



**Personalized Service. Integrity. Success.**

**Grant Law, LLC** is a law firm dedicated to providing quality legal services to large and small businesses, governmental entities, and individual clients. We concentrate in the areas of Commercial Litigation, Real Estate, Commercial Lending, Corporate, Product Liability Litigation, Municipal Liability, Bankruptcy and Creditor's Rights.

Grant Law, LLC combines proven, professional excellence and complete dedication to client service with the firm's interpersonal diversity. We realize that every client's situation is unique. We listen carefully to each client's concerns to gain the insight necessary to ask the right questions. We then apply our legal expertise to our client's specific situation and rigorously analyze alternative courses of action to recommend the best solution to resolve our client's important legal issues.

Our firm is rated AV by Martindale Hubbell, and we are certified as a Minority Business Enterprise. Our firm is also a member of the National Association of Minority and Women Owned Law Firms (NAMWOLF).

**At Grant Law, LLC, we combine the diverse skills of a large law firm with the innovation, efficiency and personal service of a smaller firm. We counsel our clients in a direct, no nonsense manner and welcome the opportunity to serve you.**



**Personalized Service. Integrity. Success.**

**Dedicated to serving the unique needs of each client, we have the knowledge and experience to represent clients across a diverse set of legal matters.**

#### **Commercial Litigation**

Grant Law, LLC provides a full range of dispute resolution services in all aspects of commercial enterprise. Our commercial litigators represent clients in a broad array of commercial disputes at the federal and state level, including business disputes, injunctive relief, real estate litigation, and constitutional law. As trial lawyers, our professional experience entails not only jury and bench trials, but also investigation and discovery practice, motion practice and appeals. We also leverage alternative dispute resolution through arbitration and mediation to resolve disputes in a more timely and cost effective manner for our clients.

#### **Employment Law**

With substantial experience in the field of employment law, Grant Law, LLC proactively works with clients to help them avoid lawsuits before they start by assisting them with the development and implementation of policies and practices that reduce the possibility of litigation, including employment policies for hiring, retaining and terminating employees. We also conduct independent internal investigations of employee claims of adverse employment action. When employment claims are filed, we represent our clients before federal and state courts as well as administrative agencies.

#### **Corporate Services**

Corporations of all sizes, in a broad range of industries, look to Grant Law, LLC for a variety of legal services and casework, including drafting bylaws and resolutions, corporate counseling, review and drafting of legal contracts, sales of businesses and other related transactions, and representation in matters of banking, retailing, real estate and construction.

#### **Real Estate and Commercial Lending**

Grant Law, LLC leverages its extensive experience in handling real estate matters for developers, investors, lenders and other businesses. We provide a full range of real estate services, including dispositions and acquisitions, mortgage and construction financing and leasing. Our expertise in all areas of commercial lending includes experience in banking law, lending, leasing, structured finance, and project finance and securitizations.

#### **Healthcare Law**

The attorneys of Grant Law have represented a number of hospitals, community health clinics, private practice groups, individual healthcare providers, and health insurance companies. Our experience includes assisting clients with the creation, purchase, and sale of physician and dental practices; drafting and negotiating employment agreements for physicians, nurse practitioners, and non-provider staff; drafting and advising clients regarding employee handbooks, policies, and procedures; drafting and negotiating office leases, service agreements, and supply contracts; litigating insurance contract disputes as well as employment disputes, including restrictive covenants (non-compete clauses) and employment discrimination claims.

#### **Product Liability Litigation**

Grant Law's extensive experience in the area of product liability litigation includes attorney representation of national and international corporations against a wide array of claims including defective design, failure to warn, and breach of warranty. In addition, we defend manufacturers in cases alleging asbestos and other toxic exposures. We serve as national asbestos counsel for multiple clients, coordinating and supervising all aspects of the litigation including motion practice, discovery, trial and appeals. Our attorneys' experience has covered a broad range of product categories.

#### **Municipal Liability**

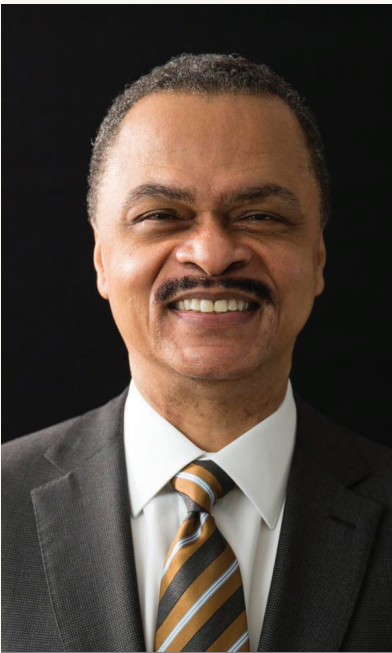
Providing a full array of governmental law services, Grant Law's seasoned attorneys represent a variety of governmental entities, including municipalities, authorities and school districts. We defend our clients' interests in allegations of personal injury, property damage, automotive accidents, dangerous highway conditions, breach of contract, employment matters, and police misconduct and other claims pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. We proactively work with our municipal clients to help them avoid lawsuits before they occur by rendering legal advice and interpretation regarding specific issues of liability.

#### **Bankruptcy and Creditors' Rights**

Grant Law has considerable experience representing the interests of creditors and lending institutions in federal bankruptcy and state courts covering a wide range of issues. We are equipped to protect the interests of secured and unsecured creditors involved in any contested matters under any chapter of the Bankruptcy Code. We are also able to represent the interests of any creditor initiating a collection action or other commercial litigation against an adverse party. Grant Law's vast experience in transactional matters further qualifies our firm to provide counsel to any creditor involved in the work-out or liquidation of a commercial entity.



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### Maurice Grant

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**GRANTLAW, LLC**

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## Recognized and respected as an attorney who believes in providing superior client service with unwavering integrity and an impressive record of results.

Maurice Grant is a nationally recognized and highly respected attorney, specializing in business and commercial litigation, employment, healthcare and real estate. He successfully represents clients ranging from large Fortune 500 companies, to governmental entities, hospitals and private medical practices, medium and small businesses, as well as individuals.

