

ACCEPTANCE REMARKS

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*By The Honorable Gabrielle Kirk McDonald**

I remember attending a Women in International Law Interest Group (WILIG) luncheon many years ago when we all fit in the small breakfast room at the Fairmont Hotel in Washington, D.C. Now, WILIG luncheons at the ASIL Annual Meeting are sold out! If you do not buy your ticket early, you are out of luck! I believe this popularity is due not only to the increase in the number and influence of women in international law, but also is a show of appreciation for the role of WILIG in this growth.

Yet this is often not the experience for women of color lawyers. The recent ABA Commission on Women in the Profession report, entitled “Left Out and Left Behind: The Hurdles, Hassles, and Heartaches of Achieving Long-Term Legal Careers for Women of Color,” finds that they feel undervalued and “as though they are left standing on the outside looking in.” They point to obstacles such as the persistent inequality in the distribution of and access to the resources and opportunities that are essential to a lawyer’s success. These include prime work assignments, effective and influential mentors, and information about a firm’s inner workings often gleaned through networking. So it should not be startling that 70 percent of women of color report leaving or considering leaving the legal profession.

Diversity and inclusion of women of color in the legal profession requires that recognition be given to the intersectionality of women of color; that is, the overlapping and intersecting of race and gender, and its consequences. WILIG has done just that in partnering with the ASIL Minorities in International Law Interest Group on a mentoring event that gives attention to the merged identities of women lawyers of color. Plans for joint panels with the Blacks of the American Society of International Law on the subject of women of color lawyers is a further indication of this commendable direction.

This recognition reflects the words of the renowned Black feminist Audre Lorde in her essay, “An Open Letter to Mary Daly”: “The oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial boundaries.”

I am honored to be recognized by the Women in International Law Interest Group, and humbly accept its Prominent Women in International Law 2021 Award.

* 2021 Prominent Woman in International Law Recipient.