

# MultiCultural Law

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for Diversity  
in the Legal  
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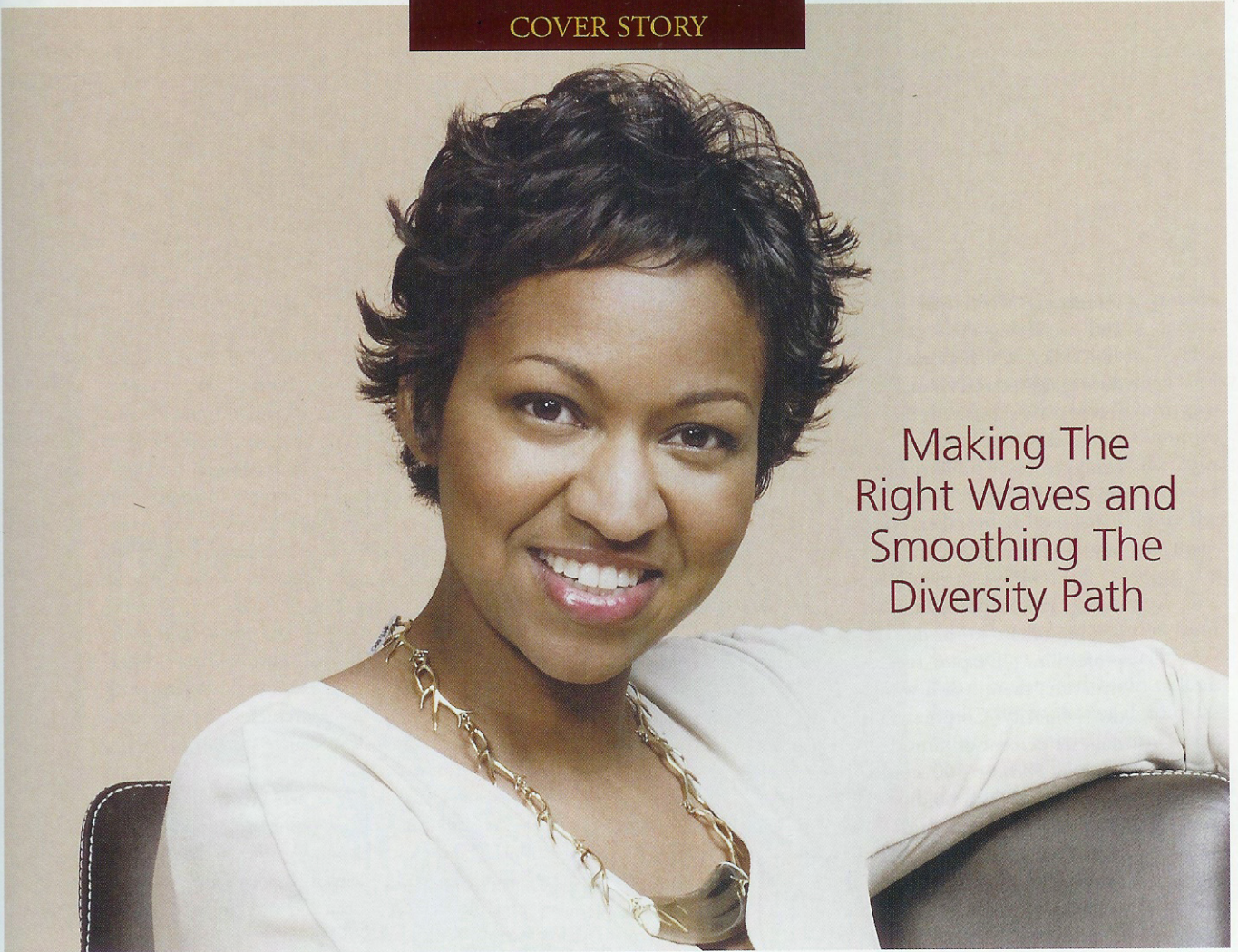
## Laurie Nicole Robinson

