GABWA hosts “Lean In” forum

Panelists discuss Sandberg’s book and issues facing women today.

By Christina Calloway

When Sheryl Sandberg, CEO of Facebook (and the first woman board member of the social media company), released her book, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* last year, it was met with great praise and much criticism. In the book, Sandberg discusses the lives and decisions of today’s working women and provides personal stories and advice on how to achieve professional and personal successes in a tough, male-dominated landscape.

The significance of such writing by Sandberg sparked a global conversation that the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys (“GABWA”) felt the need to be a pertinent part of. For GABWA’s March general body meeting on March 20, meeting co-chairs Brianna Williams and Tameka A. West invited six extraordinary panelists for a forum on leaning in (or out), with Sandberg’s book as a foundation for the discussion.

The panel was moderated by Williams and featured Patrise Perkins-Hooker, Esq., President-Elect of the State Bar of Georgia and Vice President and General Counsel of the Atlanta Beltline, Inc.; the Honorable Linda T. Walker, Esq., Magistrate Judge for the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of Georgia; Bizunesh Scott, Esq., Partner at Steptoe & Johnson and former advisor to President Barack Obama; Kat Cole, President of Cinnabon, Inc.; Christopher Allison, Director of Adolescent Education with the NBA Players Association; and Kevin Finke, Vice President of Global Brand Management for the NCR Corporation.

In introducing the panelists, Williams highlighted their many accomplishments and included personal anecdotes.

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A Special Message From President Tracee R. Benzo

“When You Walk With Purpose, You Collide with Destiny.” - Dr. Bertice Berry

This month, GABWA celebrated Women’s History Month and chose to “Lean In.” The undertones of this administration have and will continue to focus on “us” because we are stronger together. We are inclusive of all who have allegiance to our mission. We must listen to each other, learn from each other, and support one another.

I am learning to be vulnerable. Vulnerability is not a weakness; it is a sign of strength and consciousness. GABWA, we cannot do everything. I wholeheartedly believe we can have it all, we just cannot have it all at the same time. We have seasons in life.
What season are you in?
What is your purpose?
So often we dwell in the past or focus on the future without being fully present today. In the words of author Robert Collier: “Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.” GABWA, let us learn to acknowledge and cherish the small lessons presented as gifts to each of us daily. If we follow this principle, I believe we will all live happier lives.

Earlier this month, I was walking to a meeting. A lady in a Ford Explorer, with a welcoming smile, rolled down her window and tried to hand me a white envelope. I declined her offer. She then said: “Please ma’am, take this. God wants you to have it.”
I immediately thought: “Who am I to deny God?”

This middle-aged African-American woman was nicely groomed and dressed in business-casual attire. She looked as though she was headed to work, but she pleaded with me to take the white envelope. Finally, I accepted.
Inside the envelope, a note read:

“STRETCHING- I am presently being stretched! And it does not always feel good. It burns, its uncomfortable, it makes my flesh want to QUIT...but each day I am getting closer to reaching my goals! I pray that God gives you grace to push thru momentary inconveniences. That you fight a GOOD FIGHT! That you DON’T QUIT; that you SMILE in the faces of those waiting for you to pass out, and that you stretch into ALL that God has waiting for you at the finish line!!

With God’s Grace, I believe you can do this! So let Him stretch you, hang in there, and stay HUNGRY for the WIN!!

The $5 enclosed is a seed I’m sowing into you, and whomever you may share/pass it on to. May not seem like a lot, but biblically, five (5) represents “Grace” or “Unmerited (unearned) Favor!”

GABWA, I have had the opportunity to connect with many of you at the numerous March Madness Membership Mixers. I listened. I heard you.

GABWA, some of you feel stretched. We must remember that it is when we are most uncomfortable that we are on the verge of a breakthrough. Allow yourselves to be stretched so that you may reach your ultimate potential. There are no limits. There are only plateaus and we must learn to push past them!

Please allow our organization to be stretched so that we may grow. We need all of your positive energy, ideas, time, talents and gifts so that we may walk with purpose together in order to collide with our destiny.

Let us “Lean In” to each other so that we are stronger as individuals and stronger as a whole. We are as robust as the sum of our parts.

Please come and meet me in person at our April General Body Meeting on April 17th at King & Spalding.

We have a great program in store for you! I would love to get to know you better.

As a friendly reminder, please remember to pay your dues. We do not want you to miss out on all that GABWA has to offer.

