



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Written by Kirtana Kalavapudi

In June 2022, **Sabria McElroy** was named to *NAWL's Rising List*. Given her recent award, we reached out to Sabria to learn more about her, her love of learning and the pursuit of joy in the practice of law, and her involvement with NAWL.

Please Introduce Yourself

SM: My name is Sabria McElroy and I am Partner at the firm Boies Schiller Flexner in our Ft. Lauderdale, Florida office. My practice focuses on complex litigation disputes across a range of subject areas, including antitrust, education, financial services, and legal malpractice. I also serve as a co-chair of the firm's diversity and hiring committees. I have been with Boies Schiller since 2012 when I joined as a Junior Associate. I am also a mother to three wonderful and energetic children.

What inspired you to pursue a career in law?

SM: Sometimes, I wish I had a more interesting story about why I became a lawyer. The reality is that I thought it would be a good fit for me. I never considered being a lawyer until after I graduated from college. At the time, I was teaching seventh-grade English and Social Studies in Philadelphia through Teach for America and I had several friends who had gone to law school straight after college.



Sabria McElroy

Partner
Boies Schiller Flexner

Whenever I spoke to them about their law school experience, I was intrigued and thought it sounded fun. And, while I was teaching, I started to realize just how much I enjoyed problem-solving and learning about new areas and I figured the law would be a good career fit. So, I started the process of applying to law school. I remember visiting law schools and sitting in on a Constitutional Law class at the University of Michigan. I was absolutely fascinated, and it was at that moment, I was hooked and felt confident that I would enjoy learning about the law. Also, I had been accepted to Yale Law School and couldn't pass up that opportunity. It turns out I was right — working as a litigator has been a great fit for me and it's something that I truly enjoy.

What is one of the most memorable cases you have worked on?

SM: The case that stands out the most in my mind is an antitrust class action lawsuit that we brought on behalf of a class of au-pairs. The suit alleged that the au-pair sponsorship agencies colluded to suppress au pair wages. Early in the case, I had a particularly memorable experience when I defended the deposition of one of our named plaintiffs, a young woman from Columbia. At that time, I was an associate and it was probably the most significant deposition that I had handled.

My client was very nervous about discussing her experience as an au pair, which had not been positive, and I was the only lawyer for plaintiffs in the room with about 15 lawyers for the defendants on the other side of the table. On top of that, there were translation issues since the official translator did not speak Colombian Spanish. Overall, it was a very challenging deposition. Some of the defense lawyers were extremely aggressive and seemed intent on making the experience difficult for my client. However, at the end of the day, my client held her own by giving testimony that was authentic and impactful and I was proud that I was able to help her feel comfortable enough to tell her story. That case went on to settle for one of the largest wage and hour class action settlements in years. It was a meaningful case that provided me with great learning opportunities and ended with a good result.

What first brought you to NAWL?

SM: It was my firm. Once our firm became a Sustaining Member, I became a member of NAWL, along with all of the other women in my firm, and received access to all of NAWL's amazing resources and content.

How are you involved with NAWL (committees, affinity groups, publications, etc.)?

SM: Next month, I will be participating in the 2022 Leadership Program. I am very excited about this program which provides an opportunity to work with other women lawyers in a small group setting to grow our personal and professional skills.

How has NAWL supported you in your profession?

SM: So far, it has been a wonderful source of information and inspiration. One specific example is the most recent issue of the Women Lawyers Journal, which I read either just before or just after I returned from maternity leave in July. For me, the return to work after a baby is always a challenging transition.

This issue of the Women Lawyers Journal was heavily focused on mindfulness and well-being, which was something that I needed at the time. I try to practice mindfulness and have a meditation practice, but I had lapsed in those areas after giving birth to my daughter and it was very helpful to have that reminder on incorporating mindfulness into my practice. There was even an article on returning to work after parental leave that had specific strategies for building a support system and navigating mom guilt. More generally, I enjoy reading stories that highlight other women lawyers and their accomplishments, which renews my energy to pursue my own goals. Also, as I already mentioned, I will be participating in the 2022 Leadership Program which will help me strengthen my leadership skills.

What does being on the NAWL Rising List mean to you?

SM: It is a special honor to be recognized for an award that is focused in part on helping other women advance in their careers. Mentorship and teaching are very important to me. As I mentioned, before law school, I was a teacher and I would not be where I am today without great mentors, so I try to pay it forward by mentoring more junior lawyers.

It is very rewarding to be on a list with other women lawyers who share those values.

What is it that you love about your current role at Boies Schiller Flexner?

SM: There are two things that keep me happy in my work life. The first is interesting work. I decided to attend law school largely because I love to learn and I love to find solutions to challenging problems and I get to do both of those things on a daily basis. We regularly handle complex cases with novel legal issues that often require creative solutions with no easy answers.

The second thing that I love about my job is the people. I have fantastic coworkers, which is a huge part of why I love my work. I work with a diverse group of people who are extremely sharp and driven, but also kind and collaborative. We support one another both professionally and personally, which sometimes takes the form of helping each other navigate complex legal issues and other times might involve advice on housing or schools. This dynamic creates a wonderful work environment and I think our culture of collaboration makes us better lawyers.



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