Prior to founding Grant Law, LLC, he co-founded Grant Schumann LLC and established the Law Offices of Maurice Grant. Earlier in his career, after serving as a judicial law clerk for Justice Calvin C. Campbell of the Illinois Appellate Court, Maurice worked as an associate attorney representing clients in commercial, real estate, and employment litigation at the law firm of Much, Shelist, Freed, Denenberg, Ament & Rubenstein, P.C.

During his career, Maurice has served the legal community both as a member of the Board of Managers and Chair of the Solo and Small Firm Committee of the Chicago Bar Association. He currently serves on the CBA's Finance Committee and as the association's Pro Bono General Counsel.

A licensed member of the Illinois Bar, United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Seventh Circuit Court and the United States Supreme Court, Maurice has been recognized on the Super Lawyer list by legal industry publication, Super Lawyer Magazine in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 for his accomplishments in commercial litigation. In 2013, he was honored as a Business Leader of Color by Chicago United.

### Legal Industry Recognition

On June 23, 2016 the Nominating Committee of the Chicago Bar Association announced its slate of officers for 2016 –

2017, including attorney Maurice Grant, principal of the Chicago firm, Grant Law LLC, nominated and awarded the position as the Association's Treasurer.

Business advocacy organization Chicago United announced on March 10th, 2016 the appointment of Maurice Grant, principal of Grant Law LLC, to its Board of Directors, during the organization's Annual Meeting & Leadership Summit.

Maurice was awarded the AV Preeminent® rating by the legal industry's Martindale-Hubbell® Peer Review Ratings,™ an objective indicator of a lawyer's high ethical standards and professional ability, generated from evaluations of lawyers by other members of the bar and the judiciary in the United States and Canada.

Maurice was recognized on the Super Lawyers list by legal industry publication, Super Lawyers Magazine in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 for his accomplishments in commercial litigation. In 2013, he was honored as a Business Leader of Color by Chicago United.

Recognized by the *Illinois Leading Lawyers™*, Maurice has been recommended by his peers as being among the top lawyers in the fields of commercial litigation and real estate. Less than 5% of all lawyers licensed in each state have receive the distinction of *Leading Lawyer*.

*continued >*

### Areas of Practice

Business and Commercial Litigation  
Employment Law  
Real Estate  
Commercial Lending  
Healthcare



## Community Involvement

Maurice also has served the local community in a variety of capacities including as a member of the Board of Trustees of Living Word Christian Center, the Board of Directors for the Illinois Facilities Fund (the largest not-for-profit lender in Illinois), the Center For Conflict Resolution, and the Evanston Symphony Orchestra. He is a former Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Abraham Lincoln Centre and the Board for the Chicago State University Foundation. Maurice is currently on the Board of Directors for Chicago United, the Public Interest Law Initiative ("PLI") and on the Advisory Board of the Justice Enterprise Project ("JEP").

In addition, Maurice has served as an adjunct faculty member at the Illinois Institute of Technology Chicago Kent College of Law where he taught Legal Drafting General Practice to second year law students. He is currently a member of the PLI ("Practicing Law Institute") faculty.

## Education

Maurice graduated from the University of Maryland School of Law in 1984. Prior to attending law school, he earned a Bachelor of Arts in History from DePaul University and attended graduate school, majoring in European and African History.

REV09-112116

### Education

- University of Maryland School of Law (J.D. 1984)
  - Articles Editor of the Maryland Journal of International Law and Trade
  - Assistant Editor of the Maryland Law Forum
- DePaul University (B.A. 1980)

### Bar Memberships

- American Bar Association
- Chicago Bar Association

### Board Membership

- Board Member – Chicago United (2016 – Present)
- Treasurer - Chicago Bar Association (2016 – 2017)
- Finance Committee - Chicago Bar Association (2013 - Present)
- Steering Committee - Justice Enterprise Project (2012 - Present)
- Finance Committee and Inclusion Initiative - NAMWOLF (2009 - Present)
- Board of Managers - Chicago Bar Association (2007-2009)
- Chair of Solo & Small Firm Committee - Chicago Bar Association (2006-2007)
- Advisory Board Public Interest Law Initiative (2016-Present)
- Vice-Chair of Solo & Small Firm Committee - Chicago Bar Association (2005-2006)
- Center for Conflict Resolution (2010 - 2013) (Audit Chair)
- Evanston Symphony Orchestra (2011 - 2013)
- Chairman of the Governance Committee (2007 - Present)
- Chicago State University Foundation (2002 - Present) (Chairman - 2011 - Present)
- Chairman of the Board - Abraham Lincoln Centre (Member - 2001 - 2011) (Chairman - 2008 - 2011)

### Presentations

- PLI Faculty Member - 2013 - Present
- CLE – CBA Trial Practice (Cross Examination and Closing Argument)
- CLE – Taking and Defending Depositions (2014)
- Webcast – CBA Practice Pointer, "Developing a Website for Solo and Small Firms" (2010)
- Webcast – CBA Practice Pointer, "Marketing for Solo and Small Firms" (2010)
- Guest Speaker – Entity Type and Partner Considerations, "Starting Your Own Law Practice" (2008, 2009, 2010)
- Guest Speaker – CBA Law Practice Management and Technology Conference, "How to Handle High Maintenance Clients" (2007)
- MCLE Evaluation (2005)
- Guest Speaker – Serving on the Board of a not-for-profit organization (2004-2006)



### Ronald Austin, Jr.

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As a partner in the firm and experienced defense attorney, Ron has established a reputation as a sought-after corporate litigator, advisor, and speaker in both the Midwest and national legal communities.

Ronald Austin, Jr. is a highly regarded corporate attorney who concentrates in the areas of employment law, healthcare law, commercial litigation, and product liability litigation. Ron joined Grant Law in 2015 as a partner.

Ron's practice includes representing health care providers, financial services companies, retailers, manufacturers, and insurance companies in employment litigation, contract disputes, and corporate transactions. Ron also represents clients in commercial litigation and product liability litigation, including automobile, construction equipment, and food equipment manufacturers.

Ron has extensive experience defending against toxic tort claims and serves as national counsel for manufacturing clients in asbestos personal-injury actions. As national counsel, he manages all aspects of the litigation, including trial.

In addition, Ron regularly advises and provides training to clients to help them avoid litigation.

Ron is a licensed member of the Illinois Bar and a member of the trial bar for the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. He has also been admitted

to practice in the United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois, Southern District of Illinois, Northern District of Indiana, Southern District of Indiana, and the Eastern District of Wisconsin.