Please let me know how I may be of service to you.

Stronger Together,

Tracee R. Benzo

GABWA President
benzogabwa@gmail.com
**Honorable Mentions**

Verda M. Colvin was appointed by Governor Nathan Deal to fill the Superior Court judgeship vacated by last year’s retirement of Macon Judicial Circuit Judge S. Phillip Brown. Colvin will be the first black female Superior Court judge appointed in the Macon Judicial Circuit, which spans Bibb, Crawford and Peach counties.

GABWA’s Legally Speaking (Kenya Johnson and Sonja Brown) earned Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasters’ Programmer of the Year Award. The 2014 AIB Allen Awards were held on March 25 at Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church Fellowship Hall in Atlanta.

Sheronn Harris earned third place in the ABA Business Law Section Mendes Hershman Student Writing Contest for her comment, “What is Considered a Reasonable Investigation Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act?”

Carol D. Riley satisfied the Specialty Certification requirements of the National Association of Counsel for Children and the American Bar Association and is now a Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS).

Joy White was featured in Black Enterprise Magazine’s January 2014 edition as a “BE Next Dreamer”, which recognizes entrepreneurs in their respective fields.

Do you know someone who deserves an “Honorable Mention”? Send an e-mail to gabwane ruler@gmail.com.

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**LEARN IN: Audience, diverse panel talk work, life and walking with true purpose**

Continued from Page 1

...dotes about their lives, which lead their discussion to the chapters of the book that spoke to them most. Each panelist spoke about aptly titled chapters such as “It’s a Jungle Gym, Not a Ladder” and “Sit at the Table”.

Practical tips about work/life balance included Scott telling the audience quite simply not to bring work home and Judge Walker sharing her realization that being able to “do it all” is a myth.

Each panelist stressed that the impact of their different paths was not lost in their successes and accomplishments.

Cole recounted her early home and professional life and how her experiences equated to value in the workplace. “If you get a seat [referring to Chapter Two “Sit at the Table”], make sure it’s not a seat without a voice,” she said. Cole shared her personal story of success with the audience, which involved some risk-taking and quite a bit of faith. She knew she was on the right track because things just started falling into place. “When you’re on purpose, you can accomplish things with much less effort,” she said.

Cole encouraged the audience to not be afraid of taking risks, especially when they feel they are called by their purpose because “when you walk with purpose, you collide with destiny.”

The passion the panelists had for their work and the impact on their personal lives was apparent: Finke became emotional when discussing Chapter Six (“Seek and Speak Your Truth”), expressing to the audience the importance of vulnerability in all aspects of life even though it may be seen as weakness.

The stereotypes and expectations of today’s working woman weaved throughout the panel discussion and paralleled GABWA’s own mission to nurture, support, and galvanize the power of Black women attorneys.

Finke pointed out the discrepancies between men and women in the workplace and said the redefinition of women cannot be accomplished without the redefinition of men. The panelists advised that women should put themselves in environments conducive to mentoring opportunities and be confident in their skills and abilities.

Perkins-Hooker implored the audience to constantly ask “why isn’t someone [a woman, an African-American] here?” She noted that “we will all be in a better place when we are all equally represented.”

The discussion ended with a question and answer segment, providing the audience with an opportunity to solidify the gems of wisdom provided throughout the meeting.

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ALETA MCLAURIN/GABWA

GABWA members and guests listen during the General Body Meeting and “Lean In (Or Out)” Forum held on March 20 at Sutherland.
A Phenomenal Founder—Julie M.T. Walker

This month we put the spotlight on GABWA Founding Member and our 13th Past President, Julie M.T. Walker:

A graduate of Howard University, Emory Law School and Hampshire College, Ms. Julie M.T. Walker is the President of Julie M.T. Walker, P.C. We caught up with Ms. Walker and talked about why she loves GABWA, her upbringing, and pointers for attorneys.

Q: You always state that you LOVE GABWA. Why do you love the organization?
A: As a GABWA Founding Member and Past President, GABWA is the daughter I never birthed, the sorority I never pledged and the sisterhood where I sought counsel and advice. I found sisters and friends for life who span over multiple generations. I have treated GABWA like a mother-daughter relationship. A parent provides a child with preventative guidance based upon their experience in hopes that the child will avoid their mistakes. A child hears the wisdom but wants to try it their way, as we all did. I will continue to love GABWA as a daughter and be available to her for guidance and support, on any issue, from political, social or economic.

