

Bird & Bird & Embrace

An introduction to Bird & Bird's London BAME Network
2021

Embracing the Community

Embracing the Perspective

Embracing the Digital World



Embrace



Bird & Bird's multi-cultural network established to promote diversity and represent the BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) experience.

The Embrace Network supports the advancement and celebration of racial and cultural diversity at Bird & Bird.

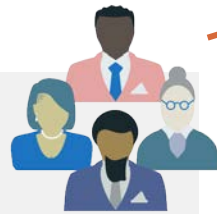
Embrace welcomes any and every person within the firm, who relates to, identifies with, appreciates or celebrates Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) culture, religion, history and experience in an intersectional manner, and acknowledges the challenges faced by those who identify with this category and the work that is needed to address this.

Embrace offers an inclusive community that welcomes both members and allies of all cultural and racial backgrounds.

About Embrace

Bird & Bird's award-winning London BAME network

- The first BAME network ever created at Bird & Bird globally!
- A London-based employee network
- Founded in 2017 by Rachel Welch-Phillips, Aviation Associate when she was a second year trainee solicitor and chaired by Rachel and Rex Bautista, Senior Client Relationship Executive. Born of the desire to celebrate and embrace racial and cultural difference and promote inclusion
- 40 core members, including partners, associates, business services, secretarial & facilities staff
- Three distinct focus areas that target key objectives of internal awareness, policy change and outreach:
 - ❖ Embracing the Perspective
 - ❖ Embracing the Community
 - ❖ Embracing the Digital World
- Awarded outstanding multicultural employee network at the UK Diversity Legal Awards in 2019



About Embrace – how it began

Since its launch in November 2017, Embrace has become a cross-business, intersectional network that has interacted with internal and external stakeholders to create a multi-faceted and innovative approach to racial and ethnic diversity and equality within Bird & Bird.

In October 2017, the UK celebrated the 30th anniversary of Black History Month. Deciding that it was essential that the firm recognised this landmark anniversary; Rachel Welch-Phillips, a second year trainee solicitor engaged with HR and the partnership to create an awareness campaign.

Rachel created fact sheets with profiles of accomplished minority ethnic legal minds, and placed them on tables every week in October in the office canteen - where over 600 occupants of the building regularly have breakfast and lunch.

Albeit simple, this initiative generated widespread conversation with respect to underrepresented groups in the firm and the profession in general. Following the success from this Black History Month initiative, Rachel realised a greater platform was necessary to harvest these conversations and inspire change in the firm.

On the **24th November 2017**, Embrace was officially established as an employee network at the firm. The momentous occasion was marked with a celebratory launch event with an array of cultural food and drink, music and networking.

Embrace has continued to achieve notable success in a very short period of time since its launch. Through social media campaigns, community outreach programs and a series of varied in-house events, Embrace has gone from strength to strength in engaging with key stakeholders to work towards improving representation, retention and attitudes regarding racial diversity and equality within the firm and the legal profession.

Purpose & Impact Embrace

Purpose:

- ❖ **In-reach:** (i) an internal network for supporting, sharing and celebrating racial and cultural diversity within Bird & Bird. (ii) collaborating with HR and leadership teams towards enhancing the firm's diversity and inclusion policy, recruitment strategies and racial inclusion initiatives.
- ❖ **Education:** raising awareness of multiculturalism and the need for racial inclusion and representation in the workplace, I particular on cultural and historical occasions of importance to the BAME community (e.g. Black History Month).
- ❖ **Outreach:** continuing to engage with and give back to BAME communities through volunteering, fundraising, and assisting with diverse and inclusive recruitment to the firm.
- ❖ **Social Events:** bringing people together with music and food and demonstrating how different cultures have a good time!

Impact:

- ❖ Through *Embracing the Perspective*, the network chairs are actively engaging with HR and the firm's leadership to continuously ensure that we are attracting, retaining and engaging diverse talent.
- ❖ Through *Embracing the Community*, the network is forming partnerships in London to encourage diverse talent in the legal industry.
- ❖ Through *Embracing the Digital World*, the network is raising awareness of key issues through intersectional virtual discussions on diversity in the workplace.

Nicholas Perry, Managing Partner of Bird & Bird London:

"The Embrace network has gone from strength to strength since its launch in November 2017. The firm has benefitted from the energy and enthusiasm of its initiatives, which continue to attract increased engagement both internally and from clients."

