

American Bar Association's Diversity Day- #MeToo: Confronting Sexual Harassment in Our Professional Lives

Hofstra Law American Bar Association Student Representative: Danielle Leavy

Summary: On March 5, 2018, Hofstra Law Women along with several other Hofstra Law Student groups held #MeToo: Confronting Sexual Harassment in Our Professional Lives for the American Bar Association's Diversity Day. This panel was to discuss the cultural phenomenon of the #metoo movement and its heated conversation about social norms and gender dynamics. As employers react to accusations and move towards policy changes, lawyers are playing a large role in improving workplace environments. The panel offered perspectives from various backgrounds on issues such as what to do if you witness sexual harassment, how to advocate for policy changes, and what sort of legal ramifications the movement has had and will continue to have. The panelists included Gail Auster, Esq. Law Offices of Gail I. Auster and Associates, P.C.; Andrea M. Brodie '09 Partner, Abrams, Fensterman, Fensterman, Eisman, Formato, Ferrara, Wolf & Carone, LLP; Vanessa German Senior Director of Human Resources & Employment Counsel, Pepsi Co.; and Pepe-Souvenir University Title IX Director, City University. Susan Joffe '89, Professor of Legal Writing, Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University served as the moderator. Approximately 58 students attended, and 6 faculty members (these numbers do not include panelists.). This event was sponsored by the American Bar Association, Office of Student Affairs, Monroe H. Freedman Institute for the Study of Legal Ethics, Student Bar Association, Hofstra Law Women and APALSA, BLSA, LALSA, OUTLaw and SALSAs (several of our diversity groups on campus).

Snapshots of Questions/answers:

- Define sexual harassment. Some conversations, comments, gestures, etc. may be offensive but may not actually constitute sexual harassment. Some sexual harassment can be subtle or confusing. What are certain factors an individual can use to figure out if they have been/are being sexually harassed?
 - *Pepe Souvenir stressed that sexual harassment is anything that is "unwelcomed", and that the definition is usually broader at the state level than it is at the National level.*
- So I think what I have experienced is sexual harassment, who should I speak to and what steps do I need to take to help myself?
 - *Multiple panelists stressed the importance of documenting everything in diaries and saving all documentation. This will help credibility. They mentioned retaliation claims are on the rise, and are often more successful than discrimination claims.*
- It is imperative that the conversation around this movement remains inclusive of different genders, sexual orientations, cultures, backgrounds, etc. In your work, how do you ensure that diversity is recognized and all voices are heard? Are there any misconceptions you had about sexual harassment or gender dynamics that has changed since working in your field? If you could ensure that every student walk away from this event with one idea, what would that be?

- *Andrea Brodie stressed the importance of viewing yourself as a brand. You want to protect yourself and your brand, and be aware of your actions in work and outside of work (on social media) at all times.*
- *Others highlighted that sexual harassment is not unique to one subset of society. We must be sure listen to all parties, and make sure all employees are aware of company policies and procedures.*

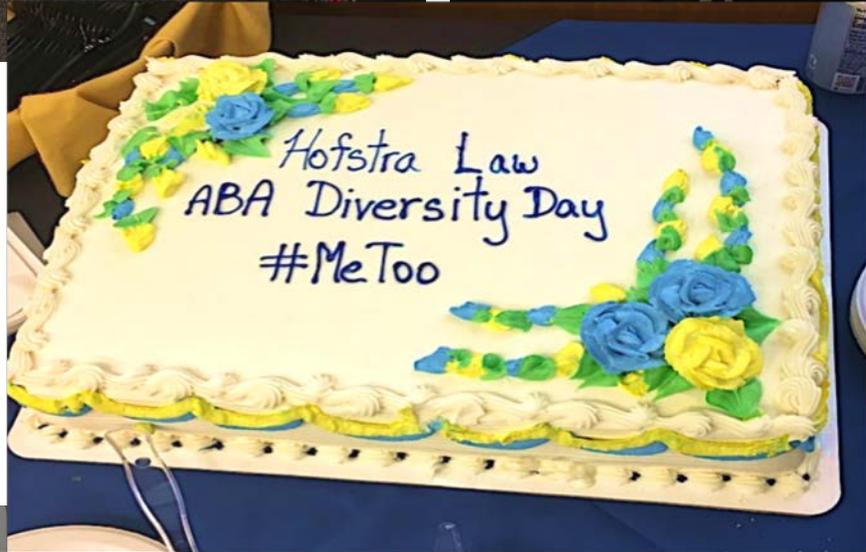
Analysis: The event ran very smoothly and was well attended. The panelists created a comfortable atmosphere for audience members to ask questions and share stories. Next year, I would love to include another panelist, perhaps also a male for another perspective. I think I would continue the idea of having firms, in house counsel/human resources, and school representation. This provided a nice balance and an expansive review of the current issue in various fields.

