

HERBERT SMITH FREEHILLS COMBINES WORDS AND ACTION TO CHALLENGE RACE AND RACISM IN THE WORKPLACE

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Firm news

As part of its commitment to build a supportive, respectful, environment, where everyone can thrive, the firm has teamed up with people consultancy, Inner Ambitions. Together they will deliver a series workshops enabling staff across Herbert Smith Freehills' network to build their knowledge of and talk more openly about systemic racism. The workshops will also provide practical methods for addressing systemic barriers and challenging unacceptable behaviour, both within the workplace and across society.

Developed as part of the firm's [10 Actions for Change](#), the programme has launched in London prior to being rolled out globally. The initial cohort has seen over 250 colleagues participate, with additional sessions planned across the network in the coming months. It covers a range of topics including:

- building an understanding of micro-aggressions, the impact these can have on minority ethnic colleagues, and how they stifle business innovation
- how to enhance cultural understanding
- addressing structural racism
- the actions being an anti-racist requires

- building confidence to speak out and challenge.

“Considerable strides have been made by many organisations over the past six months, but no one should be lulled into the belief that they are nearing the end of the journey. Our goal is to become an actively anti-racist organisation. That may mean facilitating difficult conversations but it is necessary to ensure we can equip our teams with the ability to confront any deep seated inequalities they may see,” says Alison Brown, executive partner at Herbert Smith Freehills.

The programme has been developed to focus on experiential learning. It will encourage participants to address any fears they may have, learn how to recognise their own and other peoples’ vulnerabilities and enable them to educate others about how racism can harm their organisation, irrespective of sector.

“The extent of active engagement in our early sessions, across all levels of seniority, is an example other firms can follow. I have sensed a strong desire from participants to build greater racial equity and to become more comfortable talking about race. There is acknowledgement by everyone that there is a long way to go, but it is clear that everyone recognises a personal responsibility to maintain a focus on this important issue,” adds Lanre Sulola, CEO of Inner Ambitions.

The workshops have been launched following the release of a [toolkit](#) published by NOTICED* offering a structured approach to conversations which many individuals otherwise feel is difficult to have.

* NOTICED is the UK’s first inter-firm diversity network aimed at promoting networking opportunities to integrate, celebrate and educate on diversity across the legal sector.

KEY CONTACTS

If you have any questions, or would like to know how this might affect your business, phone, or email these key contacts.



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