### Community Involvement

Ron serves as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of PCC Community Wellness Center, a federally qualified health center with locations in Chicago and the western suburbs. He also serves on the Community Board Member Advisory Panel for the Illinois Primary Health Care Association. Additionally, Ron serves as Vice-Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Victory Apostolic Church.

### Education

Ron obtained his Juris Doctor from the University of Illinois College of Law in 1997. Prior to law school, Ron graduated from Florida A&M University, cum laude, with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in 1993.

### Areas of Practice

Employment Law  
Healthcare  
Commercial Litigation  
Product Liability Litigation

REV10-121117

#### Education

- University of Illinois College of Law (J.D. 1997)
- Florida A&M University (B.S. 1993)

#### Board Memberships

- Chairman of the Board of Directors – PCC Community Wellness Center
- Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees – Victory Apostolic Church
- Community Board Member Advisory Panel – Illinois Primary Health Care Association

#### Bar Membership

- Association of Defense Trial Attorneys (Vice Chair of Mentor Committee, Publications Committee)
- Chicago Bar Association (Business Law Committee, Health Law Committee)
- Defense Research Institute
- Illinois Association of Defense Trial Counsel
- Illinois Association of Healthcare Attorneys

#### Presentations

- "Litigating Non-Compete Agreements" – Association of Defense Trial Attorneys' Annual Meeting (2017)
- "Amendments to the Illinois Limited Liability Company Act" – Illinois Paralegal Association's Spring Education Conference (2017)
- "Introduction to the Family Medical Leave Act" – client presentation (2011, 2017)
- "Diversity and Inclusion" – client presentation (2016, 2017)
- "Employment Laws Every Business Owner Should Know" – Chicago Urban League's Next Level Business Development Program (2016)
- "Bylaws and Operating Agreements" – Illinois Paralegal Association's Corporate Section Meeting
- "Team Building Basics" – client presentation (2013)
- "Estate Planning" – client presentation (2013, 2014, 2016)
- "Organizing Your Business" – client presentation (2012)



### Berkely Cobb

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## Berkely Cobb offers Grant Law clients skilled legal and financial expertise in Commercial Litigation, Employment Litigation, and Real Estate matters.

As an important addition to the litigation team at Grant Law, Berkely Cobb provides the firm and its clients with a unique mix of knowledge and experience in the fields of both law and finance.

Prior to joining Grant Law, Berkely was responsible for litigating real estate related court hearings and municipal housing cases including other related responsibilities at two respected Chicago area law firms. Berkely also worked as a law clerk for the Illinois Department of Insurance.

In addition, Berkely previously served as an Admissions Recruiter for the DePaul University College of Law, a legal intern for the U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Illinois in Chicago, a summer law associate for Tressler LLP, and a judicial law clerk for Judge Franklin U. Valderrama, Circuit Court of Cook County. Prior to her work in the law field, she worked as a Senior Financial Analyst for General Motors Corporation, and as an Audit Associate for PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

Berkely is a respected member of the American Bar Association, Chicago Bar Association, Cook County Bar Association, Illinois State Bar Association and is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA).

### Community Involvement

Berkely leverages her legal skills to assist the community in a variety of volunteer efforts for the Chicago Bar Foundation and as a Cabrini Green Community Legal Aid.

### Education

Berkely earned her law degree at the DePaul University College of Law in Chicago, Illinois in 2014. Berkely's college career began at Michigan State University in East Lansing where she earned her Bachelor of Science degree with honors in Accounting with a minor in finance in 2003. She went on to earn a Master of Science degree with honors in Accounting with Tax Specialization in 2004.

### Areas of Practice

Commercial Litigation  
Employment Litigation  
Real Estate and Commercial Lending

REV04-112016

#### Certifications and Awards

- Certified Public Accountant (CPA)
- CALI Award for Excellent Achievement in the study of Electronic Discovery
- PriceWaterhouseCoopers Minority Scholar Award Recipient (4 years)

#### Bar Memberships

- American Bar Association
- Chicago Bar Association
- Cook County Bar Association
- Illinois State Bar Association

#### Board Memberships and Committees

- Fundraising and Alumni Chair - Black Law Student Association ("BLSA") (2012 - 2013)
- Mock Trial Team Member, BLSA (2012 - 2013)
- President, National Association of Black Accountants MSU Chapter (2001 - 2002)



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## Carlos Carabajal provides Grant Law clients with knowledgeable representation in civil rights litigation and employment law, as well as a youthful zeal and intensity critical to our successful litigation team.

Carlos comes to Grant Law with experience as a civil rights attorney handling Equal Employment and Fair Housing matters. Also Carlos gained experience as an associate attorney at a Chicago personal injury firm and as a law clerk for the Cook County State's Attorney's office in Illinois.

Carlos represents clients at all phases of civil litigation including taking and defending depositions, representing clients at arbitration and in court, interviewing witnesses, briefing motions, and developing and implementing litigation, discovery and settlement strategies. He has litigated state and federal cases, covering a broad range of legal issues.

As a student-instructor supervisor for the John Marshall Academic Enhancement Program, Carlos organized and implemented academic enhancement workshops taught by legal professionals, authored exams, and supervised and mentored student-instructors.

Carlos worked in the Cook County State's Attorney's office felony division as a law clerk. Carlos' responsibilities included assisting attorneys in legal research, meeting with witnesses and victims for pre-trial meetings and prepared discovery files, among a variety of other duties.

Carlos is a current member of the American Bar Association and Chicago Bar Association, former Academic Chair of the The John

Marshall Latino Law Student Association, and is fluent in both English and Spanish.

### Community Involvement

Carlos maintains close ties to the community having participated in the Restorative Justice Mentor Program at Chicago Public School's Marine Leadership Academy, as well as membership in the Illinois Latino Law Student Association (serving as an ILLSA Latino Law Forum Board committee member), and in the Illinois State University Police Department's STOP (Students on Patrol) Program while attending undergraduate classes in Normal, Illinois.

### Education

Carlos earned his law degree at The John Marshall Law School in Chicago in 2015. Prior to law school, Carlos earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice/Police Science from Illinois State University, where he graduated summa cum laude in 2011.