Q: How did your upbringing affect your career choice?
A: We are born into our family with no choice of our parents or circumstances. Whatever our birth legacy, who we are, what we think and who we become is shaped by our beginnings. My journey began on the south side of Chicago near the University of Chicago. My parents were Catholic, my father a chemist and my mother an English teacher. In 1969, I integrated an all-white co-ed Catholic high school on the far south side of Chicago. My mother involved our family in “The Movement” by joining Atlanta’s SCLC Operation Breadbasket- Chicago and Rev. Jesse L. Jackson’s Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity). My dad quit his job as a chemist to become the Director of Communications for Operation PUSH. My high school years were dedicated to Operation PUSH, my mother’s involvement in the Free Angela Davis campaign, parties and basketball games. At the young age of 14, I decided to become a lawyer because I only knew of one black female attorney. I wanted to be an attorney to continue the social and economic change for black people that I witnessed during my high school years.

Q: What is one thing that most people would not know about you?
A: I am a Wanna Be Athlete! After graduating from law school, I have engaged in a variety of athletic endeavors including: ALTA tennis for 18 years; Bike Ride Across Georgia; The Peachtree Road Race for 24 consecutive years; AVON 3 Day Walk, two beginner triathlons and in April 2014, will complete my first Sprint Relay triathlon.

Q: What was the most challenging moment in your career?
A: The abolishment of the City Court of Atlanta and the end of my judicial career. My goal was to retire from that court.

Q: What advice would you offer to an attorney who has grown tired of “practicing law”?
A: Law is not her only gift. If practicing law is no longer her passion, try something else. While she is exploring other opportunities, she can use the funds from her law practice to maintain her lifestyle. A woman should always have multiple streams of income!

Q: What motivates you each morning to get up to do what you do?
A: I live everyday by the words of the old Negro spiritual, “If I can help somebody, then my living shall not be in vain.” I love helping people professionally by solving their legal problems and personally by mentoring.

Q: Describe yourself in one Word?
A: Adventurous...in mind, body and thought!

- ShaMiracle S. Johnson
Panel discusses Obamacare, changing health care landscape

By Wendy Jerkins

On Thursday, February 28, GABWA’s Legal Education Committee hosted the first 5th Thursday Lunch of 2014, featuring a panel discussion on the Affordable Care Act (commonly referred to as “Obamacare”).

The Affordable Care Act has changed how health care is viewed in America and has also given the legal community quite a bit to talk about and explore.

Panelists included Erin C. Fuse Brown, Assistant Professor of Law, Georgia State University College of Law; Danté T. McKay, State Director, Georgia, Enroll America; and Linda Lowe of Families First.

GABWA member Jamila Young, a health insurance navigator for Grady Health Systems, moderated the discussion and gave insight from an enrollment perspective.

The discussion touched on various topics and issues, including how the Affordable Care Act has provided health insurance for individuals previously denied coverage due to preexisting conditions; how expanding Medicaid could help our state; and how to contact someone to assist with enrollment.

Following the panel discussion, members were able to ask questions and express their experiences with health insurance.

For those who were unable to attend the discussion, it will be made available soon on the GABWA website (www.gabwa.org).

DID YOU KNOW?

Since September 2010, more than 3 million young adults have gained health coverage through a provision in the Affordable Care Act that allows children up to age 26 to stay on their parents’ health insurance plan.

Source: http://www.whitehouse.gov/healthreform/myths-and-facts

Upcoming 5th Thursday Lunches

- **May 29**—The next 5th Thursday Lunch, sponsored and hosted by Sutherland, will be Thursday, May 29. We will explore the topic of technology with panelists Natalie R. Kelly, Director, Law Practice Management Program, State Bar of Georgia; Brandee Lattimore Strothers, Esq.; and Shireen Hormozdi, Esq.

- **Oct. 30**—This luncheon will address difficult personalities and situations, including sexual harassment. Sponsorship opportunities are still available.

Join the Committee — If you are interested in joining GABWA’s Legal Education Committee please send an e-mail to committee co-chairs Wendy Jerkins and Teri Fields at legal.education@gabwa.org.

