



PRESS RELEASE

Statement by State Bar of Texas Sections and Committees in Response to Comments by State Bar of Texas President Larry McDougal and in Support of the African American Lawyer's Section

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 17th, 2020

CONTACT:

Michael Debnam, Chair, LGBT Law Section of the State Bar of Texas

michael@debnamrust.com

In the last week, we and the public have learned of statements by State Bar of Texas President Larry McDougal concerning race, women, drug addiction, and police brutality that are shocking to the conscience, misinformed, and, at best, display a severe level of misunderstanding and a lack of empathy.

In the interest of the integrity of the State Bar of Texas, its members and the people its members serve, we express our strong disappointment in his behavior and are calling on all members of the Bar to raise and maintain its standards as an organization of attorneys, judges and the

supporting staff that works with them. When assuming an office such as the Presidency of the State Bar of Texas, the elected official relinquishes a part of their autonomy for the benefit of the organization and entity they serve. The conduct of President McDougal is unbecoming of the office he was elected to hold and of our expectation of how a president of our organization should behave.

We, the following sections and committees of the State Bar of Texas (SBOT), stand in solidarity condemning President McDougal's comments and hereby fully endorse and adopt the "Call to Action in Response to State Bar of Texas President Larry McDougal's Comments Concerning Black Lives Matter" by the African American Law Section (AALS) dated July 12, 2020:

Asian Pacific Interest Section
Diversity in the Profession Committee
Hispanic Issues Section
LGBT Law Section
Native American Law Section,
Texas Minority Counsel Program Steering Committee
Women & the Law Section
Women in the Profession Committee

Furthermore, we know, believe, and affirm the following statements to be true and undeniable:

Black Lives Matter.

Police brutality is wrong in all instances; it is not justice.

President McDougal's opinion of a female attorney's looks has no place in public discourse, and appearances do not measure any person's merit.

Lawyers experiencing substance addiction and mental health issues deserve support and empathy from the SBOT and its leaders, not belittlement of their plight.

The SBOT should, as its mission statement states, "support the administration of the legal system, assure all citizens equal access to justice, foster high standards of ethical conduct for lawyers, enable its members to better serve their clients and the public, educate the public about the rule of law, and promote diversity in the administration of justice and practice of law." Mr. McDougal's comments are directly at odds with these fundamental ideals.

We strongly and unequivocally request that the SBOT Board of Directors immediately and affirmatively act on the proposals made by the AALS to include implementing educational opportunities at all levels of the practice of law, to include the engagement of our Law Schools, to address bias and racism while promoting diversity, inclusion and equity. This includes a requirement that 2 hours of implicit bias training or related education becomes part of the 15 hours of required annual CLE by lawyers in Texas.

We further call upon those who serve as General Counsel, on Diversity and Inclusion Committees in law firms of all sizes, in corporate legal departments, and in education through our law schools to stand in solidarity with us, that we re-commit to education on implicit bias and the avoidance of micro-aggressions, and that we uphold our standards as articulated in The Texas Lawyer's Creed – A Mandate for Professionalism.

All of this is done, affirmed, and requested in the interest of justice and in support of the rule of law to #RaiseTheBar.

Signed,

African American Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Texas, Council 2020-2021
Asian Pacific Interest Section of the State Bar of Texas, Council 2020-2021
Diversity in Profession Committee of the State bar of Texas, Council 2020-2021
Hispanic Issues Section of the State Bar of Texas, Council 2020-2021
LGBT Law Section of the State Bar of Texas, Council 2020-2021
Native American Law Section of the State Bar of Texas, Council 2020-2021
Texas Minority Counsel Program Steering Committee of the State Bar of Texas, 2020
Women and the Law Section of the State Bar of Texas, Council 2020-2021
Women in the Profession Committee 2020-2021