



DIVERSITY INITIATIVE: DAVID FLUGMAN, PARTNER

SELENDY GAY ELSBERG

Q&A **What are your proudest accomplishments in the area of diversity and inclusion in law?**

Inside the courtroom, I'm most proud of my work on behalf of Garden State Equality defending the constitutionality of New Jersey's statewide ban on the practice of "conversion therapy" on minors. Keeping that law on the books not only prevented kids throughout New Jersey from being subjected to traumatic and sometimes deadly quack "therapies" aimed at changing their sexual orientation, but also laid a solid legal foundation that enabled nearly 20 other states and hundreds of municipalities to enact similar bans.

Within my firm, I am very proud of the diversity we have cultivated at Selendy Gay Elsberg. Half of our equity is held by female partners and we have a vibrant LGBTQ community, with more than 22% of our attorneys self-identifying as such. I am particularly proud of our Selendy Gay Elsberg Diversity Fellowship, which takes direct aim at systemic issues of advancement by historically underrepresented groups in the legal profession—especially attorneys of color and first-generation lawyers from economically disadvantaged backgrounds—by providing individualized programming and training by independent career coaches. The goal of the Fellowship is to make the leadership of law firms look more like the population of law schools, recognizing the importance that diverse perspectives bring to the successful practice of law.

What are the greatest diversity and inclusion-related challenges today for New York lawyers and firms? I think the challenges for New York attorneys and firms mirror those nationwide. One of our

most critical tasks is to ensure we are providing opportunities to a large and diverse pool of potential talent, while at the same time making sure we have structures and practices in place to support and retain that talent. This can't be accomplished without long-term support and professional development for people to unlock their potential as lawyers. That is precisely the goal that our Fellowship is designed to address and one of the core missions of our firm.



David Flugman. Courtesy photo

Who have you found to be particularly inspirational in implementing successful diversity initiatives? Robert Grey and the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD) are doing important and impactful work to improve diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. Through its Leaders at the Front campaign—in which our firm proudly participated—law firm managing partners make public pledges that detail the specific steps they will take to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in their firms and beyond. Another initiative that particularly stands out is LCLD's Pathfinder Program, which helps gifted, diverse lawyers cultivate leadership skills, build professional networks and successfully develop their careers.

Selendy Gay Elsberg is also a strong supporter of LCLD's 1L Scholars Program, developed to bolster the legal pipeline by increasing the number of opportunities available to diverse first-year law students.