A final version of the attached *Letter to the ABA Section of Business Law*, from Diversity Clerk Muhammad El Gawhary, then a student at Vermont Law School, was published in *Business Law Today* (November/December 2008).

Dear ABA Section of Business Law,

I am writing to express my gratitude for the opportunity to clerk in Philadelphia’s Commerce Court this summer, as part of the Diversity Clerkship Program. It was an enlightening experience and an invaluable contribution to my career as an attorney. It has given me an accurate understanding of business law and a front row seat to its real world application.

With the New Year in 2008, I planned a transition in focus from criminal to business law. That change of approach was motivated by the realization that the broader my legal skills, the more useful I can be to my employers and clients. With that in mind, I sought to familiarize myself with the laws of the corporate world. Although I was deterred by the competitiveness of the field and the selectiveness of employers, I was encouraged to see that the ABA Section of Business Law was providing a Diversity Clerkship Program. I was encouraged by the thought that diversity would count for strength and was eager to take advantage of the program.

To my surprise, by the summer, I was selected to be one of the nine privileged clerks. I was assigned to the Chambers of the Honorable Judge Mark I. Bernstein, with the Court of Common Pleas, in City Hall, Philadelphia. Judge Bernstein made this an educational experience by constantly asking questions and assigning legal tasks. Going to court was not for entertainment, but for answering unpredictable questions later. The Judge was also expressive about his response to motions, memos, and lawyers, and drew a good picture of what to emulate, and what not to. Judge Bernstein was a great mentor to his clerks and made us all proud to be members of his team.

The clerkship allowed us to observe and study ongoing civil cases and gave us full access to a busy court room. It allowed us to observe the litigation of business torts, real estate, contract and insurance disputes, and legal malpractice. We had the opportunity to observe various advocacy skills and to learn from the strengths and weaknesses of qualified business lawyers. As clerks, we were required to be competent and professional and to write with proper articulation and on point precision. We were required to constantly research, understand, and explain the law. By the end, the clerkship had significantly improved my legal research and writing skills, deepened my understanding of business law and had provided me with insight on what it takes to be a professional and effective attorney. As clerks in a busy chamber, we were also given good networking opportunities and access to business lawyers and various law firms. I was grateful to see how lawyers with pending motions were so courteous with the Judge’s clerks.

The ABA Section of Business Law also invited us to several events in Philadelphia, including CLE’s, lunches, a meeting at a Law Firm, and an upscale celebration organized by the Philadelphia Bar Association - all free of charge. Those events were as educational as they were inspirational and they all encouraged success in the legal profession.
By allowing me to observe effective advocacy skills, to study good legal writing, and to conduct critiqued legal research, this clerkship has exposed me to the requirements of a successful attorney. It has given me knowledge, skills, and strength. It has allowed me to develop confidence in my understanding of the laws of the corporate world, and an eagerness to pursue their practice.

The experience has also shown me the importance of diversity. As an underrepresented minority, I was encouraged by the fact that most major business law firms have made a commitment to diversity. The ABA Section of Business Law has made the same commitment. It has invested in me and has given me much to contribute. It has sharpened my qualifications, refreshed my legal approach, and has solidified my professional commitment. By investing in diverse law students, the ABA Section of Business Law has given confidence to minorities and has enriched the future of the legal profession. For all these benefits, I am very grateful. Thank you for your confidence in, and appreciation of diversity.

Very Truly Yours,

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