

# Laurie N. Robinson receives 2009 Diversity Trailblazer Award

Fast-rising attorney committed to diversity and advancement of women attorneys of color



**Laurie N. Robinson**

**By Brandon J. Vogel**

All it took was a single idea, but Laurie Robinson of New York (CBS Corporation) has made a difference in the lives of thousands of women of color.

Robinson is the founder and CEO of Corporate Counsel Women of Color®, an organization for “in-house” women attorneys of color to promote their advancement and all aspects of global diversity in the legal profession and workplace. Within four years, the organization’s membership has skyrocketed from 10 members to 2,300 members.

The Committee on Minorities in the Profession honored Robinson last night with the prestigious Diversity Trailblazer Award. The award honors individuals who demonstrate a strong commitment to helping enhance diversity in the legal profession. President Bernice K. Leber and Lillian M. Moy of Albany (Executive Director, Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, Inc.), chair of the Committee on Minorities in the Profession, presented Robinson with the award at the Celebrating Diversity in the Bar reception.

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## 2009 Diversity Trailblazer expanded personal

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### **Outstanding contributions**

“At a time when fewer minorities are entering the legal profession, I congratulate Laurie Robinson for providing female attorneys of color with the resources and mentoring to stay in the profession and make their mark. Her ingenuity and efforts have made a profound difference in the lives of thousands of women attorneys of color,” said Moy. “It is a privilege to honor Laurie for her outstanding contributions to the advancement of minorities in the legal profession.”

“Receiving this award means so much to me, especially at the time in our history where this country has elected the first African-American to the highest office in the land. It signals that America is open to giving talented people with diverse backgrounds a chance and opportunity. I am optimistic that corporate America and the legal profession will eventually mirror the outcome of the historical 2008 election,” said Robinson.

### **Up-and-coming**

Robinson recently was promoted to vice president and assistant general

counsel of CBS Corporation, where she reports directly to the Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Louis J. Briskman, and represents more than 150 radio and television stations in labor and employment matters.

She graduated from North Carolina Central University, *magna cum laude*, and earned her law degree from Indiana University School of Law—Bloomington. She initially planned on practicing environmental law, but discovered that labor and employment law was her passion. Upon graduation, she practiced at Epstein Becker & Green, P.C. and Seyfarth Shaw LLP in New York before joining CBS Corporation.

Widely recognized for her legal expertise and commitment to diversity, Robinson was chosen as one of the “10 Up-And-Coming African-American Lawyers to Watch” by Diversity & the Bar Magazine and as a “Power Broker” by Inside Counsel in its list of the most influential in-house counsel in North America. She is a past recipient of the New York City Bar’s Diversity Champion Award, and was selected as one of “40 Under Forty” by the

# observations into a global organization

Network Journal – Black Professionals and Small Business Magazine.

## Corporate Counsel begins

“Corporate Counsel Women of Color® came about as a result of my observation that diverse lawyers were scattered throughout New York City and, hence, hard to find in aggregate. To remedy the situation, I compiled and self-published a directory that had people’s contact names in it so that diverse people could reach out to other people with similar backgrounds. It started out with about 10 people or so in 2004. It grew in leaps and bounds,” said Robinson. “Now in 2008, the organization has over 2,300 women attorneys of color around the globe who primarily work for Fortune 1000 and Forbes 2000 legal departments.”

In keeping with its global diversity, Corporate Counsel Women of Color® will travel across the water to Africa, where it will host its Third International Career Strategies Symposium in May. The organization will visit schools in Johannesburg, South Africa to encourage young stu-

dents to become lawyers. It also will donate needed supplies to the schools such as dictionaries, books, rulers, pencils and other needed items.

## Advice to attorneys

By taking what she has learned in her years as an attorney and CEO, Robinson is invested in shaping the next generation of attorneys. “The best career advice that I received is ‘add value.’ Understand that you do not add value by doing the job that the company pays you to do. You add value by doing what is not in your job description. Sometimes it is the very small things that are not already being done that fill a void,” said Robinson.

“Keep developing your skills and keep developing you. Being able to offer multifunctional skill sets will provide significant benefits to your company and to your community.” ♦

*Vogel is NYSBA’s Media Writer.*

## 2009 Diversity Trailblazer expanded personal observations into a global organization

*Continued from page 1*

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