Kenya Woodruff Talks Embracing Diversity With *D Magazine*

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Health Care partner and Katten's Women's Leadership Forum head, Kenya Woodruff, recently spoke with *D Magazine* on the importance of diversity and inclusion efforts, building allyship and working together through differences. Regarding diversity programing, Kenya stated, "I think all of that is absolutely necessary, but we also have to ensure that there are practical, day-to-day opportunities afforded to diverse individuals. I always want people to be careful not to tilt their diversity efforts too much to the speeches and listening to this person and listening to that person, but to be sure that we are ensuring actual opportunities, and that once people are in those opportunities, they're supported." Kenya stresses the importance of not being discouraged and to recognize that progress has been and continues to be made. "There have been challenges, but I think those are the reality checks that we need to keep us driven towards moving toward a more equitable space and equitable opportunity."

She notes that the events of 2020 have created the opportunity for both conversations and sharing perspectives across difference. "My perspective is informed by a history that's different from many of my counterparts, and [there is] discussion that happens, because I'm not afraid of that difference. I think that we as diverse professionals sometimes are reticent to show our difference, or we are reticent to say 'My history may not be like everybody else's in the world.' But [it's important] to embrace that and be able to say, 'No, my experience was different, and this is where I'm coming from because of that.' To be able to communicate that in a way in which people hear you, and you can have that open dialogue is crucial."

Kenya views community support and open communication as critical to helping diverse professionals be successful in their careers. "I understand that there will be challenges that a women of color will face in the legal industry. So, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that we can identify allies, and sometimes those allies are not the people who we think they're going to be. Letting yourself be open to connection and communication with those individuals [is important] because what I have found in the Dallas market is that there are people who are diverse and non-diverse who are so willing to work together to overcome the historic and current issues that we have around race and gender. And that

has been the most inspiring thing for me—that there is continued opportunity." ("Kenya Woodruff on Leaning In to Conversations About Difference," August 6, 2021)

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