Sponsor a 5th Thursday Lunch — Contact Wendy Jerkins or Teri Fields (legal.education@gabwa.org) if you would like to sponsor a 5th Thursday Lunch. We are able to offer these seminars only through the financial support of GABWA members and nonmembers alike. Your sponsorship will allow the Legal Education Committee to continue to present topics and issues that further GABWA’s mission.
Members Mix and Mingle Across the State

During GABWA’s inaugural March Membership Madness campaign, membership committee members and GABWA leaders mixed and mingled with current and prospective members in Metro Atlanta’s Fulton, DeKalb, Clayton, Henry, Gwinnett and Rockdale counties. Mixers were also hosted by GABWA’s Regional Chapters in Macon, Augusta and Columbus.

Continued on Page 7
GABWA Hosts Mixers for “March Membership Madness”

Clayton/ Henry Mixer

Fulton/DeKalb Mixer

Rockdale Mixer
Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead

By Amber Murray


On a Saturday afternoon in February, we had an awesome time sharing our thoughts and feelings about *Lean In*, which is Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg’s call to action to professional women, encouraging them to lean into their careers in order to climb the “corporate jungle gym” (as she calls it).

In *Lean In*, Sandberg asserts that the main reason more women are not in positions of power in corporate America is that we hesitate to accept more challenging positions at work in anticipation of potential family responsibilities that do not yet exist and that we do not readily volunteer for more challenging projects and positions until we feel we have mastered all of the skills required for success in our current positions.

Sandberg also asserts that one of the keys to success for women is to select partners who are willing to take an active role raising children and helping with housework.

The GABWA Book Club members had a lively discussion about Sandberg’s advice, our experiences working in predominantly male environments, and the impact that the intersection of gender and race have on our ability to rise to positions of power within our workplaces. We were each able to take some valuable nuggets of advice from *Lean In* even if we did not completely agree with all of Sandberg’s assertions. And in the end, we each identified ways that we can further “lean into” our careers and encourage the women around us to do the same.

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The next Book Club meeting will be held on April 12, 2014 from 2-4 p.m. We will discuss *The Good Lord Bird* by James McBride. Contact Shatorree Bates at shatorree@bateslawfirmllc.com to RSVP and to receive location information.

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**Members of GABWA’s Historic Leadership Share Their Wisdom**

Zomi Wilson

*Founding Member*

“’The economic, political and social climate of 2014 is as treacherous as that of the 60’s and 70’s. Each thought and action should be designed to insure our collective survival.’
Welcome Message from GABWA’s Young Lawyers Division

LaKeisha R. Randall & Kristen E. Files
gabwa.yld@gmail.com

Greetings,

My name is LaKeisha R. Randall and I have the privilege of serving as the 2014-2015 Chair of the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys’ Young Lawyers Division (YLD). My Co-Chair is Kristen E. Files. Together, we are honored to be of service to GABWA, the YLD, and the community at large.

The YLD is open to members under 36 or admitted to practice 5 years or less. In addition to your GABWA benefits, the Young Lawyers Division is here to equip you with the tools, network, and support needed to ensure personal and professional success.

A few of the Division’s goals include:

- Expanding our professionalism efforts through skills development panels and seminars;
- Partnering with the Professional Development Academy (PDA) to build relationships between all graduates of PDA; and
- Providing a network to help young lawyers successfully navigate the early stages of their career and decision-making.

In sum, the YLD provides members opportunities to have fun, gain leadership skills, and become more involved with the legal community. We have prepared an impressive agenda of events for this calendar year and we are excited to begin working with each of you!

LaKeisha R. Randall, YLD Chair, Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys
Sr. Judicial Law Clerk for the Municipal Court of Atlanta, she serves as the staff attorney to the 9 judges of the court, drafts all judicial opinions, and advises senior management.

Kristen E. Files, YLD Co-Chair, Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys
Associate Attorney for Stearns-Montgomery & Proctor, practicing exclusively in the areas of family law and domestic relations

*If you are a GABWA member under 36 years old or admitted to practice for five years or less, you are eligible to enroll in the Young Lawyers Division (YLD) at no additional charge. If interested, please email us at: gabwa.yld@gmail.com*
At its inaugural Diversi-
sion Program Parent &
Volunteer Appreciation
Day on March 29, the
Fulton County Juvenile
Court recognized the
GABWA Foundation and
its Sister to Sister Mentor-
ing Program for their ded-
cation to making a posi-
tive difference in the juve-
nile court community.