The work of Embrace supports our One Firm culture and our commitment to maintain an inclusive work environment where everyone feels encouraged to achieve."



Contact Embrace

Rachel Welch-Phillips

(Founder & Network Chair)

Aviation Associate

EmbraceNetwork@twobirds.com



Embracing the Perspective

- About Embracing the Perspective
- Collaborations with other diversity networks
- Internal staff training & workshops
- Collaborations with Graduate Recruitment

Embracing the Perspective

Embracing the perspective forms a key part of the network's 'in-reach' activities.

This area focuses on internal awareness and change management, working in collaboration with Bird & Bird leadership teams and HR, on enhancing our firm's diversity policies and recruitment strategies.

Educational seminars for all internal staff form a key part of this arm. This includes raising awareness through knowledge sharing and events on the impact of multiculturalism at work and on the wider community.

Initiatives include:

- Staff training seminars and workshops
- Collaboration with StandOUT, the LGBT+ staff network in London
- Collaboration with the London graduate recruitment team and wider HR
- Celebratory events

Collaborations with other diversity networks

Harnessing the power of intersectionality

Embrace operates in an intersectional manner, working closely with other employee led diversity & inclusion networks at Bird & Bird London.

Embrace works in partnership with **StandOUT** on internal change management initiatives to enhance our firm's diversity policies and recruitment strategies.

The StandOut network provides a supportive framework for our LGBT+ staff and Allies by representing their views and promoting a culture of diversity and inclusion both internally and externally.



Though Embrace does not have a religious affiliation, the network has helped to support the establishment of religious networks that have recently formed within Bird & Bird London.

The network also celebrates key events in various religious and cultural calendars such as collaborating with the catering staff to produce Eid & Diwali themed lunches.



Internal staff training seminars & workshops

Embrace has maximised its use of both physical and digital platforms to ensure positive and meaningful impact is made within Bird & Bird and the wider community.

Over the last three years, Embrace has successfully engaged with Bird & Bird's staff training and development programmes to facilitate important and necessary educational training seminars.

Our seminars and 'Lunch & Learns' generally focus on the racial and cultural elements of Diversity & Inclusion.

Topics include:

- improving cultural awareness,
- facilitating conversations about race; and
- highlighting the impact of intersectionality between race and other diversity strands.



Feedback received on workshops:

"It was crisp and interactive, the content and the flow was well-prepared by focusing on the challenges that all of us are experiencing."

"I liked the fact that the session was interactive. It was good to see what other people were thinking. This also gave me an insight into how people may view things differently."

Virtual Slavery in the City Tour

Open to all offices



During lockdown in the UK in November 2020, Embrace hosted a virtual “Slavery in the City” tour, delivered by Six in the City, a team of fully qualified City of London tour guides.

55 attendees from across the firm's international offices were virtually guided through the streets and alleyways of the City of London, pausing at each historical ‘stop’, where the virtual tour guide shares the significance of each place, its story and the historic figures involved.



"I thought it was a brilliant and thought provoking event"

"I did not get taught about this at School (unbelievably), and was completely unaware of the full extent to which the city's wealth is built on slavery"

"I've certainly added more books to my reading list as a result and I'm definitely keen to learn more!"

"It was so interesting and informative"

Collaborations with Graduate Recruitment

Supporting Aspiring Solicitors

Aspiring Solicitors was set up in 2013 with the primary aim of increasing diversity in the legal profession.

Bird & Bird's graduate recruitment team works in partnership with Aspiring Solicitors including hosting events, mentoring, competitions, employability assistance and access to the workplace for students from a range of underrepresented backgrounds.

Embrace have supported these joint events for example participating in the Aspiring Solicitors Facebook Live panel discussion, where Embrace members discussed the experience of Black and Minority Ethnic trainees, NQs and Business Services employees in the legal industry. Over 100 listeners tuned in to the live session and the post has since been viewed over 400 times on Bird & Bird's Graduate Facebook page.

Embrace also attends Open Day events to network with students from diverse backgrounds who are interested in pursuing a career within the legal industry.



Embracing the Community

- About Embracing the Community
- Embrace partnership event with Think Forward UK

Embracing the Community

Embracing the Community focuses on the network's outreach activities: engaging with and giving back to BAME communities.

