



Greater Rochester Association
for Women Attorneys

279 CASTLEBAR ROAD
ROCHESTER, NY 14610
info@grawa.org

□

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A Chapter of WBASNY
Women's Bar Association
of the State of New York
www.grawa.org

November 17, 2017

New York State Bar Association
One Elk Street
Albany, NY 12207

Attn.: Maria Kroth

Re: Bar Leaders Innovation Awards

Dear Ms. Kroth:

Kindly accept this letter as the narrative in support of Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys' Nomination for NYSBA Bar Leaders Innovation awards:

During the summer of 2016, the Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys (GRAWA) Board, at its summer meeting, discussed the increasing number of deaths of men and women of color during confrontations with police, as well as the growing number of acts of hate happening across the country. We considered whether responding to these events was something we, as GRAWA, could do. In reviewing our mission statement, which includes the goals of promoting the fair and equal administration of justice, we concluded it was. We formed a committee, which we have called the GRAWA Committee on Social and Racial Justice.

Over the course of its first year, the committee members discussed how to approach issues of race and racism, and what our goals would be. Ultimately, we concluded we first had to educate ourselves, and then bring programming to GRAWA, with the goal of eventually bringing our ideas and efforts to the Greater Rochester community. We shared materials, book suggestions and videos. In the spring 2016, the Board voted to continue the committee as an ad hoc GRAWA Committee.

In conjunction with a local school district, with the Rochester Black Bar Association (RBBA) and Monroe County Bar Association (MCBA), we held a showing and discussion of the movie, "I'm Not a Racist, Am I?" Following that event, members of the three bar associations signed up for a joint bar association project, now known as The Lawyers Committee on Racial Justice. This joint coalition's purpose is to challenge systemic, institutional, and individual racism in the legal profession, criminal justice system, and the Greater Rochester area.

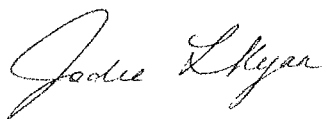
Our next project is coordinating a CLE in January 2018 on microaggressions and implicit bias in the workplace, with a focus on the relationship between attorneys, their colleagues, adversaries, and staff.

In addition, the coalition recently collected feminine hygiene products and provided them to the New York State Police, which, in conjunction with the Governor's Office, is collecting items for residents of Puerto Rico.

As we pursue efforts to enhance our cultural sensitivity, the New York Continuing Legal Education Board is working towards similar goals, having created a new category for CLE credit. The category, Diversity, Inclusion and Elimination of Bias, will include courses, programs and activities that must relate to the practice of law and may include, among other things, implicit and explicit bias, equal access to justice, serving a diverse population, diversity and inclusion initiatives in the legal profession, and sensitivity to cultural and other differences when interacting with members of the public, judges, jurors, litigants, attorneys and court personnel. Beginning July 1, 2018, all attorneys must complete one (1) hour of CLE credit in diversity, inclusion and elimination of bias training in each two year reporting cycle.

We are hopeful that with our combined efforts, we can increase our community's attorneys' engagement in these efforts, our own cultural sensitivity, as well as our offices', improve retention of staff of color, develop better client relationships, and ultimately contribute to improvement of our community.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jodie L. Ryan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Jodie L. Ryan
President

700 Crossroads Building
11 State Street, Rochester, New York 14614
P 585.987.2800 F 585.454.3968



woodsoviatt.com

1500 Main Place Tower
Buffalo, New York 14202
P 716.248.3200 F 716.854.5100

Writer's Direct Dial Number: 585.987.2898
Writer's Direct Fax Number: 585.987.2998
Email: dbascoe@woodsoviatt.com

November 17, 2017

Via Email (Awilliams@vlsprochester.org)

Ann M. Williams, Esq.
VLSP Rochester

Re: NYSBA Bar Leader's Innovation Award

Dear Ms. Williams:

My name is Duwaine Bascoe, 2017 President of the Black Bar Association (RBBA) and I write in support of the nomination of the Greater Rochester Association of Women Attorneys (GRAWA) for the New York State Bar Association's Bar Leaders Innovation Award for their efforts in the creation of the Lawyer's Coalition on Racial Justice, which is a joint endeavor between GRAWA, RBBA and the Monroe County Bar Association (MCBA).