### Areas of Practice

Civil Rights Litigation  
Employment Law  
Business and Commercial Litigation

REV02-112016

#### Education

- The John Marshall Latino Law Student Association (former Academic Chair)
- The John Marshall Law School (J.D. 2015)
- Illinois State University (B.A. 2011)
  - Journal of Information Technology and Privacy Law, Production Editor (2013-2015)
  - Latino Law Student Association, Academic Chair (2014-2015)

#### Bar Memberships

- American Bar Association
- Chicago Bar Association

#### Board Memberships and Committees

- ILLSA Latino Law Forum Board Committee Member (2014-2015)
- Illinois State University Police Department – STOP (Students on Patrol) (2010)

#### Presentations

- Speaker, panelist for the Illinois Latino Law Forum (2015)



### Ashley Starks

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## Ashley Starks brings Grant Law clients a strong set of litigation skills gained from a unique legal background and extensive clerkship experience.

Ashley Starks, a bright and energetic member of the firm's litigation team, offers the clients of Grant Law a legal expertise built upon a unique range of experience that includes work with matters of both governmental and civil law.

Prior to joining Grant Law, Ashley worked at the Office of the Illinois Attorney General, as an Assistant Attorney General representing the State of Illinois in a wide array of civil litigation. During her time there, she successfully argued motions, advised state agencies on legal matters, conducted settlement negotiations, and acted as a Lead Attorney on cases before the Civil Service Commission.

Her post law school experience also included serving as a judicial law clerk for Judge LeRoy K. Martin, Jr. and Judge Anna H. Demacopoulos in the Chancery Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County. Following her clerkship, Ashley transferred to the Criminal Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County as a staff attorney, assisting a team of judges with a variety of criminal and constitutional matters.

### Community Involvement

While studying at the Loyola University Chicago School of Law, Ashley worked as an Assistant Program Director for *Just the Beginning—A Pipeline Organization*, and as a tax preparer for the non-profit organization *Ladder Up*. Currently, she volunteers as a Group Leader for Minority Legal Education

Resources, where she oversees a group of tutors as well as spearheads group classes for recent law school graduates preparing for the Illinois bar exam.

### Education

Ashley Starks earned her law degree in 2014 from the Loyola University Chicago School of Law. In her years at Loyola, she served as: Staff Editor for the *Public Interest Law Reporter*; Student Representative for the Federal Income Tax Clinic; Civil Procedure Research Assistant to Professor Emeritus Richard A. Michael; member of the Black Law Student's Association; and earned membership on the Loyola University Chicago School of Law Dean's List.

Ms. Starks also earned a Certificate in Trial Advocacy from the Loyola University Chicago School of Law's Dan K. Webb Center for Advocacy, the mission of which is to develop and educate ethical advocates for justice and the rule of law that are conscientious, persuasive and highly effective in their representation of clients across diverse practice environments.

Prior to law school, Ashley attended the University of Florida, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and double-minored in Business Administration and English.

### Areas of Practice

Commercial Litigation  
Employment Litigation

REV04-121217

#### Education

- Loyola University Chicago School of Law
- University of Florida

#### Certification and Awards

- Loyola University Chicago School of Law Dean's List
- Certificate in Trial Advocacy (from Loyola's Dan K. Webb Center of Advocacy)

#### Clerkships

- Circuit Court of Cook County, Honorable Anna H. Demacopoulos (2016-2017)
- Circuit Court of Cook County, Honorable LeRoy K. Martin, Jr. (2015-2016)

#### Bar Memberships

- Chicago Bar Association
- Cook County Bar Association
- Black Women Lawyers' Association

#### Board Memberships and Committees

- Cook County Bar Association (Professional Development Committee and Young Lawyers Section)





### Karen J. Porter

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Recognized nationally for her more than 30 years of experience representing creditors and debtors, Karen serves as counsel for Grant Law, LLC in matters involving bankruptcy law, bankruptcy litigation, creditors rights, commercial litigation and commercial real estate transactions.

Karen J. Porter has spent more than 30 years representing creditors and debtors in every aspect of bankruptcy and commercial law. She concentrates her work in the areas of bankruptcy law, bankruptcy litigation; chapter 11 reorganizations, creditor's rights business workouts, mergers and liquidations, commercial litigation and commercial real estate transactions. Karen has represented a diverse client base of large corporations, lending institutions, collection agencies, insurance companies and small businesses.

Karen was admitted to practice law in Michigan in 1982 and in Illinois in 1984. She is a member of the Trial Bar of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

After graduating from law school, Karen served as law clerk to United States Bankruptcy Judge Thomas James. She also served as a staff attorney for the judges of the Bankruptcy Court of the Northern District of Illinois where she gained additional experience working on complex Chapter 11 cases and preparing opinions for publication in the Bankruptcy Reporter. Karen joined the law firm of Rosenthal and Schanfield in 1986 as an associate. Since leaving that firm, Karen remained in private practice representing the interests of debtors and creditors in bankruptcy and commercial law matters.

### Community Involvement

A member of the Chicago Bar Association and the Illinois State Bar Association, Karen is a recognized leader in the legal profession. She has been a member of the Bankruptcy Executive Council of the Commercial Law League of America and served as a faculty member of the Illinois Professional Responsibility Institute. Karen also is associated with other civic organizations in the city of Chicago.

### Education

After earning a Bachelor of Arts degree, class of 1979, from Kean University in Union, New Jersey, Karen studied law at the University of Michigan, graduating in 1982.

### Areas of Practice

Bankruptcy Law and Bankruptcy Litigation  
Chapter 11 Reorganizations  
Business Workouts, Mergers and Liquidations  
Creditor's Rights  
Commercial Litigation  
Commercial Real Estate Transactions

REV05-112016

### Education

- University of Michigan (J.D. 1982)
- Kean University (B.A. 1979)

### Bar Memberships

- Chicago Bar Association
- Illinois Bar State Association

# How One Minority-Led Law Firm Is Climbing to the Top

*Grant Law, LLC*

Step foot inside the law offices of Grant Law, LLC, and you'll see one of the most diverse legal teams in the nation working on cases ranging from commercial litigation, employment and real estate to corporate law and health care. What you'll also see is that although this firm represents some of the largest clients throughout the world, it's doing it with a powerhouse team of six.

