



## Introduction

Welcome to our first Global D & I newsletter. The Global D & I Committee and 7 local D & I Committees (with representation from all 10 offices) were established in 2019/20. Across our 10 offices, we have almost 70 D & I Committee volunteers committed to progressing our diversity and inclusion agenda.

Our initial areas of focus are on gender, ethnicity and LGBTQ+ and we also report on initiatives to reduce the impact of socio-economic divides and to promote understanding of neuro-diversity. Check out our [Meet the Committees](#) intranet page to identify and connect with a member of your local D & I Committee. New volunteers are always welcome.

## What do we mean by "D&I"?

'Diversity', 'inclusion', 'equality' and 'belonging' are terms which have become increasingly common. What do they actually mean?

In principle, it's about keeping partners, staff and clients happy and engaged. In practice of course, it is complex, challenging and multifaceted.

### Diversity

Diversity focusses on respecting and celebrating the myriad differences which make people (and life) rich and interesting. It is tempting to think of diversity as being about the 'minorities' in any society. But diversity is about each and every one of us, and the things we hold in common and value as much as the things we do differently.

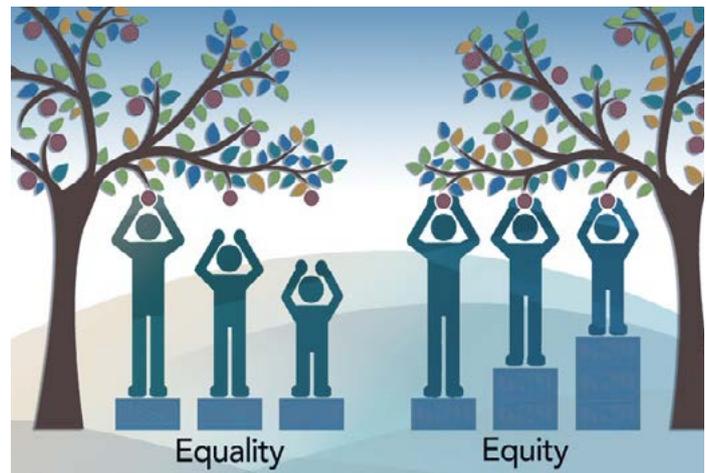
### Inclusion and belonging

It's no good having a diverse mix of people if they don't feel comfortable and respected in their place of work (or society more broadly). Inclusion is about ensuring people feel safe, respected, valued and have a sense of belonging.

## Equality and equity

Treating people equally sounds very admirable in theory – but of course if there are inequalities or barriers in front of people, treating them equally doesn't necessarily mean treating them fairly or equitably – see the illustration below. Making reasonable adjustments or providing tailored supports can deliver equity rather than equality. In other words, making adjustments which place people on a 'level playing field', so that all are able to achieve their maximum potential meaning the business also benefits. For example:

- » A child from a challenging background who has achieved modest grades may well have worked harder and achieved more than a child from a privileged background with excellent grades. An assessment which takes these contextual issues into account is fairer to both students and provides the business with access to a wider pool of talent (compared with a traditional assessment considering grades only); or
- » If one parent is doing all of the childcare, then in the short term they need flexibility to accommodate work commitments; but in the longer term, the organization is much more likely to retain a valuable asset, the value of which outweighs any potential short term 'inconvenience'.



## The diversity 'value add'

A wealth of evidence from around the globe and across different industry sectors demonstrates that diverse organisations are more innovative and creative, delivering better outcomes for their staff and for clients. People who feel included are more engaged and happy – and engaged employees work harder – so an inclusive firm places itself in a "win win" situation. Why wouldn't you want to get diversity and inclusion right given the bottom line benefits? Especially when it's the right thing to do anyway.



## Early Steps

Over the last two years we have:

- » Conducted a diagnostics review, asking partners and staff questions about their view of Walkers/their team in the context of diversity and inclusion. The results were communicated directly to staff during 2021 as part of a number of Office Managing Partner led Town Halls. Whilst the results of the survey were largely positive, the candid feedback received from the in-depth interviews highlighted that more work needs to be done in relation to diversity and inclusion.
- » Run Inclusive Leadership training and Inclusive Behaviours training facilitated by external consultants Byrne.Dean. The Inclusive Leadership programme highlighted that partners and leaders are critical to driving inclusion and creating a culture of psychological safety and a sense of belonging. The Inclusive Behaviours training looked at how to create an inclusive environment that allows everyone to bring their authentic selves to work and provided a practical framework to help challenge biases and encourage everyone to speak up.
- » Introduced agile working, generous maternity and paternity leave, and the WalkersConnect and Virtual Coffee shop initiatives to provide support across levels and teams.
- » Reviewed our approach to recruitment including the use of a 'gender decoder' in job advertisements, requirements for recruitment firms to provide diverse and gender balanced shortlists, and a co-ordinated strategy to manage down the potential for bias in our internal processes.
- » Raised awareness through D&I newsletters and the Celebrations Calendar to acknowledge culturally or religiously important events.
- » Held internal and external events to mark International Women's Day, Pride and Black History Month.
- » Partnered with networks such as OUTlaw, TENI, The Association of Mixed Race Irish and joined networks including the 30% Club, 100 Women in Finance and Women in Fund Finance. Our relationship with OUTLaw and TENI included having their founder/directors join our events and talk about allyship etc.



