

NEWS & INSIGHTS

AMBER THOMPSON SPEAKS ON IMPROVING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION PROGRAMS DURING TEDX EVENT

December 9, 2024

Lightfoot associate **Amber N. Thompson** recently served as a **featured speaker** for the Take Flight TEDx event at Kansas State University's Salina Aerospace and Technology campus. Her talk explored the challenges and opportunities in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs, with a focus on how some initiatives fall short of fostering true "inclusion." Thompson told the audience that many workplace groups formed under the banner of inclusion are *bonding* social capital groups—focused on employees' race or gender—rather than *bridging* social capital groups, which connect employees through shared interests.

"With bonding social capital groups, there's the danger of the majority not getting to know minorities," said Thompson. "While minorities are getting to know each other, they're left not feeling connected to the greater workplace."

Thompson said this disconnect can lead to resentment when members of the majority lack personal familiarity with minority colleagues who earn promotions. To foster authentic inclusion, she suggested that organizations should create groups such as running or book clubs that encourage interaction among all employees based on shared interests. This approach builds camaraderie and deepens understanding across diverse teams.

Thompson defends leading companies against product liability, environmental and toxic tort litigation nationwide, with a focus on the South and Midwest. Her clients include international automotive manufacturers, a leading wheelchair maker, a Fortune 100 natural oil and gas company and a multinational conglomerate. Thompson's recent matters include serving on the Lightfoot team prosecuting an Alabama Judicial Inquiry Commission trial for a Jefferson County judge accused of ethics violations.