



NEW JERSEY
LAW JOURNAL

DIVERSE ATTORNEYS
OF THE YEAR

2017

Hill Wallack LLP
congratulates our partner,
Supti Bhattacharya, on
being chosen by New Jersey
Law Journal as a 2017
Diverse Attorney of the Year.
We celebrate her leadership,
achievements, and dedication
to the important work of
expanding diversity in our profession.



Hill Wallack aims to reflect the communities that it represents. Our firm's Diversity Initiative is an essential platform upon which that purpose is pursued and achieved. We understand that diversity fundamentally alters the client experience, and that broad awareness achieves the best results. Through both practice and policy, we encourage the respect and inclusion of distinct experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds in our firm and our services. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion extends beyond our walls. As a local and regional community partner, we work with organizations with similar goals to facilitate education and acceptance of our individual differences and to strengthen our common bonds.

Founded in 1978, Hill Wallack LLP is a leading law firm with offices in Princeton and Cedar Knolls, New Jersey and Yardley, Pennsylvania. Our regional strength places us in an ideal position in today's rapidly changing global marketplace.

With over 70 attorneys, our mid-market size allows us to provide sophisticated, high-level service to clients in a cost-efficient, responsive, and individualized manner.

**Hill
Wallack** LLP
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SUPTI BHATTACHARYA

A partner at Hill Wallack as of 2016, Supti Bhattacharya is one of the firm's youngest partners and chairs the divorce and family law department in the Princeton office. She helped form the firm's Diversity & Inclusion Committee, which she co-chairs, and is heavily involved in its women's initiative. Bhattacharya also is active with the New Jersey State Bar Association, including as co-chair of the organization's Diversity Committee, and as a CLE lecturer.



Why is diversity particularly important in the legal profession? Lawyers are service-based professionals. Our sole product is communication in its various forms. We talk and write for a living. How we communicate makes the services we each provide unique. Diversity in the way we communicate helps expand the reach of the legal profession to individuals who otherwise may have been isolated due to cultural, ethnic, religious, language or other barriers. People also often seek services from those with similar backgrounds to match their own world experience. Diverse backgrounds also bring different life experiences and thought processes to the table, which expands how a team can tackle client issues. Be it individual or corporate legal services, diversity helps clients to achieve a better result.

Are law firms and other organizations employing lawyers doing enough to foster diversity? What could they be doing better? While law firms and organizations employing lawyers recognize the need to foster diversity, many simply do not know how to diversify because they lack experience in this area. Unconscious bias can undermine diversity and inclusion efforts as well. Education about unconscious bias and active efforts to address and tackle it in the workplace is important. In addition, appointing diverse attorneys to recruitment and hiring committees, to lead departments, to firm management, and to other firm and company leadership roles shows visibly a firm or company's commitment to diversity and inclusion. Actions speak louder than words.

What unique challenges do diverse attorneys face—on their teams, in the courtroom, in the conference room, and beyond?

Diverse attorneys are often the sole minority within a law firm. We encounter assumptions and preconceived notions about who we are based on our physical appearance, which isolates us and highlights our differences, rather than naturally integrating us as professional colleagues. To be included, we often must make extra efforts to extend ourselves socially in order to break past unconscious biases that create barriers. Non-diverse attorneys do not have this experience of being "the other," and by default are included on a daily basis.

Name a mentor, or someone you admire, and why. My mother is one of my greatest inspirations and my first mentor. She raised me to value education, to be independent, and to treat people with honesty and respect above all else. As an immigrant from a conservative, non-Judeo Christian culture, my mother experienced and overcame racism and sexism while living in both Europe and the United States after she left India in the 1960s. I live and work as I do today because of diverse immigrants like my mother who came before me, and I appreciate their efforts every day.

What is the best advice you ever got? Or, what is your best advice for someone looking to make an impact in the legal profession? Find what makes you unique and use that trait, skill, knowledge, or ability to create a career that makes you different than your colleagues. Therein lies your value and indispensability to your clients and law firm.

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