In 2000, the GABWA
Foundation and the Ful-
ton County Juvenile
Court, with the assistance
of the Georgia Supreme
Court's Commission on
Equality, began the Sister
to Sister Mentoring Pro-
gram, which aims to as-
sist at-risk teen girls
through mentoring and
bi-monthly meetings
covering important top-
ics such as abstinence,
STDs, self-esteem, goal
setting, and making in-
formed and positive life
choices. By introducing
the girls to the promise
that their lives hold if
they make positive choic-
es, Sister to Sister en-
courages the teen girls to
continue their education,
remain abstinent, and
develop behaviors that
will prevent future con-
tact with the criminal
justice system.

Sister to Sister is cur-
rently led by Executive
Director Mercedes Ball,
Program Administrator
Olivia Smith, Program
Director ShaMiracle
Johnson and Volunteer
Coordinator Liz Broad-
way Brown.
—UPCOMING EVENTS—

April 2
Professional Development Academy Graduation
Where: Sutherland, 999 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, GA 30309
Time: 6:30 p.m.

April 5
Demystifying Law School
Where: Tapley Building Room 103 at Spelman College, 350 Spelman Lane SW, Atlanta, GA 30314
Time: 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.
This program will cover law school from start to finish and is open to all undergraduate students.

April 7
Gala/Auction Committee Meeting
Where: Sutherland, 999 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, GA 30309
Time: 6:30 p.m.

April 9
Judicial & Public Office Academy Meeting
Where: Jury Assembly Room at City of Atlanta Municipal Court
Time: 6 p.m.
If you would like to join the committee, please email Jadaunya Butler at jadawnyabutler@hotmail.com or Kedra Gotel at kmgotel@gmail.com.

April 10
Fundraising Committee Meeting
Where: Ogletree Deakins, 191 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA 30303
Time: 6:30 p.m.
Newsletter Committee Meeting
Where: Alston & Bird, 1201 W. Peachtree Street, Atlanta, GA 30309
Time: 6 p.m.

April 11
Columbus Region: Prom Dress Distribution
Where: Carver High School

April 12
GABWA Book Club: "The Good Lord Bird"
Time: 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
Please RSVP to Shatorree Bates at shatorree@bateslawfirmllc.com for location and address information.

April 13
"Legally Speaking" Airs
Where: AIB Network (Comcast channel 5, AT&T U-verse channel 6, and Charter Communications channel 22, and aibtv.com)
Time: 9:30 p.m.

April 17
GABWA General Body Meeting: "Protect Yourself (Including But Not Limited To: Identity Theft/Email Hacking/Safety and Security at Work)"
Where: King & Spalding, 1180 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, GA 30309
Time: 6 p.m.
Please RSVP to RSVP@gabwa.org.

April 22
Dream Team Law Day Program
Where: State Bar of Georgia
Time: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

April 26
MultiBar Leadership Council's "Taste of Diversity" Celebration and Cook-Off
Where: Grant Park

THANK YOU!!

GABWA would like to thank the following sponsors for supporting our March programming:

Sutherland
Eraji Media
Esquire Deposition Solutions
Tameka A. West
Brianna Williams
Charlotte J. Redo
Nuuvo Clean
Injured Workers Pharmacy
The Washington law Group
Shelton Law Office
The Wilson Davis Firm, LLC
Royce Bluitt
Janet Scott
The Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys ("GABWA") was founded in 1981 by a group of African American women who sought to form a voluntary bar organization that would (1) focus on women and children's issues, (2) increase black female representation in the judiciary and in public offices, and (3) take a proactive stance on political issues. Today, GABWA has an active membership of women and men who strive each day to fulfill the organization's mission: to nurture, support and galvanize the power of Black women attorneys, advocate for women and children and empower our communities. GABWA is open to all persons, regardless of race or sex. Become a member today! www.gabwa.org/dues.php

1. Get up and move. Exercising is good for the body and the soul.

2. Relax. Enjoy a spa day, a mani/pedi, or pamper yourself at home.

3. Reconnect. Brunch with your closest friends is an automatic stress reducer!

4. Unplug. Turn off your cellphone, iPad, and computer, for an hour, and do something that makes you smile.

5. Laugh. Watch a funny YouTube video, read a comic strip, or tune into your favorite TV show. Laughter significantly decreases stress hormones.

GABWA:  
P.O. Box 4381  
Atlanta, GA 30302

GABWA Foundation:  
P.O. Box 7381  
Atlanta, GA 30309

Phone: 678-825-5675  
E-mail: contact@gabwa.org

GABWA Newsletter Chair:  
Liz Broadway Brown  
gabwanewsletter@gmail.com