Further Details (Budget): We adjusted our original budget to reflect available funding (no new items, same expenses originally asked for). **Total expenses: \$531.86**

- Food- \$531.86 (itemized receipts attached):
 - 3 ft. American Hero- \$42.49
 - 6 ft. American Hero- \$85.15 (*requesting reimbursement for*)
 - 6 ft. Italian hero- \$85.15 (*requesting reimbursement for*)
 - 4 Kosher sandwich meals- \$60.00 (*requesting reimbursement for*)
 - 4 Vegetarian sandwich meals- \$60.00 (*requesting reimbursement for*)
 - Potato Salad- \$21.50
 - Sheet Cake (with “Hofstra Law ABA Diversity Day” in writing”)- \$65.27
 - Cold beverage station- \$112.20 (*requesting partial reimbursement for*)
- Room: free of charge
- Flyers: printed from student printer credit/faculty printers (no additional charge)
- No revenue made
- Financial support by:
 - American Bar Association- \$300
 - Monroe H. Freedman Institute for the Study of Legal Ethics - \$100
 - Hofstra Law Women -\$131.86

Reactions: “The panel was a great opportunity to explore sensitive topics, which are extremely timely. I am proud of Hofstra for highlighting these issues and allowing a forum for our voices to be heard. I appreciate the honesty of the panelists who shared their difficult experiences. I walked away with more confidence in my ability to handle a situation, should it arise.” Female, 2L

“I thought it was very informative and topical with a great focus on what we can do to address issues in our workplaces going forward. I was surprised at the diverse audience and happy I chose to attend.” Male, 3L





Sponsored by American Bar Association, Office of Student Affairs, Monroe H. Freedman Institute for the Study of Legal Ethics, Student Bar Association, Hofstra Law Women and APALSA, BLSA, LALSA, OUTLaw and SALSA

American Bar Association's Diversity Day

#MeToo: Confronting Sexual Harassment in Our Professional Lives

Monday, March 5, 2018 | 12:10 -1 p.m. | Room 303

The cultural phenomenon of the #metoo movement has spurred a heated conversation about social norms and gender dynamics. As employers react to accusations and move towards policy changes, lawyers are playing a large role in improving workplace environments.

This panel will offer perspectives from various backgrounds on issues such as what to do if you witness sexual harassment, how to advocate for policy changes, and what sort of legal ramifications the movement has had and will continue to have.

MODERATOR:

Professor Susan Joffe '89,
*Professor of Legal Writing,
Maurice A. Deane
School of Law at
Hofstra University*

PANELISTS:

Gail Auster, Esq.
*Law Offices of Gail I. Auster
and Associates, P.C*

Andrea M. Brodie '09

*Partner, Abrams, Fensterman,
Fensterman, Eisman, Formato,
Ferrara, Wolf & Carone, LLP*

Vanessa German

*Senior Director of Human
Resources & Employment
Counsel, Pepsi Co*

Ms. Pepe-Souvenir

*University Title IX Director,
City University of New York
(CUNY)*