

# DIVERSITY MATTERS IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

CMCP | California Minority Counsel Program

July/August 2018

*"To whom  
much is  
given,  
much is  
required."*

*Member Attorney Spotlight*

**WANJI WALCOTT**

SVP and General Counsel

PayPal

*Member Attorney  
Spotlight*

**WANJI  
WALCOTT**

**SVP AND GENERAL  
COUNSEL  
PAYPAL**

BY DAVID A. SHIMKIN, MEMBER  
COZEN O'CONNOR

Wanji Walcott is Senior Vice President and General Counsel at PayPal and one of her mottos is, "To whom much is given, much is required."

The child of Guyanese immigrants, Ms. Walcott was not given much. Yet she has ascended to the position of Senior Vice President and General Counsel at PayPal, the Internet's largest online payment system.

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“WE ARE GREAT AT WHAT WE DO BUT WE HAVE COMPETITION SO WE REALLY TRY TO KEEP AN EYE OUT ON EVERYTHING THAT IS HAPPENING.”

Ms. Walcott is passionately dedicated to promoting diversity in our profession, and was inspired by her parents to become a lawyer. She grew up as an only child and says, “I would instinctively advocate for myself and other people and their parents. From as far back as I can remember, my father said that I always took a position and had an argument to make and so he thought I would become a lawyer someday.”

Ms. Walcott’s father, now deceased, was an engineer, and her mother specialized in health care administration, and works in that field to this day. Ms. Walcott’s mother is “a people manager” and has excelled at leading people and sometimes conducting difficult conversations. It was from her gracious and diplomatic mother, in fact, that Ms. Walcott learned about problem solving and human relations, particularly about how to lead people and keep their dignity intact even when delivering bad news to them.

After graduating from Howard Law School (she waited tables during both college and law school at Howard), she went straight to an in-house position at a subsidiary of Lockheed Martin. That division of Lockheed dealt with local and state government contracting, and she was at Lockheed for four years.

One day, her General Counsel at the subsidiary observed that she would make a great general counsel. Ms. Walcott was flattered, and responded, “Wow, you really think that I could have your job someday.” Her boss then responded, “No, I think you could be General Counsel of not just the subsidiary but the whole corporation.” Ms. Walcott never forgot that, and set her sights on becoming a corporate general counsel, preferably in a technology-focused company.

She left Lockheed to go in-house at a start-up software company and then, soon after, joined Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP for four years. To Ms. Walcott's surprise, a recruiter had told her that she needed to get some law firm experience if she wanted to attain her goal of becoming an in-house counsel, so she jointed that firm.

After four years at Pillsbury, she went to the Technology Law Group at American Express. She only intended to stay at American Express for a short time, but stayed for 13 years because, she says, "I had a lot of opportunity to grow and expand my practice and also gain leadership experience, which I knew would be important."

Ms. Walcott then joined PayPal in 2015 as the Vice President of Legal Product with the primary responsibility of providing legal support to the company's Global Product and Engineering Group. She became Senior Vice President and General Counsel in February of 2017.

Ms. Walcott certainly has a challenging job, since PayPal transacts business in multiple jurisdictions and across numerous cultures, and is subject to various regulatory regimes. Even more challenging perhaps is the pace of change and innovation in her industry. She observes, "We are great at what we do but we have competition so we really try to keep an eye out on everything that is happening." She says, "What I want to do with my team is drive results by adding value, by not just reacting, but by being proactive to trends and payment regulations to assist our business partners to think strategically, in order to stay competitive in the market place."

Ms. Walcott says that diversity in the technology space is critically important. "Our mission is to democratize financial services so that our clients

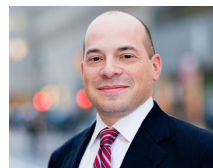
can move their money anywhere in the world. That inclusive mission is at the core of who we are and we need diverse people so that we can appeal to all."

Notably, Ms. Walcott cites artificial intelligence as an example of how diversity can have a very real and practical impact. She explained that if we do not have diverse engineers creating the artificial intelligence algorithms, then the artificial intelligence that results will not reflect the many differences in outlook and perception that people have the world over.

Ms. Walcott similarly sees organizations like CMCP as vital for bringing people together and offering awareness and programming for diverse attorneys, and all attorneys. She believes that partnering with groups like CMCP is crucial in helping corporations achieve and advance diversity in the legal profession, and she is a strong and vocal proponent of pro bono initiatives.

"CMCP and the Minority Corporate Counsel Association bring people together and go a long way to promote diversity and inclusion in our industry, which still has a long way to go," she said.

We at CMCP agree, and we appreciate these words of wisdom from Ms. Walcott, a trailblazer who has come a long way herself.



**David A. Shimkin, Member**  
Cozen O'Connor

David practices in the firm's Commercial Litigation Group. His litigation practice includes complex commercial matters, with a focus on representing clients in the hospitality, transportation, construction, and real estate fields.

# ABOUT CMCP

The California Minority Counsel Program (CMCP) is a 501(c)(6) non-profit mutual benefit corporation, dedicated to promoting diversity in the legal profession by providing attorneys of color with access and opportunity for business and professional development.

CMCP is a state-wide organization that brings business lawyers of all races together as members and colleagues, regardless of the type of organization in which they practice, for the purpose of achieving diversity and inclusion within law firms and in-house law departments, and in the outside counsel spend of corporations and government agencies.

For more information about CMCP, activities, events, and how you can get more actively involved, visit [www.cmcp.org](http://www.cmcp.org) or give us a call at 415-782-8990.



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