



Jill Katz

The Potential Power of Listening & Reflecting

Our job as lawyers is to tell the stories of our clients. We gather their stories by asking questions and listening for the facts that fit within the legal parameters of the matter. We discard or discount the information that we deem not relevant or not helpful to the matter. We seek out witnesses to the facts that we deem helpful to the story we want to tell. While we are aware of the existence of other facts, we may spend very little time attempting to understand these other facts. Our minds are focused on what we need to do in the representation of our clients in a specific matter.

While this strategy of understanding the story of our clients may be appropriate, it is not a strategy that should be employed in our day-to-day life. It is by listening with an open mind, not according to the parameters of our viewpoint and experiences, that we can truly understand. Understanding is important as it is a key to effective and meaningful change.

As President of KCMBF, I have attempted to listen to other voices not within the parameters of my own viewpoint and experiences. Having grown up in the inner city of Kansas City with parents who did not graduate from college, I feel that I have persevered and accomplished much through hard work. I have learned that my road has been made easier because I am White. I also at times feel like I am fairly evolved in my understanding of racial disparity. Inevitably I say or do something that deflates my feelings of enlightenment. I have discounted the value of being in a room of lawyers that look like you and share common experiences.

Whenever I am at an attorney gathering, I am in the midst of mostly White lawyers because of the years of inequity toward people of color. When a friend and colleague, a woman of color, shared her feeling of empowerment when she was at a legal function with the majority of attorneys being people of color, my immediate response was to point out that this was not the only function that she attended like this – there was this ONE other time. In that moment, I completely discounted her experience. I as a White woman told her she was mistaken in her feelings, mistaken as to the facts, and most importantly, I did not realize what I had done until later. While she and I have talked about my words and I hope she has accepted my apology, I learned that I have much to learn.

It has become my goal to listen to voices of those whose life experiences are different than mine because of their culture, race, gender, disability, religion, or orientation. But listening is not enough. I also want to let these voices inform, impact, and change me. I want to understand these different voices and move forward in my life to be a better person, friend, and professional. I want to cause effective and meaningful change.

I challenge each of you to seek out and listen to voices of people with different life experiences. As you listen to these voices, I challenge you to just listen. After you listen, I challenge you to reflect. It is my hope that by listening and reflecting, you will become informed, impacted, and changed. By listening we can become a better community. ■

At the KCMBF Board meeting on August 17, 2021, Board members engaged in an important discussion about the health and safety of our legal community. We listened to one another, in a trusted conversation, ultimately deciding to pivot the Gala from an in-person event to an online fundraiser. This decision was not an easy decision and comes along with regret that we will not be together at the Gala. The programs and goals of KCMBF are dear to our hearts and while we cannot gather in person, we remain dedicated to continuing and growing our Legal Connection programs and ask for your support. Donate at kcmbf.org/liberty or scan the QR code on page 5.

KCMBF

Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Foundation

MILITARY MATTERS PRO BONO SPOTLIGHT



Samantha Sader

Samantha Sader of Fisher Law, LLC is this month's honoree of the Military Matters Spotlight, a monthly recognition to distinguish the great work performed by the

hundreds of pro bono volunteer attorneys within the Military Matters network. Please go to the KCMBF Facebook page to learn more about Samantha's service to Military Matters.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE FOUNDATION?

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