

## Affiliate Spotlight

# The Gate City Bar Association Young Lawyers Division: Advancing Community, Leadership and Service Across Georgia



**Shannan M. Young**

In January 2025, the Gate City Bar Association (GCBA) advanced its long-standing commitment to the professional development, mentorship and advancement of young Black attorneys in Georgia by formally establishing the Gate City Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (GCBA YLD). While GCBA has consistently supported young lawyers and law students through its programming and leadership, the creation of a dedicated Young Lawyers Division marked a significant structural and strategic milestone.

Founded in 1948, GCBA is the oldest and largest voluntary bar association for Black attorneys in Georgia. For more than 75 years, it has served as a pillar of advocacy, professional excellence and access to justice. With a membership exceeding 500 attorneys, judges, professors and legal professionals, GCBA continues to play a vital role in shaping the legal landscape across the state.

The creation of GCBA YLD represents a natural extension of that legacy, ensuring that the next generation of attorneys is not only supported, but intentionally developed.

## Formation and Purpose

Recognizing the growing need for structured mentorship, leadership development and professional engagement among early-career attorneys, GCBA formally established its Young Lawyers Division to serve attorneys under the age of 40 or within their first 10 years of practice.

As reflected in its 2025 resolution, GCBA reaffirmed its commitment to en-

gaging young lawyers in leadership, service and networking opportunities that enhance their careers while strengthening the profession as a whole. The GCBA YLD was therefore created to provide a supportive and structured environment where young attorneys can build community, grow professionally and meaningfully contribute to the legal field.

## State Bar Affiliation

Following its formation, GCBA YLD petitioned for affiliation with the Young Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Georgia (State Bar YLD). In its petition for affiliate status, GCBA emphasized that such affiliation would provide enhanced access to leadership development, statewide collaboration and professional opportunities for its members.

At its General Session on June 6, 2025, the State Bar YLD voted to approve GCBA YLD as an official affiliate.

This designation formally integrated GCBA YLD into a broader statewide network of young lawyers and expanded opportunities for its members to engage in initiatives that advance both the profession and the community.

## Leadership and Organizational Structure

The successful launch of GCBA YLD was made possible through the vision and leadership of its inaugural chair, Shannan Young, under the administration of GCBA Immediate Past President, Christopher E. Bruce.

The division's inaugural leadership team—Keith Collins, Brooke Harrison, Porcia Lockett, Shombraya Goodman, Brianna Smith and Obasi Bryant—worked collectively to establish the division's strategic direction and operational framework.

From its inception, GCBA YLD has been guided by three core pillars:

- Community Building
- Professional Development
- Service to the Public

These principles continue to inform the division's programming and initiatives.

## Community Engagement

GCBA YLD has prioritized the development of meaningful relationships among young attorneys through a series of networking mixers and social events. These gatherings



The Gate City Bar Association YLD inaugural leadership team.

provide opportunities for connection, mentorship and collaboration among attorneys at various stages of their early careers.

To further strengthen engagement, the division will host monthly social meetups throughout this summer, creating consistent opportunities for members to build relationships and remain actively connected to the organization.

### Professional Development

In addition to community-building, GCBA YLD has developed programming designed to address the practical realities of legal practice—particularly those aspects of career advancement that are not typically taught in law school.

Under Young's continued leadership, the division is hoping to launch a comprehensive slate of programs this year, including:

- A Multi-Pathway Career Strategy Forum exploring advancement across large firm, small firm and public sector careers
- Programs focused on financial literacy, wealth-building and law firm ownership
- Skills-based sessions on negotiation, deposition practice and client development
- Discussions addressing leadership pathways, authenticity in practice and transitions to in-house or public service roles

These initiatives are designed to equip young lawyers with practical tools, strategic insight and the confidence necessary to navigate their careers effectively.

### Service and Community Impact

Consistent with GCBA's longstanding commitment to service, the YLD has actively engaged in initiatives that expand access to legal resources within the community.

To date, GCBA YLD has hosted wills clinics in partnership with organizations such as the Atlanta Legal Aid Society and



Members of the Gate City Bar Association YLD at a service event.

record restriction clinics in collaboration with Georgia Justice Project, providing direct legal assistance to individuals seeking a second chance and an opportunity to build greater stability in their lives.

As current GCBA President Hon. Pierce Hand Seitz noted, "Gate City's Young Lawyers Division is making a meaningful impact within the legal and Atlanta community. ... Their work meeting the community's legal needs reflects the community-centered focus of Gate City."

Building on this momentum, GCBA YLD is developing a statewide Day of Service, during which young lawyers will engage in community-based projects across Georgia before reconvening for fellowship and reflection, further reinforcing the division's commitment to collective service and meaningful impact.

### Looking Ahead

Since its inaugural year, the Gate City Bar Association Young Lawyers Division has established a strong foundation for continued growth and impact. Through its focus on community, professional development and service, the division has positioned itself as an important contributor to both Gate City and the broader legal community.

As GCBA YLD continues to expand its programming and membership, it remains

committed to fostering leadership, strengthening professional networks and advancing access to justice throughout Georgia.

### Join the Gate City YLD

The Gate City Bar Association Young Lawyers Division invites attorneys across Georgia who are under 40 or within their first 10 years of practice to become part of this growing community.

Membership in GCBA YLD offers the opportunity to:

- Build meaningful professional relationships
- Access practical and forward-thinking professional development
- Engage in impactful service initiatives
- Develop as a leader within both Gate City and the broader legal community

For those seeking connection, growth and purpose within the legal profession, GCBA YLD strives to provide a space to not only show up and observe, but to actively grow, develop and lead. *YLD*

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