### Gender

International Women's Day (March 8th) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. This year the IWD theme was Let's Communicate to #BreakTheBias.

Our IWD programme included:

- » A fireside chat with Walkers' Global Managing Partner, [Ingrid Pierce](#) on "How do great leaders communicate?"
- » Diversity and communication styles: A conversation with global political and marketing strategist, [Roger Fisk](#) discussing body language; and,
- » A successful virtual panel client event looking at how communication styles can unconsciously create bias and the impact of differences in gender communication in the context of mental health, including burnout, stress and discussing mental health at work.





# Ethnicity

## For Black History Month Europe we:

- » Held a quiz – the first time we have held a truly global Walkers event. Teams competed not just by getting the answers right, but in the speed of their answers.
- » Organised a Book Club to discuss Christo Brand’s book on Nelson Mandela (“Mandela: My Prisoner, My Friend”) - a good illustration of the importance and benefits of discussing uncomfortable topics which enable people to gain new perspectives.
- » Published ‘Spotlight’ interviews with Black colleagues in London, Singapore, Cayman, Hong Kong and Guernsey, exploring the 2021 BHM theme of ‘Proud to be’ through a short series of questions.
- » Hosted a virtual “Proud to be” Panel Discussion moderated by June Sarpong, a British TV presenter and Director of Creative Diversity at the BBC.

## For BHM Americas we:

- » Repeated the success of our Quiz event.
- » Discussed “Augustown” by Kei Miller in a series of local book club events.
- » Published a further series of Spotlight interviews.
- » Produced Points of Interest briefings about our Americas offices.

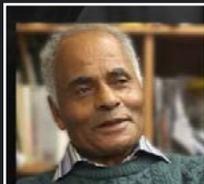
## Irish Based BHM Interviews:



Joy-Tendai Kangere & Susan Battye



Dr. Maurice J. Casey & Fiona Boland



Jude Hughes, Frank McCracken & Dragos Savacenco

## Book club



## Spotlight Interviews



Pascalle Palmer  
Guernsey



Renee Prendergast  
Singapore



Annabelle Jules  
London

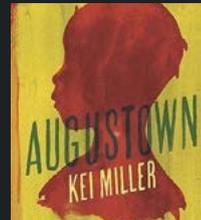


Jamila Simpson  
London



Lloyd Barker  
Cayman Islands

## Book club



Augustown  
Kei Miller

## Spotlight Interviews



Dorothy Scott  
Cayman Islands



Lesley Jefferson  
Cayman Islands



Akeem Robinson  
BVI



Michelle Woodley  
BVI



Onyema Ugorji  
Cayman Islands

# LGBTQ+

For Pride 2021 we produced a jurisdictional comparison of LGBTQ+ rights in each of Walkers jurisdictions which you can access [here](#), and six offices developed their own Pride programme from weekly newsletters and guides on being a better ally, which you can view [here](#), to rainbow themed days or sponsorship of external events.

We have produced a short guide to explain the importance of gender neutral pronouns which you can read [here](#).

## Regional focus

### Asia – Gender

In celebration of International Women’s Day, the Asia offices hosted a webinar #BreakTheBias Panel Discussion on Thursday 10 March. They were joined by the regional managing partners of Clifford Chance, A&O, Ashurst and HSF who shared their career journeys and how they’re working to break down biases within their own firms.

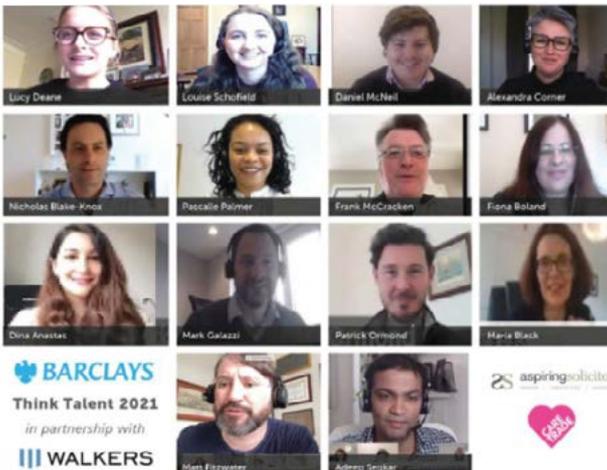
### Cayman Islands - Social Mobility

The Walkers Legal Mentorship Programme is aimed at high school students attending a government-funded school and is managed by the Cayman Trainee Committee as a key part of the firm’s strategy to attract and recruit Caymanian legal talent.