If you're looking for a list of attributes that set Grant Law apart from its competitors, you simply need to spend a few minutes talking with Maurice Grant, founder and principal. Staunchly committed to excellence and diversity, Grant is determined to build a firm that represents inclusion, top-notch professionalism and unparalleled leadership.



*Maurice Grant*

"Throughout the last two years, we've handled matters on every continent except Antarctica, and our lawyers are well positioned to deal with cutting-edge issues," he says.

"Every Grant Law attorney acts as a change agent, shifting the tide in a field known for being the least diverse among any profession requiring licensing and a post-graduate degree."

Describing his firm as justice driven, Grant says his team consistently delivers both in and out of the courtroom because



*The Grant Law Team*

of a simple philosophy. "I always tell my team: Don't get ready. Be ready." It's a mantra that has defined Grant Law's work throughout the region and the world, earning the attention and the business of multiple Fortune 500 corporations, major nonprofit organizations and top-notch academic institutions, including the region's top hospital and largest municipality, the country's second-largest municipal transit organization and the world's largest corporation.

"We have a client list that resembles that of much larger firms," Grant says. "What our clients discover is with us, they can get the same level of service offered by those larger firms but with greater success and better value."



**GRANTLAW, LLC**

## Introducing Relationships to the Corporate World

In a world where information is instantly accessible, Grant Law works hard to deliver a higher level of accessibility to its clients. Each case is leanly staffed with attorneys. Clients are always given their attorneys' cell phone numbers and direct email addresses, and attorneys immediately contact clients when a question or new information arises. "We just had a large corporate client tell us that our response time was second to none," says Grant. "It all points back to

our commitment to every relationship. We want our clients to know we're available whenever they need us."

As Maurice Grant looks to the horizon, anticipating great changes to commercial litigation, employment and health care, he says Grant Law is well prepared, thanks to the storied resumes of his team members. All Grant Law lawyers serve multiple professional organizations and lead throughout their communities. They remain actively involved in organizations like the American Bar Association, the Chicago Bar Association and the Bankruptcy Executive Council of the Commercial Law League of America. They serve local organizations like Chicago United, the Justice Enterprise Project, the Lighthouse Youth Center and more. For Grant, it all serves as the proverbial proof in the pudding as he watches how his firm's relentless pursuit of perfection shatters minority stereotypes and paves the way for corporate and nonprofit clients to claim and sustain success.



# Maurice Grant

## Shattering Perceptions in the Legal Industry

by Dustin J. Seibert

Maurice Grant draws several parallels with the late, great attorney Johnnie Cochran.

Grant has a commanding personality, a flashy sense of dress (fine, tailored suits), and a megawatt smile. That personality informs everything he does, not the least of which is being the face of **Grant Law, LLC**, a six-attorney shop that he founded in January 2015.

The multi-service litigation and transactional firm is much smaller than a lot of firms that have a roster of Fortune 500 clients that rival those of Grant Law LLC, including Wal-Mart, Allstate and Northern Trust Corporation, through which Grant completed the loan documentation to establish the Noble Network of Charter Schools, the first charter school network in downtown Chicago. But his firm's relatively diminutive size fuels Grant to provide client service that rivals those of exponentially larger shops.

"Doing what we do provides an opportunity for everyone to realize that it can be done," he says. "Because right now, there seems to be a perception that there's an exclusivity to it, and that motivates me."

Grant's longtime friend, Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP co-founder Patricia Brown Holmes, says Grant's motivation begets a tenacity that makes him a formidable foe in the courtroom or on the other side of a deal.

"If you're a client who wants someone who'll definitely have your back, it's him," Holmes says. "He's not afraid or tentative about anything. At the same time, he'll give you the last penny in his pocket. He really does well by his people."

### Humble Beginnings

Grant is the second of two children to Willie, a crane operator who retired after 45 years, and Elcase, who worked in food service. They moved to Chicago in the



1950s during the Great Migration; both parents are still living.

Neither of Grant's parents obtained a formal education, but they made sure he and his sister Michelle Grant Ervin, a Washington, D.C.-based physician, understood that getting a good education was not optional.

"We were going to go to college, and they pushed for As" Grant says of his parents. "If we didn't get As, I had to pay for it. I learned early on that there's pain associated with your decisions. It's better to learn that when you're young than when you get older."

Grant was a child piano prodigy who started playing at 4. He played his first recital at 6, taught lessons from his teen years through to law school, and competed to the point that he suffered bleeding ulcers at 18 on his way to "wanting to be the next (black classical pianist) Andre Watts," he says.

After 53 years on the keys, he can still "play two hours cold," doing the occasional paid "gig."

"When I'm done playing, you can put me in a box," he says.

As a child, Grant knew he would grow to do one of three things for a living: become a classical pianist, a lawyer or a professor. He won a piano scholarship to DePaul University and intended to go before discovering the program's practical limitations.

"They told me I would be taking a series of classes that required me to practice eight to 10 hours a day, but my scholarship wasn't a full one, so I had to work," he says. "I made the decision that first day in the registrar's office to not major in music."

Grant decided instead to major in history, a discipline he says that helped him to have a photographic memory that benefits him to this day.

"When I'm preparing cases and briefs, I can see something and know it's there; I can visualize the case on the page," he says. "It got me through law school and still helps me tremendously in my career. I'm pretty sure it came from memorizing all those notes."

He ultimately decided that of the three potential careers, he'd become a lawyer — mainly because it still allowed him to help people and use all of his core strengths.

"Any trial lawyer worth their weight has to be a teacher," he says. "I figured I could positively affect the most people as a lawyer. Being a musician in the entertainment industry is fine, but the advancement of peoples' rights, to me, is on another level."

Grant discovered what type of law he wanted to practice as a college junior when he was a computer operator for a furniture company "back when computers took up a whole room." He went to DePaul's job placement and found an internship as a law clerk with a small law firm that has since merged into Hinshaw Culbertson.

"I knew I wanted to go into law, but I didn't know anything about it, so this internship was necessary," he says. "I had to take a \$2-per-hour pay cut, which was huge in 1978, but I spent three years there."

"I learned that I didn't want to practice criminal or divorce law. I liked business law, so I wanted to be a commercial litigator. From there, employment and contract work became a natural fit."