After identifying the need to address issues of racial and ethnic injustices in the Greater Rochester area, GRAWA took the initiative, sought collaboration from both the legal and business communities, and took action to address these issues; beginning with the organizing and showing of the documentary "I'm Not a Racist, Am I?" which provided a jolt to the attending members of the legal community and enabled a sincere dialogue of both conscious and unconscious biases. From there, the Coalition met throughout the summer to address numerous social injustices and sought practical solutions to address the concerns of the citizens of the Greater Rochester area. The Coalition went on to put on a successful CLE on diversity, retention and inclusion, which addressed the lack of diversity in the legal community, the need to be purposeful when recruiting, and ways in which firms, corporations and public entities can create and foster a more inclusive and welcoming environment.

The Coalition has also focused on micro aggression in the work force and with clients, voting rights, gerrymandering and public education. They have provided a review of the report "Enough is Enough" which provides a statistical overview of the police department's use of force and the disciplinary actions that arose therefrom. This report was disseminated throughout the Coalition's membership and provided suggestions on combating police brutality with the creation of a new, independent review board, and ways in which to address pretextual stops of people of color in Rochester for mundane offenses, such as riding a bicycle without a bell.

November 17, 2017

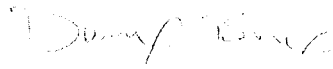
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In addition, the Coalition was instrumental in collecting feminine hygiene products for those displaced by Hurricane Maria.

For these reasons, I wholeheartedly support the nomination of GRAWA for the New York State Bar Association's Bar Leaders Innovation Award for the work that has been done, and the difference that continues to be made, by the Lawyer's Coalition on Racial Justice.

Very truly yours,

WOODS OVIATT GILMAN LLP

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Duwaine T. Bascoe", is centered below the firm name.

Duwaine T. Bascoe
Rochester Black Bar Association President

DTB/knw



November 17, 2017

Dear Members of the Award Committee:

I write in support of the nomination of the Greater Rochester Association of Women Attorneys for the Bar Leaders Innovation Award for their spearheading role in the creation of the Lawyers Coalition for Racial Justice. Under GRAWA's leadership, the Monroe County Bar Association and the Rochester Black Bar Association have worked together to support this committee. I believe the Coalition is a unique and striking example of the ways creative bar leaders can have an impact on their local communities. Consequently, GRAWA richly deserves the Innovation Award for its pioneering effort to create the Coalition.

GRAWA's nomination letter provides the history of the Coalition. The goal, shared by the MCBA and RBBA, has been to address questions of racial and ethnic injustice in the Greater Rochester area. GRAWA leaders saw a need to move beyond discussions about the "law" to explore a variety of other topics of concern not only to lawyers but to the community as a whole. A major stimulus was a realization that the lack of diversity in the legal profession in the Rochester area stemmed from factors outside the legal profession: perceived injustices toward minority residents of the city, particularly in street interaction and in the criminal justice system; lack of connection among professionals (lawyers, doctors, journalists, police officers, etc.) from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds; the persistence of racist attitudes and micro-aggressions within our law firms and businesses; the fact that economic improvement in our city barely reaches into poor, ethnic communities; the ongoing lack of access to justice among our poorer neighbors.

For these reasons, when GRAWA approached us with the idea of teaming up for the showing of the film "I'm Not a Racist, Am I?" we were excited to join them. As the nomination letter indicates, after the showing of the film, members of the three bar associations, under the leadership of Jill Paperno of GRAWA, organized the joint project that became the Lawyers Coalition for Racial Justice. The Coalition meets at the MCBA offices and its programs have all taken place at the MCBA's Rubin Center for Education, so we have had ample opportunity to see the energetic and thoughtful leadership of Ms. Paperno and others in GRAWA. The Coalition has worked to encourage attendance by non-lawyers at its events, offering free admission or significantly reduced prices for attendance. The aim is to reach as broad a spectrum of the community as possible, while taking advantage of our base of strength within the legal profession. These programs help lawyers meet new CLE requirements while at the same time increasing the sensitivity of all those who attend to the various, often hidden, ways in which implicit racial attitudes lead to injustice, not just in law firms but in the community at large.

Telesca Center for Justice
One West Main Street, 10th Floor
Rochester, NY 14614-2098

585-546-1817
585-546-1807 fax

www.mcba.org

As the nomination letter notes, the Coalition collected and delivered feminine hygiene products to Puerto Ricans who came to Rochester in the wake of Hurricane Maria. The Coalition is well placed to respond in this manner to future situations of this sort. Because it represents a community of professionals, it is perfectly situated to "make things happen" quickly, to tap into local resources and funding, and move efficiently toward providing help where needed.

I urge you in the strongest terms to recognize the work of the Greater Rochester Association of Women Attorneys in creating the Lawyers Coalition for Racial Justice with this year's Bar Leaders Innovation Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin F. Ryan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kevin F. Ryan
Executive Director