Embrace regularly participates in Bird & Bird's centrally managed Community Enterprise and Pioneer initiatives. These initiatives aim to equip young people in primary and secondary schools with the skills, experience and aspirations to succeed in life.

Over the last two years, the network has forged its own ongoing partnerships with organisations closer aligned to its outreach goal: 'to give back to BAME communities'. ThinkForward is an example of one such organisation handpicked by Embrace members.

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For more information about the Embracing the community outreach programme and collaboration opportunities please contact:

EmbraceNetwork@twobirds.com

Embracing the Community

Think Forward UK

As part of Embrace's outreach programme, the network organised an all day event in partnership with [Think Forward](#), a non-profit organisation that aims to prevent youth unemployment; working with young people at the highest risk of leaving school and becoming unemployed to provide the support they need to succeed.

The Embrace team delivered a workshop to a group of 15-16 year olds providing them with an insight into Bird & Bird and the team. HR participated on the day, providing the students with some valuable career advice and shared options available to them at this early stage in their careers. The event ended with a networking session with Embrace members.



Embracing the Digital World

- About Embracing the Digital World
- Embracing the Conversation podcast
- Embracing the Spotlight video series

Embracing the Digital World

Embrace initiatives are fully aligned with Bird & Bird's vision:

To be the number one law firm in the world for organisations being changed by Technology and the Digital World.

Embracing the digital world supports the creation of the network's multimedia products, improving accessibility and engagement with a wider audience beyond the firm's internal network.

Embracing the Conversation & Spotlight were two successful digital campaigns created by Embrace under this arm.

These self-created digital products are used to lift and amplify underrepresented voices and experiences at Bird & Bird and across the wider legal profession.

Embrace digital products:

❖ Embracing the Conversation Podcast

Guest speakers from Bird & Bird, our clients and influential professionals from across the industry joined Embrace members to participate in thought provoking, difficult conversations and shared ideas, inspiration and insights on BAME experiences within the legal profession.

❖ Embracing the Spotlight

A series of videos which showcased and celebrated cultural diversity within Bird & Bird.

London based staff from different levels, departments and cultural backgrounds, shared their experiences of working at Bird & Bird and bringing their differences to work.

Embracing the Digital World

Recent initiatives

In celebration of Black History Month 2020, Embrace created an educational podcast, that covers Black British History that has not been taught in schools.

The podcast was narrated by Embrace members and special guests, discussing important topics including:

- The Roman Empire in Britain
- The Moors
- The Tudors
- The African Slave Trade
- Present day Britain

You can listen to the podcast here:

<https://soundcloud.com/twobirdslaw/bird-bird-celebrates-black-history-month-a-brief-account-of-black-history-in-britain>

Embracing the Conversation & Embracing the Spotlight

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Embracing the Conversation

Listen to the podcast on Soundcloud

Podcast links:

- <https://soundcloud.com/twobirdslaw/embracing-the-conversation-alumni-network>
- <https://soundcloud.com/twobirdslaw/embracing-the-conversation-a-decade-of-diversity>
- <https://soundcloud.com/twobirdslaw/embracing-the-conversation-in-black-history-month-part-2>
- <https://soundcloud.com/twobirdslaw/embracing-the-conversation-in-black-history-month-part-1>
- <https://soundcloud.com/twobirdslaw/embracing-the-conversation-in-collaboration-with-standout-for-pride-2019-podcast>
- <https://soundcloud.com/twobirdslaw/embracing-the-conversation-international-womens-day-2019-podcast>

Embracing the Conversation

In collaboration with Bird & Bird's Alumni network

*A conversation about BAME experiences in the legal profession:
in-house / private practice and workplace diversity*



Alumni & Bird & Bird



Letticia
Phillips



Daniel
Anti



Alice
Esuola



Esther
Kwandahor



Stephanie
Sellers



Embracing the Conversation:
A Decade of Diversity

Embracing the Spotlight

A monthly video series introduced in 2018, in which members of staff discussed diversity and bringing their differences to work.

Watch more videos here:

<https://www.twobirds.com/en/community/corporate-responsibility/diversity-and-inclusion/embrace>



Rex Bautista, Client Relationship Executive describes his experience working at Bird & Bird.

