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Founded: July 5, 1984

Number of Members: 300

Brief Association Vision: To

advance equality and excellence in the pursuit of justice, aid the progress of blacks and other minorities in the profession, address legal issues affecting the citywide community, and foster the study of law by encouraging the personal and professional development of young lawyers and law students. The Metropolitan Black Bar Association (MBBA) is an affiliate of the National Bar Association (NBA). Founded in 1925, the NBA is the nation's oldest and largest association of African American lawyers and judges.

Brief History: Founded on July 5, 1984, the MBBA was created from the merger of the Harlem Lawyers Association, founded in 1921, and the Bedford Stuyvesant Lawyers Association, founded in 1933. As one of the largest organizations of black attorneys in New York state, the MBBA continues the rich legacy of its two predecessor organizations by providing a voice for black legal professionals in the communities it serves.

Today, the MBBA is comprised of mostly minority attorneys in large and small law firms, solo practitioners, and at all levels of government, academia, corporations, financial

institutions, not-for-profit organizations and the judiciary.

What is your association's most popular outing / social event? The MBBA offers programs on a variety of practice areas to its members and the broader legal community. Our signature event is the Annual Awards Gala. Each year, more than 500 members of the legal community and guests from the business and not-for-profit sector join MBBA members to recognize the achievements of outstanding and noteworthy black attorneys.

This year, the Gala marked the MBBA's 30th anniversary. The Awards Gala was held on May 16 at Pier Sixty in New York City. The gala's theme was "The Power of Us: Celebrating 30 Years of Leadership, Innovation and Community." Michele Coleman Mayes, vice president, general counsel and secretary of the New York Public Library, and Theodore V. Wells, Jr., partner and co-chair of the litigation department at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP, were the co-chairs of the MBBA Gala Committee. In addition to the president, the MBBA Gala Committee members include Jason Clark, Paula T. Edgar, Hon. Cheryl J. Gonzales, Taa Grays, Deborah L. Martin, Francesca J. Perkins and Hon. Alvin M. Yearwood.

The honorees were:

- **Trailblazer of the Year:** Raymond J. McGuire, global head of Corporate and Investment Banking, Citigroup, Inc.;
- **Corporate Counsel of the Year:** Duane L. Hughes, managing director, Morgan Stanley;
- **Private Practitioner of the Year:** Carmen J. Lawrence, partner, King & Spalding LLP;
- **Jurist of the Year:** Hon. Sheila Abdus-Salaam, associate judge, New York State Court of Appeals;
- **Public Servant of the Year:** Jennifer Jones Austin, CEO/executive director, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies and co-chair, Mayor Bill de



A gala night—The Metropolitan Black Bar Association held its annual gala recently and presented Duane Hughes of Morgan Stanley with its Corporate Counsel of the Year Award. From left to right: Morgan Stanley co-workers Claudette Pulido, Carla Harris, Hughes, Brooke Reid, Coleman Hughes (Duane Hughes' son) and Nate Saint-Victor.

Blasio's transition team; and

- **Member of the Year:** Shirley Stewart Farmer, first president, Metropolitan Black Bar Association (posthumously).

What is your association's most pressing concern regarding the legal profession? "We have been faced with several challenges to laws imposed to ensure equality. We are also still faced with uncertainty in our economy and continued fluctuations in the employment market. We have also been faced with the challenges to affirmative action and voter legislation," said President Nadine Fontaine.

Under Fontaine's leadership, MBBA has provided employment, networking, and mentorship opportunities for our members and also supported our community.

What is your association's goal for next year? The MBBA will continue Fontaine's work under our new president, Taa Grays, who began her two-year term on June 30. Grays' agenda will have an added focus on the following areas:

1. Legal Profession: Deepen diversity

and inclusion within the profession through partnerships and collaborations with fellow bar associations and relevant professional and non-profit organizations.

2. Members: Enhance the members' experience with the organization.
3. Community: Advocate on behalf of and provide resources to women attempting to improve their lives and the lives of their children.

Final comments: "Lawyers must be activists to leave a contribution to society," E. Clinton Bamberger, director of the Office of Equal Opportunity's Legal Services Program, explained in a 1965 speech to the National Legal Aid and Defender Association. "The law is a more than a control; it is an instrument for social change."

The MBBA strives to make an indelible impact on the legal profession one event, one partnership and one community service program at a time. ♦

The Bar Around The Corner is a project of the New York State Conference of Bar Leaders, www.nyscbl.org.