In the spring of 1971, seven women walked across the Williams commencement stage to receive diplomas for the first time in the institution’s history. In the fall of 1971, the first four-year class of women and men arrived on campus.

While the impact of half a century of coeducation on the Williams undergraduate experience has been profound, the legacy forged upon the Society of Alumni—the Williams beyond Williams—has been equally significant. Alumnae pushed our community to be more inclusive, expansive, and interconnected than ever before. This is an opportunity to reflect on the term ‘alumnae,’ acknowledging the historical shifts of inclusive language. It is a moment to celebrate the pathbreaking women of 1969-1975 who first claimed the recognition, particularly the transfer and exchange women who paved the way. This is also a time to recognize, honor, and acknowledge all alumnae across gender diversity, identity, and expression who have since affirmed their space at Williams and shaped the Purple Valley and the world beyond.

In marking the milestones of 50 years of coeducation and 200 years of the Society of Alumni in 2021, we look toward 2050 as the year when the Society will finally achieve gender parity.

With all members of the Eph community, and for all those who will come after—we chart a collective future of belonging, gender equity, and a truly inclusive definition of ‘Women of Williams.’ This moment is part celebration, part critical reflection, and part forward momentum. It is an invitation to “Dwell with the Gallant, till the suns and mountains never more shall be.”

The mountains! The mountains! We greet them with a song, Whose echoes rebounding their woodland heights along, Shall mingle with anthems that winds and fountains sing. ’Til hill and valley gaily, gaily ring.

Beneath their peaceful shadows may old Williams stand, ’Til suns and mountains nevermore shall be, The glory and the honor of our mountain land, And the dwelling of the gallant and the free.

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Vivia Chen ’78

Vivia Chen is an opinion writer at Bloomberg where she writes the “Unfiltered” column. An award-winning journalist with over 20 years of experience, she is also a former corporate lawyer. Vivia often writes about gender and race in the legal profession, particularly on the elite segment, known as “Big Law.” She regularly challenges the profession to improve its record challenges the profession.

Vivia has won several awards for opinion writing, including honors from The Society of American Business Editors and Writers (SABEW), The American Society of Business Publication Editors (ASBPE) and the Jesse H. Neal Awards. Lawyers of Color also named Vivia to its “2020 Power List” that recognizes “the most influential minority attorneys in the nation.”

Born in Taiwan and raised in Houston, Vivia is a graduate of Williams and New York University School of Law. She resides in New York City with her husband and two daughters.

Lee Kiechel Koles ’93

Lee Kiechel Koles is a Potentialist, Blending principles of science, strategy, and coaching, she helps individuals, leaders, and teams identify and maximize untapped potential and drive transformative growth.

Lee is an industrial/organizational psychologist, career strategist, Gallup-certified CliftonStrengths coach, Hogan-certified leadership assessor, and a certified life coach. Her podcast, CareerSequel, was recently named one of the top career podcasts of 2023.

Her work has been featured across media including The Journal of Applied Psychology, Psychological Science, Fairygodboss, and Shondaland.

Sharifa T. Wright ’03

Sharifa Wright is a global equity, diversity, and inclusion strategist and portfolio manager. Her expertise is in the design and implementation of inclusion, diversity, equity, and anti-racism (DEA) strategy, policies, and programs that hold executives, CxOs, and boards accountable for change.

She guides organizations to identify, dismantle, and disrupt anti-Black racism and its intersections with sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, and xenophobia. Sharifa is currently working on ESG strategy and operations at Indeed.com. She previously was the Managing Director for Black Moms Connection, the inaugural Executive Director for Equity, Diversity and Inclusive Engagement at Ontario Tech University and Director of Alumni Diversity & Inclusion at Williams.

Sharifa is a founding board member of the Institute for the Quantitative Study of Inclusion, Diversity & Equity (QSIDE) based in Williamstown and the Pan-African Credit Union (PACU) in Canada; she also serves on the boards of Tropicana Community Services and VHA Home Healthcare, also in Canada, and was a board director of Williamstown’s Images Cinema.

Most importantly, Sharifa is the mum and solo parent of three-year-old Sea; they call Canada, Jamaica, and the U.S. different versions of home and spend a lot of their time in Whitby, Ontario, next door to Sea’s grandparents. Among her many diversions, Sharifa enjoys reading long form investigative journalism, solitude, weekly therapy, forest bathing, all things hip hop, most things dancehall, and listening to Sea laugh.

Aliza Shatzman ’13

Aliza Shatzman is the President and Founder of The Legal Accountability Project, a nonprofit aimed at ensuring that law clerks have positive clerkship experiences, while extending support and resources to those who do not. Aliza earned her B.A. from Williams and her J.D. from Washington University in St. Louis School of Law, where she clerked in the 2019-2020 term.


restitution by a former D.C. judge. The intent of Aliza’s written testimony was to advocate for the Judiciary Accountability Act, legislation that would extend Title VII protections to judiciary employees, including law clerks.


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In March 2022, Aliza submitted written testimony for a House Judiciary Subcommittee hearing about the lack of workplace protections in the federal judiciary, detailing her personal experience with gender discrimination, harassment, and