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**HEADLINE:** Minority women held back in private law firms

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**BODY:**

Eighty-one percent of minority women quit private law firms within five years because they get shunted into dead-end jobs and aren't welcomed the way other new employees are, according to an American Bar Association report.

Black, Asian, Latino and American Indian women routinely miss out on the best law firm assignments and have the toughest time advancing their legal careers, says the ABA's 141-page report, "Visible Invisibility, Women of Color in Law Firms."

Minority women "often became stuck in dead-end assignments so that as third and fourth-year associates, their experience lagged behind their white male counterparts limiting their advancement potential and career trajectories," the report says.

The study, published Thursday, urges firms to enforce existing anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies, and do more to integrate minority women into firms' professional and social fabric.

"What we see is this intersectionality of the effect of race and the effect of gender," said attorney and sociologist Arin Reeves, who co-chaired the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession study.

Michelle Schultz, 34, an Asian-American partner in the Los Angeles office of Chicago's Kirkland & Ellis said she was not surprised by the findings.

"It's not just law firms but the profession in general," Schultz said.

Washington partner Walter Lohmann co-chairs Kirkland's diversity committee. "Female lawyers of color are in a doubly challenging situation and have needs to be addressed," he said.

The 1,100-lawyer firm has created both a diversity committee and several subcommittees addressing specific groups including women, minorities and gays, Lohmann said. Forty of Kirkland's 491 partners are minorities, 11 of those minority partners are women.

The ABA's Reeves -- an ethnic Indian -- quit the practice of law to open a diversity

consulting firm, the Chicago-based Athens Group, which counsels large law firms. Reeves said she is selective about her clients, focusing efforts on those firms that want "a real change."

"There are people who want a diversity initiative and people who want diversity," she said.