Year 10 or 11 students with an interest in law and strong academics are nominated by their school. Each student is partnered with a junior Walkers lawyer (each of whom has gone through the Walkers legal training programme) who meets them bi-weekly over the nine week programme. Mentors provide insights into areas of legal practice at Walkers, discuss issues affecting the profession and clarify the route to qualification. Support is also provided to help choose the best university for the individual, and on CV writing, interview skills, essential workplace attitudes/attributes, making a good first impression and on making the most of work experience.

### Dublin and Channel Islands – Neuro Diversity

The Dublin, Channel Islands and London offices participated in a Barclays ‘Think Talent’ program to provide opportunities for two neuro diverse graduates who were able to participate virtually in activities in each office.





## Dubai – Wellness and Cross-Cultural understanding

The Dubai office has promoted wellness through:

- » a presentation by Lifeworks, a leading Dubai-based holistic counselling centre;
- » our employee assistance programme which offers support on a wide range of issues including work/life balance, cross-cultural transition, stress, depression and anxiety; and
- » a presentation from abacus Financial Consultants LLC covering various aspects of financial planning and wills.

To promote cross-cultural understanding, integration and communication, the Dubai office will be attending an Iftar during Ramadan at the Sheikh Mohammad Centre for Cultural Understanding. Iftar is the meal at sunset with which Muslims end their daily Ramadan fast. The Centre is a non-profit organisation aiming to remove cultural barriers through education and by promoting awareness. This event will provide everyone with an opportunity to learn about the local culture, customs and religion of the UAE.

## Hong Kong and Singapore – Wellbeing

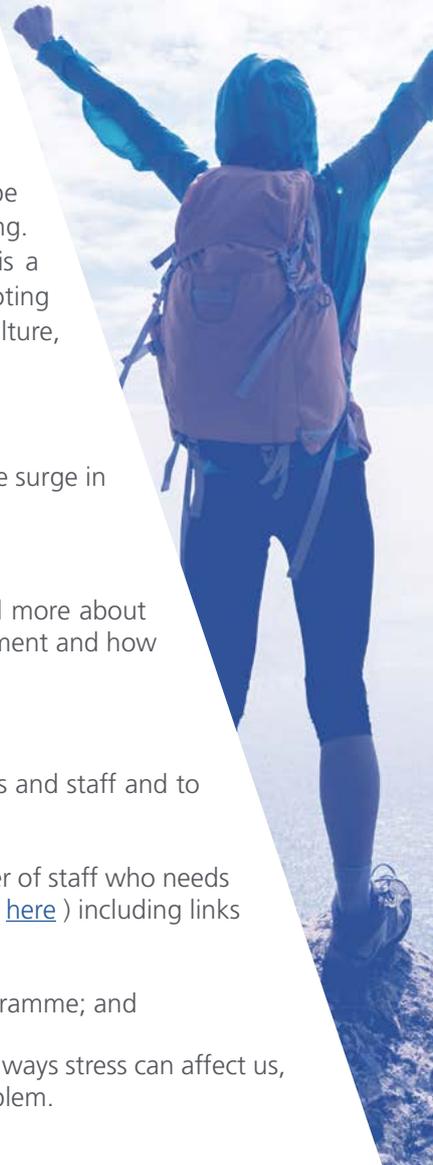
Wellness and mental health have become an increasing focus given increased anxiety due to the surge in COVID cases in Hong Kong and Singapore. In response the offices have:

- » Organised a webinar on “Staying calm during the exposure to COVID in Hong Kong”
- » Offered Mental Health Awareness sessions with the aim of helping employees understand more about mental health, how to reduce the anxiety caused by constant changes in the work environment and how to better achieve work life balance whilst working from home.

## London – Mental Health

The London office has taken the following steps to promote positive mental health for partners and staff and to support colleagues with concerns about their mental health or that of colleagues:

- » Trained 3 mental health first aiders to act as first points of contact for any partner or member of staff who needs support or information and produced a short guide to mental health (which you can access [here](#) ) including links to third party resources and self-help tips;
- » Piloted a series of webinars looking at resilience as part of the Associate Development Programme; and
- » Marked National Stress Awareness Day in November 2021, reminding colleagues about the ways stress can affect us, how to recognise the signs and what we can do to manage stress before it becomes a problem.



## And finally ...

Sarah Alonge has joined Walkers as our first HR manager focusing on Diversity and Inclusion.

We take all issues of inclusion and diversity seriously and encourage partners and staff to raise issues which they feel need to be addressed or on which education is needed, or any concerns.

If you would like to get involved with any part of our D&I programme – just say the word! Please contact any member of the D&I Committees or of course Sarah Alonge.