<https://watch.twobirds.com/embracing-the-spotlight-with-rex-bautista>

Ronald Hendrixx, Partner of Bird & Bird's Commercial Group, explains the benefits of diversity in the workplace.

<https://watch.twobirds.com/embracing-the-spotlight-with-ronald-hendrixx>

Rumana Khanom, Future Trainee Solicitor describes her experience on Bird & Bird's bursary scheme

<https://watch.twobirds.com/embracing-the-spotlight-with-rumana-khanom>

Embracing the Spotlight

Quotes published on the Bird & Bird Graduate Recruitment Instagram account from members of staff involved in diversity & inclusion work at the firm.

Rachel Welch-Phillips

Associate

Founder & Co-Chair of Embrace



Zoe Feller

Partner

London Diversity & Inclusion
Committee Member



What inspires your passion for diversity leadership at Bird & Bird?

"My passion for diversity leadership is inspired by my belief in **the unequalled strengths** that are found in difference. Everybody wins when there is a broad array of **perspectives and experiences** around the table. History has not always understood that, which drives my passion to seize any and every opportunity **to celebrate, appreciate and advocate** for diversity in the workplace today."

What inspires your passion for diversity leadership at Bird & Bird?

"I believe that in order to achieve our goals as a firm, we need to have the best people working here. And in order to have the best people working here, we need to recruit from the widest possible pool of talent. Beyond recruiting the best talent, diversity and inclusion is about making the most of all our people - this means **ensuring that everyone who works here feels valued and included throughout their career**. Creating that kind of culture comes from both the people we recruit and the firm's leaders who set the tone for the whole firm."

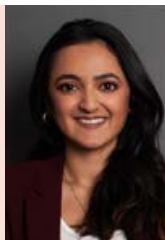
Embracing the Spotlight

Quotes published on the Bird & Bird Graduate Recruitment Instagram account from members of staff involved in diversity & inclusion work at the firm.

Adeena Wells

Associate

Co-Chair of Embrace



Craig Giles

Partner

London Diversity & Inclusion
Committee Member



What inspires your passion for diversity leadership at Bird & Bird?

"My passion for diversity leadership is inspired by a desire **to create an open, collaborative, colourful and different workplace**. The idea of working in a London City law firm can conjure up a certain image or type of person, and I want to challenge those stereotypes and open the doors for people who might not think that those doors are open to them. I want **to be different, to encourage difference and help others accept difference.**"

What inspires your passion for diversity leadership at Bird & Bird?

"Bird & Bird takes pride in our **'one firm' culture**. For me, this doesn't only mean that we see colleagues from around the world as part of the same team. It also means **we value all members of that team for the full contributions that they bring to the firm** – contributions that are inspired by a range of different backgrounds, perspectives and experiences. I want to ensure that **our staff are part of a welcoming, diverse and inclusive workplace that reflects that diversity of our clients.**"

Embrace events & socials

- Event: Round Table event with Nova Reid
- Social: Hidden Figures film screening
- Event: International Women's Day with June Sarpong
- Event: Black History Month panel discussion

Social: Film screening

Hidden Figures

In an effort to add an Embrace twist to social events for the London office, the network hosted a film screening after working hours, providing those who attended the chance to watch a movie with colleagues whilst learning about important historical figures and their contributions to science. The audience were particularly pleased when they were welcomed with popcorn, candy and fizzy drinks!

Hidden Figures is a 2016 American biographical drama film directed by Theodore Melfi and written by Melfi and Allison Schroeder.

The film is about black female mathematicians who worked at NASA during the Space Race. It tells the story of Katherine Johnson, a mathematician who calculated flight trajectories for Project Mercury and other missions. Dorothy Vaughan, NASA supervisor and mathematician and Mary Jackson a NASA engineer.



Event: The past, the present and a vision for the future

Black History Month panel discussion

In celebration of Black History Month (2018) in the UK, Embrace hosted a panel event with special guests from both public and private sectors. The speakers shared their insights on the past, the present and views of the future in relation to black history and the BAME experience.

Panellists included: **Rob Neil OBE**, MOJ's Head of Project Race – HR People Group, **Evelyn Ofori-Koree**, Solicitor – Advocate and Principal of Descartes Solicitors, **Nadia Motraghi**, Senior Barrister – Employment and Equality Law and **Trevor James**, Managing Partner of Morrison & Foerster and former partner at Bird & Bird London.