CBS Corporation  
Lawyer & CEO of  
Corporate Counsel  
Women of Color

2008  
**TOP 100**  
**LAW FIRMS**  
**FOR DIVERSITY**

2008 EDITION \$3.95





Making The  
Right Waves and  
Smoothing The  
Diversity Path

# LAURIE ROBINSON

## and the Corporate Counsel Women of Color™

BY META J. MEREDAY, *Senior Writer*

**W**hen the subject is diversity and inclusion in the legal profession, Laurie N. Robinson brings a great deal of wisdom and insight to the discussion. As Vice President and Assistant General Counsel at CBS Corporation, Laurie Robinson has worked hard to forge her own career path and to “level” the legal field for others. “Diversity means inclusion of workers to the highest levels in the workplace without roadblocks, prejudices, stereotypes, or glass ceilings limiting their acquisitions. Based on ability, talent, and creativity, a diverse worker should be recruited, retained, trained, and promoted just as any other qualified worker,” states Ms. Robinson, who was the Assistant General Counsel and Director of Training for CBS Broadcasting before this current, newly created position with the parent company, where she reports directly to the Executive Vice President and General Counsel of CBS Corporation. Along with her legal responsibilities to over 150 CBS radio and television stations, she assumes executive and managerial responsibilities in

interfacing with legal divisions, facilitating training, and overseeing the legal department's special projects. "Diversity, which promotes equal opportunities without regard to race, color, national origin, and other protected class statuses, is the right thing to do and should be at the forefront for this profession. Lawyers are equipped to be leaders; therefore, it is past time for the legal profession to lead the way in diversity efforts of increasing the numbers of women and minority attorneys hired, retained, and promoted."

Even with a thriving career, Ms. Robinson understands the importance of building foundations and helping others to "bridge the gap" to embrace the legal profession. Despite some changes in the corporate structure, there is still work to be done. "According to the Minority Corporate Counsel Association, fewer than six percent of minorities are at the general counsel level in *Fortune* 500 corporations. As the profession mandated with upholding the laws and assuring rights of constituents, the legal profession should carry the banner of what is right in the world. Lawyers are the ones to influence law and have the power to create and execute it," notes Ms. Robinson. "There are many law firms and corporations that are heads and shoulders above the rest. These companies have made diversity top-of-mind with diversity programs, initiatives, and performance efforts that really work. Many corporations make it a rule to give business to those law firms that make serious efforts to promote diversity among the staff, not only at the entry levels, but also at the decision-making levels."

Utilizing her extensive skills and far reaching contacts, Ms. Robinson decided to put her own organization in place to provide a resource base and support network for women of color in the legal profession. This allowed her to "walk the talk" in her own right. In 2004, Ms. Robinson formed Corporate Counsel Women of Color™ (CCWC) as a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit organization of women attorneys of color who

work primarily for *Fortune* 1000 companies and *Forbes* 2000 companies. The programming format for CCWC® is informative, interactive, and empowering, providing access and information within the profession and among the women of color attorneys often left out of the loop. "Women of color face unique challenges, particularly with respect to the glass ceiling, other institutional barriers, and minimized opportunities to form networks with those of similar interests and backgrounds. The organization seeks to remedy these problems by investing in its members and advocating for diversity," adds Ms. Robinson. "CCWC® unites in-house women attorneys of color nationwide and globally and provides them with substantive career development and advancement programs, mentoring opportunities, communication vehicles for information access, and placement assistance for our members in executive positions."

Within three years, CCWC® has grown to a robust roster of over 2,000 in-house women attorneys of color in the United States and abroad. "At the CCWC® annual career strategies conferences, it is easy to recognize the positive changes that have occurred and are occurring in the profession. Seeing so many diverse executive leaders provides assurance that women of color are beyond just simply making it in the profession; they are extraordinary and highly successful. These women call the shots on their jobs, are key decision-makers, supervise the work of outside counsel, and have the power to give business. We are all inspired because we now know that we are not alone." This year, CCWC® will host an International Career Strategies Symposium in London, England at the Four Seasons in June, and its Fourth Annual Conference in Beverly Hills at the Beverly Hilton in October.

Ms. Robinson has received many awards and recognitions for her trailblazing work in the area of diversity within the legal profession and in her community. Her efforts within CBS and as a founder of CCWC® have



“We are all inspired because we know we are not alone.”

established her as a proven advocate for change and a “diversity champion.” Her advice to aspiring women and minority attorneys, “Don’t give up. Think about the minorities and women lawyers of the 20th century who came before us and opened many doors despite the obstacles they faced. Use them as examples. Be excellent, be resilient, and persevere.” She draws her own motivation from her mother whose model of self-actualization and multi-tasking built the professional foundation that she currently uses. “My mother is my inspiration,” comments Ms. Robinson. “She was busily productive and always striving to attain more out of life. I realize now she was not driven by materialism, but by actualization and fulfillment. She started her career as an English teacher in Washington, D.C., worked hard, developed multiple talents, later went back to school to obtain her Master’s degree from Howard University, and retired as a principal.” Ms. Robinson is also driven by that fulfillment model. Incorporating her career and her proactive work with the Corporate Counsel Women of Color™, she is clearly geared towards fulfilling the goal of smoothing the path for a more diverse and inclusive legal profession. □