

DAILY REPORT

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Kilpatrick Townsend Hires Chief Diversity Officer

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KILPATRICK TOWNSEND & Stockton regularly is recognized as an employer that values diversity, but the firm is making its efforts more formal, bringing in a former partner to be its chief diversity and inclusion officer.

Yendelela Neely Holston is rejoining the firm after a three-year stint at AT&T, where she was an assistant vice president and senior legal counsel.

“It was a no-brainer” to take the diversity job, which she will split with a labor and employment practice, Holston said.

As an associate and a partner at the firm from 2006 to 2015, Holston worked on a host of employment cases, counseled clients on diversity issues and volunteered with community programs focused on diversity, access to justice and mentorship, among other topics.

Holston, who started last week, said she aims to make sure the firm “feels inclusive” in areas such as recruiting, promotion and retention and development. She has not yet determined any metrics to mark success among these goals, which she acknowledged can be intangible.



Yendelela Neely Holston, Kilpatrick Townsend

Henry Walker, who chairs Kilpatrick Townsend, said the firm “wanted a point

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—Yendelela Neely Holston

person” to head its diversity efforts. Holston, a partner, will work with the firm’s existing diversity and inclusion council and report directly to the management committee, Walker said.


Many firms have started to designate lawyers as chief diversity officers around the country.

At AT&T, a Kilpatrick client, Holston managed outside counsel in employment cases and worked to increase diversity in the legal department. She said she hopes to use some of those ideas at Kilpatrick, such as focusing on the diversity of suppliers.

The Daily Report named Holston to its 2014 “Rising Star” class and reported this story about how she decided to become a lawyer.

In her sophomore year at Furman University, she stopped in a seafood restaurant three hours before closing. However, the restaurant owner said they were closed, asked her to leave and called the police.

“I couldn’t believe it was happening; it was 2001,” she said. Even though she was “humiliated and embarrassed,” she didn’t get mad. “I remember thinking that I didn’t know a lot, but I knew this was illegal, and I was going to go to law school.”

Holston graduated from Duke University School of Law. 



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