

# ATTORNEY SPOTLIGHT

We took the opportunity to sit down with Neal & Harwell trial attorney, Moziano "Trey" S. Reliford III, to learn more about his personal and professional experiences as a diverse attorney.

Trey Reliford is a trial attorney at Neal & Harwell, PLC. His practice focuses on complex litigation. Before joining Neal & Harwell, Trey clerked for Chief Justice Jeffrey S. Bivins of the Tennessee Supreme Court and worked as an associate at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Warton & Garrison LLP in New York. Trey earned his JD from Stanford Law School.

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**1. Can you tell us about your background and how you made the decision to become a lawyer?** Well, my mother always said I had the "gift of gab" and I could argue non-stop . . . so I guess not much has changed. But more seriously, I made the decision to become a lawyer because I want(ed) to help people. When someone comes to a lawyer, they are often dealing with one of the most serious and consequential problems in their lives. I love helping people and strategizing to find resolutions to problems. The tactics, the stakes, the adrenaline of practicing and advocating is something I love. I am happy with the choice I made; I was meant to do this.

**2. How have you seen the legal industry shift in recent years with respect to diversity and inclusion?** I think the legal industry is still finding its footing honestly. When I graduated from Stanford Law in 2015, and was being recruited by Paul, Weiss and other firms, the big talking points were the numbers of diverse attorneys at a particular firm. Now, the conversation has appropriately shifted to the number of diverse attorneys in meaningful positions of power. I think that is spot on. What matters is how much trust and opportunity is given to diverse attorneys within organizations. Will the organization give them the ball and say, "go make plays" or will they keep them on the bench and trot them out for optics only? Speaking for myself at Neal & Harwell, I've been given the ball.



**3. Juneteenth is now recognized as a federal holiday. What does Juneteenth mean to you?** Juneteenth is a celebration of perseverance and triumph. As a black man descended from slaves, it's a day to reflect on the strength of my ancestors and their journey to freedom and the realization of greater equality in America – which, candidly – is not yet complete. Juneteenth more broadly should be a day of pride for each and every American, regardless of their race, religion, or creed. It's a day when the ideals America was founded upon were made more real. I am very happy that it is now recognized as a federal holiday – that's progress. And I'm very excited about the past and present traditions that have developed and are continuing to develop around the holiday.

**4. What areas of practice do you enjoy most and why?** I truly enjoy white collar and regulatory defense work, securities litigation, entertainment law litigation, and crisis management. Each practice area typically involves complex issues with many moving pieces and requires multi-faceted strategies. In addition, these matters are usually high-profile/high-stakes, and that gets the blood pumping. There is nothing like delivering for a client when the pressure is highest, and to do so, you must keep your cool, strategize, and execute. I love it!

**5. What is one thing about you that most people don't know?** I taught English in Japan for 2 years as a Japanese Exchange Teaching ("JET") Programme Assistant Language Teacher. I lived in Togane, Chiba, Japan, and while there, I taught myself conversational Japanese and did mixed martial arts at a local gym called, "Grow." I fought in two amateur bouts – lost both – hence why I fight with words now, haha. But really, I loved my time in Japan. I made some of my most fulfilling friendships in Japan, and call Japan my second home. I try to get back whenever I can.

**6. Best advice you received from a role model/mentor?** Take your career into your own hands and be proactive. My father told me that if I wanted to be successful, it was up to me to outwork and outperform my peers every time, regardless of previous successes. He was right.