
Black Women Leave Law Firms for Corporate Track

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(America's Web) — When Fania Washington had an opportunity to leave Winston & Strawn LLP, in 2004, to work for MTV Networks, she didn't hesitate. Washington had tired of handling cases that trickled down from the international law firm's partners, and she sought more formidable challenges. She describes the firm as a "good firm with good people." But, as an African-American and a vice president and employment counsel for MTV, Washington says, "I really feel like a partner in the company." A recent study by Corporate Counsel Women of Color (CCWC) discovered a growing trend in women of color leaving law firms to work as corporate counsels. Titled "The Perspectives of Women of Color Attorneys in Corporate Legal Departments," the study surveyed more than 1,300 African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, and Native American female corporate attorneys. A staggering 76.5 percent of women who participated in the study started their careers in law firms before leaving for corporations. Among reasons they cited for switching were feeling that their work was not valued, lack of good mentors, desire for more challenging work, and few opportunities for growth. Previous research cited by CCWC had found a 78 percent attrition rate for women of color at law firms.

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