## The Last Intimidation

Grant attended the University of Maryland Law School — famous for being the third-oldest law school in the country behind Harvard and Yale, but infamous for having a segregation policy that deterred Thurgood Marshall, the first black U.S. Supreme Court

**“When I’m preparing cases and briefs, I can see something and know it’s there; I can visualize the case on the page.”**

justice, from applying in the 1930s.

He picked Maryland in part because they had an orientation program for incoming minority students to get acclimated to the law school environment. Grant was one of 33 black lawyers in a class of 230, which he says was still more diverse than most of the law schools in Illinois when he graduated in 1984.

Grant's experience at the law school was the very last time he ever felt intimidated by his peers in the field.

"When I got there, it seemed like everyone was so far ahead of me," he says. "The list of institutions represented in my incoming class included Johns Hopkins and Harvard, and here I am, this kid from the inner city of Chicago. It felt like everyone was light years ahead of me, so I had to step my game up to stay with these people."

The drive from intimidation paid off: While in law school, Grant was assistant editor of the *Maryland Law Forum* and the articles editor of the *Maryland Journal of International Law and Trade* — a very rare feat to do both.

Upon graduating and returning to

Chicago, Grant determined that to practice the law he wanted to, he either had to go to a large firm or clerk for a judge. He chose the latter — clerking for the late Hon. Calvin C. Campbell of the Illinois Appellate Court.

Campbell was a black judge who graduated from University of Chicago Law School in 1951, three years before the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that declared unconstitutional state laws that established separate public schools for black and white students.

"He felt like he had to earn everything he got in life and that I had to earn it as well," Grant says of Campbell. "So he promptly put his foot up my rear and kept it there the entire year. I understand now what he was doing and why."

Despite the tough love, Campbell looked out for Grant, encouraging him to someday become a president of the Chicago Bar Association (Grant is currently the association's treasurer) and writing him recommendation letters.

"All this time I'm thinking he hates my guts, but his secretary called me and said that when he gave me a reference, he sounded like he was talking about his own son," Grant says.

## Things Haven't Changed

Following his clerkship, Grant was hired as an associate at the firm now known as Much Shelist P.C., a midsize firm where he was the first black attorney in the firm's history.

Hon. Michael Hyman of the Illinois Appellate Court was a partner at Much Shelist when Grant was hired. Hyman helped Grant hone his abilities, including his writing skills, and the men remain friends to this day.

"He's always been dedicated to his clients and making sure that their needs are met in a very professional manner," Hyman says of Grant. "He's a very skilled lawyer and is excellent at oral presentations."

One of the first things Grant learned doing corporate law at the firm was that a lawyer's value is directly based on their ability to generate business. That mindset carried him to the time he decided to hang his own shingle, Law Offices of Maurice Grant, in 1987. He's been a founder of various manifestations of his own practice, including 11 years of Grant Schumann, LLC before the opening of Grant Law.

"I knew that regardless of my situation — being in a firm or having my own house — I had to generate," he says. "I also realized I didn't want to continue working for and

going through the political process at other entities where no one looks like me when I can develop something on my own.”

Despite his successes and the increased number of minority attorneys and partners at firms throughout the country since he started practicing, Grant says progress hasn’t been as profound as it should be. He says it’s no coincidence that the partners and principals in most of the large firms nationwide are majority Caucasian.

“People need to understand that we still don’t live in a colorblind society,” he says. “I’ve been practicing law for 32 years and not once have I walked into a room where there were five black lawyers.”

He does what he can in the name of his race and culture in his corner of Chicago on the second floor of 230 W. Monroe St. For example, everything in the office’s main conference room “except the television and phone was created by a black person.”

Art pieces on the walls throughout the office are from the former curator of Chicago’s DuSable Museum of African American History. A sculpture from the Shona people of Zimbabwe, whose art influenced the likes of Pablo Picasso, faces the conference table. All of the furniture throughout the office was picked out by Grant’s wife, Fredericka.

“I believe in giving our people opportunities they might not get elsewhere,” he says. “Every immigrant group has had an opportunity to have their own enclaves in America, but we were the ones who were systematically separated and had our identities taken from us when we were brought over to America. People like to say that all of that that happened 200 years ago, but things haven’t changed as much as some would think.”

Grant says that, despite his proven track record of career success, he still experiences professional racism and bigotry. He tells a story of a 1997 real estate transaction in Crystal Lake, Illinois, during which the buyers refused to sit in the same room as him.

“The broker called me up the next day and apologized to me, telling me they didn’t want to be in the room with a black person,” he says. “I can go down the line with stories like this...it’s all very real.

Grant says he consciously navigates a corporate culture in which about 70 percent of Fortune 500 company board consists of Caucasian males — 90 percent if you factor in Caucasian women.

“Since I was young, (Black Americans) have comprised 13 percent of the population,” he says. “Latinos are ahead of us now, but corporate boards haven’t changed. When I started working as a law

clerk in 1978, less than two percent of all lawyers at large law firms were Black; there have been very few gains since that time.

“What’s worse is that there’s a more sophisticated subterfuge going on. The more you educate a bias, the more a person can disguise it. Like ‘Make America Great Again.’ When was America not great? The answer is not given because it isn’t true.”

Grant insists that pointing out America’s many hypocrisies doesn’t mean he doesn’t love the country, only that he feels the need to address its many warts.

## Building a Superior Product

Just as he gave piano lessons as a teenager, Grant has never stopped teaching. He spent three years on the Chicago-Kent College of Law faculty as an adjunct professor, he is a current member of the Practicing Law Institute faculty, and he still teaches an annual trial practice course for the Chicago Bar Association.

Overseeing the firm doesn’t keep Grant from maintaining a full caseload himself. He feels the same about practicing law as he does about playing the piano: He’ll stop when he’s pushing daisies.

“I’ve seen too many bad things happen with retired people who don’t stay active,” he says. “What will I do...sit around and drive my wife up the wall? I want to always be learning, embracing challenges, and adapting to an ever-changing society. Living things grow, and a sure sign of death is to stop growing.”

Grant’s primary goal these days is to continue building Grant Law into “a legacy that lives far longer than me,” he says. He also wants to ensure that the firm stays profitable when the next generation takes it over.

“I learned how to be profitable from many years on my own,” he says. “I do wish to grow, but I’d rather have six attorneys and be profitable instead of 10 or 15 attorneys and not be profitable.”

