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Press Releases

Sheppard Mullin Honors Fatema Merchant With Firm's Annual Diversity & Inclusion Award

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Sheppard Mullin has honored Fatema Merchant with the firm's eighth annual Diversity & Inclusion Award, an award that recognizes the significant diversity and inclusion commitment of a Sheppard Mullin attorney. Firm chairman Guy Halgren presented Merchant with the award at a reception in her honor on Oct. 17 in the firm's Washington DC office.

"Fatema is an incredibly passionate advocate of diversity and we are thrilled to recognize her leadership and dedication to efforts and initiatives in this area. We are proud of her service to the firm and the community we serve," stated Halgren.

"I am honored by the firm's recognition and proud of the accomplishments we have achieved in this area as a firm. We continue to make progress through each attorney's contribution to our diversity efforts," said Merchant.

Merchant is a senior associate in the Government Contracts practice group in the Washington DC office. She has done an outstanding job of raising the profile of Sheppard Mullin's DC office through her efforts related to diversity and inclusion. Merchant proposed and organized arguably the first law firm Iftar in the Washington DC area. The event was well attended by clients, government representatives, other attorneys, and local law students, gaining city-wide recognition and resulting in a *National Law Journal* article about the event and associate leadership in the Washington DC Office.

Merchant seeks to illuminate the role and challenges of Muslim women in the profession and was interviewed in a 2016 podcast entitled "Multiple Identities: Intersectional Challenges in the Legal Profession" for the podcast series *Women in the Law*. The podcast was subsequently included in an *Above the Law article* "Moving From A Values to Value Proposition".

Merchant has long been active in both Sheppard Mullin's affinity groups for women and attorneys of color, and currently serves on the Washington DC Office Diversity & Inclusion Working Group. Outside the firm, she also serves on the Board of the Capital Area Muslim Bar Association. Most recently, Merchant played a pivotal role in Sheppard Mullin filing an Amicus Brief in the U.S. Supreme Court, challenging the constitutionality of the Trump Administration's travel ban. The brief was filed on behalf of KARAMAH, a non-profit organization that promotes the rights of Muslim women and girls through advocacy, education, and legal outreach.

The Diversity & Inclusion award carries with it a financial contribution to diversity-related, non-profit organizations selected by the award recipient that seeks to promote and advance diversity and inclusion in law firms and/or in the legal profession. This year's contribution went toward a scholarship fund administered by the Capital Area Muslim Bar Association and a legal workshop for school children and their parents that will be developed by Kindred, Inc.

The Sheppard Mullin Diversity & Inclusion Award was created to recognize an individual or team of attorneys in the firm for their commitment to diversity & inclusion programs and initiatives in the legal profession. Recipients are selected based on their overall contributions and dedication to advancing the firm's mission in this area.

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