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Affirmative Action and Black Lawyers (5 Letters)

To the Editor:

Re "[Lawyers Debate Why Blacks Lag at Major Firms](#)" (front page, Nov. 29):

The American Bar Association Commission on Women in the Profession's study, "Visible Invisibility," details why women lawyers of color are leaving the profession.

Our research spotlights what's been called a "double whammy." Women of color experience unique disadvantages based on race in addition to gender. Women lawyers of color nationwide report lack of networking and access to significant billable hours, being omitted from client development opportunities, and demeaning comments and harassment. Eighty-one percent of women lawyers of color left their firms within five years of being hired.

It's not enough for these women to develop thick skins. It's the job of the law firm to, as the study suggests, "weave them into the social and professional fabric of the firm."

Pamela Roberts
Chairwoman
American Bar Assn. Commission on Women in the Profession
Columbia, S.C., Dec. 1, 2006