Ronald Austin, Jr. is likely the first in line to assume the mantle of Grant Law’s leader when Grant can no longer practice. Austin started the firm with Grant in January 2015 and is the firm’s only partner.

“He’s really driven to build this firm,” Austin says of Grant. “He wants to make sure we’re doing what we need to do not just because he wants good lawyers, but also to show that minority-owned law firms can do the type of work any other law firm can do, at or better than other firms. Doing our best and representing the best is his driving principle.” ■



# A More Inclusive Way

## Maurice Grant makes it his business to boost diversity

BY HARRIS MEYER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY COREY HENGEN

MAURICE GRANT, A TALL, SLENDER MAN in a tailored Brioni suit, stands on stage, introducing the evening's honoree at a recent fundraising dinner for Chicago State University. Grant, board chairman of CSU's foundation, has not forgotten his roots. He tells attendees that the South Side school needs help because its students are mostly people of color, many of them struggling single parents.

Grant, 56, is co-founder and principal at the seven-lawyer firm Grant Schumann in Chicago. His parents, who didn't finish high school, came north from rural Mississippi in the early 1950s to seek a better life and job opportunities. Growing up on Chicago's Southeast Side, Grant saw friends die of drugs and gang warfare. He had his school lunch stolen from him at gunpoint when he was 12.

But his parents watched over Grant and his sister closely, dressed him in suits, "whipped" him when he was bad, took him to church, and paid for piano lessons from the time he was 4. He became an accomplished classical pianist, competing throughout his teen years. "Piano competitions are way harder than trying a case," he says. Grant won a music

scholarship to DePaul University; even so, he had to work nearly full time to support himself through college and law school.

"It was a very disciplined household, very stable, which most people don't have now," says Grant, sitting in his downtown office, surrounded by African and African-American sculptures and paintings. "I'm thankful."

Now Grant co-leads one of the handful of black-owned law firms in Chicago handling litigation and transactional matters for large corporations and government agencies. His clients include the likes of Wal-Mart, Integrys Energy Group, Citigroup, JPMorgan Chase, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., and the City of Chicago.

He hopes his firm will provide a lasting foundation to help achieve greater opportunities for minorities: "My objective is to grow something that will live beyond me, and practice law in a more inclusive way."

In the last few years, Grant and his firm have gained attention with a number of significant cases, including: a 2012 dismissal for the FDIC of a federal negligence and breach of fiduciary duty

suit; a favorable 2013 settlement for a meat-processing firm in a Fair Labor Standards Act class action involving nearly 100 workers in an overtime case; and the rewriting of contracts, including one with the gravediggers' union, in the wake of the bankruptcy of the historic Burr Oak Cemetery, which was hit by a scandal involving graves dug up to resell plots.

"He's very astute at understanding the issues and sensitivities," says former Circuit Judge Patricia Brown Holmes, court-appointed bankruptcy trustee for the cemetery. Holmes is a partner at Schiff Hardin and the incoming president of the Chicago Bar Association.

"He has this gregarious manner that wins people over," she adds, noting that her office was at an impasse in negotiations with the gravediggers before she hired Grant. "When Maurice came on, he told them, 'Hey, why don't we just resolve this? The last thing you want is to hear me nag you. My wife could tell you you've never seen a nag like me.' That's how he lightened the mood."

Grant, nicknamed Reese by his family, has a strong commitment to charitable, church and bar activities, such as the



**MAURICE GRANT**

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National Association of Minority & Women Owned Law Firms. He's also well known for rigorously mentoring young lawyers. His associates often repeat his mantra, "Don't get ready, be ready"—one of Grant's many favorite sayings, which his senior associate Maurice L. Gue has compiled into a growing notebook that he calls "Reese's Pieces."

"The level of attention he gives to each associate is something you rarely find," says Gue, who's been with Grant Schumann for seven years. "We can hold our own against any firm in the city because of his training."

Despite the numerous successes and the high praise from in-house attorneys who have hired him, Grant says he still has to be relentless to get new corporate business—even as corporate executives claim they strive for diversity. "Most of that is just rhetoric," he says.

He's frank in letting corporate officials know they need to do better. "I told a large bank that they are putting up a lot of branches on the South Side, but that only a small percentage of their contractors are minorities," he says. "I made a presentation to them that their revenues from those branches will dry up unless they invest back by contracting with minorities."

Mara S. Georges, Chicago's former city corporation counsel, laughs when recalling Grant's persistence. "He must have the best calendar system, because every few weeks he would call and very professionally say, 'We did this for you; how about more work?' He's very personable and it was always nice to hear from him." Georges, currently a partner in her own firm, now seeks Grant's advice on rainmaking.

She agrees with his assessment that minority- and women-owned firms are at a disadvantage. "A lot of in-house counsel understand that, when a case is unsuccessful, if they can say they used the biggest, most expensive firm, no one can throw darts at them," she explains.

Grant learned from his mother early on that he had to be very good at what he did. "My parents pushed me to be successful, and failure was not an option," he says. "I got my butt whipped when I brought home a low grade."

"I was a tough mom," confirms Eleise Grant, who lives with her husband, Willie,

not far from their son. "I wanted my son and daughter to be highly educated and become a doctor and a lawyer, and in the name of Jesus, that's what I got." (Grant's sister, Dr. Michelle Grant Ervin, is an adjunct professor of emergency medicine at Georgetown University.)

Deciding a career as a classical pianist wasn't in the cards—"I wasn't going to be the next André Watts, and I realized that at 18"—Grant attended the University of Maryland School of Law, where he was on the law review. He went on to clerk for Justice Calvin Campbell at the Illinois Appellate Court, serve as an adjunct professor at Illinois Institute of Technology Chicago-Kent College of Law, and become the first-ever black associate at Much Shelist. Then he decided to open a solo practice. While his original goal was to become a partner at a big firm, he saw that, as a black attorney, he would face barriers. "Most partners hire people who look and talk like them," he says.

Building a new firm was a difficult learning process, but he says, "I knew I needed my own clients and revenue stream. Billie Holiday had it right: 'God bless the child that's got his own.'"

