." Those are all things that I think are benefits to your application. It actually does not really matter whether it's with one particular organization or another, with regard to your diverse background or not. I think it is obviously a way of signaling, "Hey, I hope to be involved with these things in the future." And again, I view that as a benefit. It's a way for you to have another angle to network with other people once you get into the law firm.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think students sometimes underestimate business development and that can sound really scary, but when you think of it as just the people you know, the people you connect with, the people you have commonalities with, and I think your point about someone who has a different set of networks is actually very valuable to a firm, because they're like, "We have no idea. We don't speak Vietnamese. We don't know."
- Alexis Yee-Garcia: Exactly, exactly.



- Alison Monahan: We don't know any of these people, but some of them are probably running companies or starting companies. Awesome, they're potential clients.
- Alexis Yee-Garcia: Right, yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Alright, well, before we wrap up, do you have any suggestions for people who might actually want to get into this field themselves?
- Alexis Yee-Garcia: Yeah. It kind of goes back to the business networking stuff, where all of the connections that you make are potentially valuable connections. And the more you learn about the industry, not just the legal industry, but the DEI industry, the better. And so, there are a million organizations out there where you can get a certificate in diversity, equity, and inclusion, for example. But not just that, I would say, just kind of going to those – and this is where you can also satisfy your CLE requirements – going to those presentations where you can learn about diversity in the legal industry. That's an opportunity to kind of hear from the experts about what the latest developments are, what the best practices are. There is an entire organization of law firm diversity professionals, and so there are connections that you can make there, there are connections that you can make through other organizations in the legal industry that deal with diversity and inclusion. The ABA, your local bar association, they probably have a diversity section. Learning who those people are and what they do is a really good way to figure out more about what it would be like to do this kind of work. I think being in a law firm and participating in your law firm's diversity efforts is also a really good way to learn about what it would be like to get into this field yourself. Befriend your local diversity manager, befriend your local diversity director. We are happy, like everyone, to talk about ourselves and to talk about what it's like to work in this kind of field, and so we'd be happy to kind of give you some personal advice about what your own experience has been and how you can maximize those experiences or find something else where it's going to give you an additional leg to get in.
- Alison Monahan: Mm-hmm. Alexis, thank you so much for joining us. Any final thoughts you want to share?
- Alexis Yee-Garcia: No. This was lovely. Really good questions.
- Alison Monahan: We really got everything. Alright. Well, with that, we are out of time. Like I said, thank you so much for joining us.
- Alexis Yee-Garcia: It was my pleasure.
- Alison Monahan: Definitely. If you've enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review and rating on your favorite listening app. We would really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss



anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to Lee or Alison at lee@lawschooltoolbox.com or alison@lawschooltoolbox.com. Or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at LawSchoolToolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!

RESOURCES:

[CareerDicta](#)

[Law360 Diversity Snapshot](#)

[The American Lawyer](#)

[Podcast Episode 258: Law Clerks for Diversity \(w/Guest Danielle Barondess\)](#)