Rachel Welch-Phillips chaired the discussion which centred around the impact of recent events such as the Windrush scandal, its impact on employment and discrimination at work, recent reports on BAME representation in UK corporations, and prospects for future opportunities arising with the BAME community.

The event closed with Q&A from the audience engaging with the panellists on topics such as how to be a BAME ally, how to address unconscious bias and the importance of sponsorship and mentorship in the workplace.



Embrace partner sponsor Elizabeth Lang:

"I am delighted to champion our fantastic Embrace Network who work so hard to ensure that everyone, regardless of their race and ethnicity feels welcome in the firm.

Their contribution to the firm is highly valued and makes a real difference."



Industry Recognition

UK Diversity Legal Awards 2019 winners:

Outstanding Multi-cultural / BAME Employee Network

These awards, held at the Leonardo Royal Hotel London St Paul's, focus solely on recognising and celebrating equality, diversity and inclusion across the legal profession.

The team effort and firm wide support of the network were instrumental in this success.

The network was also shortlisted in the European Diversity Awards 2019 in the category of Employee Network of the Year



More information & resources

- Let's talk about race
- Top tips for setting up an employee network
- External resources
- Partnerships & commitments

Let's Talk About Race

Tips to kick start conversations

Getting the conversation started:

- **Be curious and ask questions:** No-one knows everything there is to know about race and ethnicity, and asking questions is how we all learn more.
- **Pick a 'terminology' and start:** Preferred terminology can vary person to person. But it's worth noting one in three people say they don't mind what terms you use. If you ask, most people would be happy to tell you what they prefer.
- **Listen to understand:** Check for clarity of what you have heard or play it back to confirm understanding.
- **Share what you have learned from previous conversations** to spark a new conversation. And offer up any experiences that you may have had.
- **Have fun:** It doesn't have to be an uncomfortable, stilted conversation and will be a richer and much more interesting one if everyone in the conversation is sharing information about themselves during the discussion.
- **Attend Cultural Awareness Days:** These events provide a great opportunity to learn about diverse communities and individuals.

Role models & change agents:

Everyone has a role in creating an inclusive environment here at Bird & Bird. Use one of these suggestions to get started:

- Sit down / interact with teams and colleagues you don't know
- Mentor someone junior/diverse to you
- Support / attend events of networks from your out-group
- Discuss diversity with your team, have diversity in mind when hiring/promoting etc.

"We can't address what we don't talk about. Organisations need to create an environment where employees can feel comfortable discussing difficult topics. Well done to Bird & Bird for hosting the 'Let's talk about race' event."

– Patricia Chinyoka, Diversity Advisor at BITC

External Resources

If you want to find out more about racial and cultural diversity outside of Bird & Bird, we have listed below some links to organisations and useful guides on issues related to race and culture in the wider community.

- ❖ The **Race & Equality Foundation** is a charity which promotes race equality in social support (what families and friends do for each other) and public services (what 'workers' do with people who need support):

<http://www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/about-us/about-race-equality-foundation>

- ❖ Guidance on approaching **terminology** around race and ethnicity:

<https://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/using-data-and-evidence/use-language-race-ethnicity/>

- ❖ Why not join: **The Ethnic Minority Lawyers Division (EMLD) Law Society:**

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/practice-management/diversity-inclusion/ethnic-minority-lawyers-division/>

Partnerships & Commitments



Business in the Community is the oldest and largest business-led membership organisation dedicated to responsible business. Supporting employers to ensure that ethnic minority employees are represented at all levels.

Bird & Bird is a **BITC Race at Work Partner** supporting their Race Equality Campaign.

For more information visit: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/race/>

RACE FAIRNESS COMMITMENT

We want fairness at work for people of all ethnic backgrounds – so everyone has an equal chance to succeed.

Bird & Bird has signed the **Race Fairness Commitment**, committing to:

- removing race-based obstacles faced by employees from BAME backgrounds
- making an effort to recruit and retain BAME talent and that qualified ethnic minority applicants are just as likely to receive an interview as their white counterparts.
- ending racial pay disparity and ensuring that lawyers of all races are equally likely to receive promotions.



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