In 2004, Grant decided to launch a firm with two other solo black attorneys, Anthony Schumann and Geraldine Holt. It took years of determined outreach to get cases from corporate and government clients. He started contacting Wal-Mart in 2006 and finally got his first two matters from the corporation in 2014: an ongoing Americans with Disabilities Act case and a racial discrimination claim. He's fiercely proud of snaring big companies as clients and serving them well. "Their business means everything to me," he says.

"There are not that many lawyers of color who've been able to grow a firm that relies on business clients," says First Appellate District Justice Michael B. Hyman, who mentored Grant at Much Shelist. "I respect him so much because he's been able to build something from the ground up."

Greta Weathersby, senior counsel at energy firm Integrys Energy Group, says Grant has been "a great advocate" for her company since 2005, getting many cases moved from the court system to the Illinois Commerce Commission. "He's

very tenacious," she says. "There may have been multiple motions, hearings and changes of judge, but he stuck with it and sometimes created novel arguments to have the case dismissed with prejudice."

Grant is particularly proud of the FDIC case. It was a 13-count federal claim that accused a trustee—a failed bank overseeing two land-trust agreements—of acting negligently and fraudulently and allowing the trustholder to be defrauded out of \$10 million; the FDIC was the receiver for the bank. Grant got the call, along with 19 boxes of documents, from the federal agency in November 2011; he was asked to replace another law firm. Working with his associates, Grant had until the end of February 2012 to prepare a motion for summary judgment while defending an opposing motion for summary judgment.

It was a big job in a tight time frame for a small firm, involving complex legal issues about who had authority to direct transfers of trust property and the nature of the trustee's fiduciary duties. On top of that, the client wanted the brief two weeks early. But in August 2012, Grant and his team won the case outright on summary judgment in a 27-page opinion.

Grant hates to lose—in law, tennis, piano competitions or anything else. "Losing is not my heritage," he says. So it pains him that in 2014 he lost his first trial in 16 years, representing a large municipal agency in a circuit court lawsuit brought by an auditing firm to recover fees. But his opponent says it was a "game-changer" when Grant took over from government staff attorneys, turning what looked like a blowout win for the auditing firm into a more difficult case.

"He was a tough adversary and developed arguments the other lawyers hadn't identified," says opposing attorney Charles Ritter Jr., senior partner at Duke Holzman Photiadis & Gresens in Buffalo, New York. "He's aggressive and came up with curveballs for me at the last minute. And he was fearless about moving forward into trial."

Holmes says Grant's legal creativity is related to his musicianship. "He's an artist, and he brings that artistic flair to the practice of law," she says. "Sometimes you have to pull him back. But he's looking



at it from a lot of different viewpoints that your typical lawyer might not see."

Grant is proud of running a diverse firm, which currently employs four African-American lawyers and three white lawyers, and includes two women. "If you start having more diverse firms, you'll have more diverse hiring," he says. "We have to start looking like the society in which we live."

His first associate hire was Gue, a young lawyer he lured away from a better-paying contract assignment with the promise of intensive training. Gue's workdays often start by going into Grant's office with a notebook and discussing the law, business and sometimes personal issues. "I wasn't used to practicing at his level, and it's caused me a lot of pain," Gue says with a rueful grin. "But you can go in any time to talk to him about anything."

Grant's perfectionism extends to the impeccable way he dresses and requires his colleagues to dress. "My mother

always said, 'Your package has to look good or no one will buy the product,'" he says. "I don't want anyone to discount me based on the way I look."


Associate Margaret Bogacki agrees that Grant is a tough but supportive taskmaster. "He is always there, saying, 'Let's think about the next step; here's why that won't work,'" she says. "I have to tell him to slow down. He's at step 10 and I'm still at two or three. He's not messing around, and that can take some getting used to. But it's good for a newbie like me."

After giving his associates detailed instructions and debriefings on hearings and trials, Grant often lightens the mood by taking them out to his favorite Italian café for sausage or chocolate chip cookies. "My one vice is chocolate," he says with a smile.

Fredericka, his wife of 19 years, runs an office furniture company. "Freddie is his secret weapon," Hyman says. "She has a

good business mind, and I'm sure every night she's telling him things he needs to know."

Walking around his office and pointing out the many art pieces he has collected, with titles like *Slave Vessel Chronicles* and *Nostalgic View of Black America*, Grant returns to the theme of widening legal opportunities for minorities. He aims to continue promoting a standard of excellence so that clients and other attorneys have confidence in the quality of representation provided by minority lawyers.

"The black bar is struggling, and black law school enrollment is dropping," he says. "That's really scary to me because it's through the law that we have made most of our advances. The firm is my legacy to expand diversity." 

## Christopher W. Helt, Esq.

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## The Voice

### And The Defense Wins

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#### Ronald Austin, Jr.



On April 1, 2015, DRI member [Ronald Austin, Jr.](#), a partner at the law firm of **Grant Law, LLC** in Chicago, Illinois, obtained summary judgment on behalf of Defendants in the case of *Dr. Chinyere Odeluga v. PCC Community Wellness Center, et al.*, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois Case No. 12-cv-07388. Plaintiff filed her lawsuit against Defendants, PCC Community Wellness Center, a federally-qualified community health center, and four of its physicians.

Plaintiff, a family medicine physician, was accepted into PCC's maternal-child health fellowship, a one-year training program designed to enable family medicine physicians to perform C-sections and other obstetric procedures. Soon after plaintiff began the fellowship, PCC received complaints about her performance from attending physicians, nurses, and medical residents at the hospital where most of the training was conducted. At the conclusion of the fellowship, PCC refused to issue a certificate of completion to plaintiff.

The complaint alleged that defendants discriminated against plaintiff on the basis of her race, national origin, and age and created a hostile work environment. The court granted judgment in favor of Defendants on all counts alleged in the complaint. The court agreed with defendants that there was no direct or indirect evidence to support plaintiff's discrimination and hostile work claims. In addition, plaintiff failed to establish a prima facie case of discrimination. The court found that plaintiff did not meet PCC's legitimate performance expectations. PCC placed plaintiff on a performance improvement plan two months into the fellowship and later placed her on academic probation, but her performance did not improve. Plaintiff also failed to establish that she suffered an adverse employment action. Her primary complaint was that she did not receive a certificate of completion at the conclusion of the fellowship. The court found that a certificate of completion was not a term or condition of plaintiff's employment. Therefore, PCC's decision not to provide plaintiff with a certificate of completion was not an adverse employment action.

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