

PROFILES IN *DIVERSITY JOURNAL*[®]

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2023 Third Quarter

Affie Ellis
Brownstein Hyatt
Farber Schreck

22nd Women Worth Watching[®] in Leadership Awards

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Where are they now?

AND MORE ...



NEXT ISSUE: 2023 Black Leadership, Innovations in Diversity and Diverse Lawyers in Leadership Awards



Affie Ellis
Shareholder

Brownstein

Education: JD, University of Colorado School of Law; BS, University of Wyoming

Company Name: Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck

Industry: Legal

Company CEO: Rich Benenson

Company Headquarters Location: Denver, CO

Number of Employees: 600+

Your Location: Cheyenne, WY

Words you live by: “Never let the odds keep you from doing what you know in your heart you were meant to do.”

Who is your personal hero? Elvis

What book are you reading? *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt

What was your first job? Motel maid

Favorite charity: CLIMB Wyoming

Interests/Hobbies: Quilting, camping, paddle boarding

Family: Husband of 20 years, Dennis, three children, Marlo, Archer, Linden and two golden doodles



Believing in yourself and following your heart can help you make the right choices

My parents are Navajo and they grew up on the Navajo Reservation. They were sent to an Indian boarding school where they received an education in the trades. When they graduated in the mid-1950s, they moved to Jackson, Wyoming. My dad was a welder and my mom worked in laundry services. I am the youngest of their four children and the first to attend college. I later earned my law degree.

My first legal job after passing the bar in 2008 was with the Wyoming Attorney General’s Office. I loved representing the state in federal natural resource cases. In 2010, I received a call from a U.S. Senate office asking if I would be willing to serve on the newly formed Indian Law and Order Commission. Congress created the commission to develop recommendations to improve public safety for Native American communities, particularly those with staggering crime rates. I excitedly approached my supervisors about the opportunity, but was unfortunately met with skepticism about my ability to serve. I was torn—decline the offer to serve on the commission and stay in my secure job or accept the offer and serve without support from my employer?

I talked to my mentors and husband for advice. They told me to have faith in my abilities and to follow my heart. After careful consideration, I left the

AG’s office and started my own consulting company, which afforded flexibility to serve on the commission. This was one of the best professional decisions I have ever made. I loved being my own boss and growing a company. Even more, I was grateful for the experience of serving on the commission. The work was hard and gut wrenching, but by 2014, we had developed a report containing more than 40 unanimous recommendations to strengthen public safety for Indigenous people. I was honored to present our findings to the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

Although our commission officially disbanded in 2014, many of us remain committed to implementing initiatives that strengthen Native justice. In 2016 I ran for the Wyoming Senate and was the first female Native American elected to serve in that capacity. I currently chair our Select Committee on Tribal Relations and have passed bills to address the missing and murdered Indigenous persons epidemic in our state.

When I ran for the Wyoming Legislature, I returned to the practice of law. I am thankful to be in a position to work on issues that are important to me, both in my legal practice and through public service. My family, friends and mentors have helped me develop a rewarding career. Anything is possible if you believe in yourself and never give up.