

JVR

JURY VERDICT REPORTER
ANNUAL AWARDS ISSUE

2014 AWARDS FOR TRIAL LAWYER EXCELLENCE

FEATURING THIS YEAR'S

29 OUTSTANDING
TRIAL LAWYERS

Patti Bobb, Don Segal and Judge Maddux receive
JVR Lifetime Achievement Awards

Kay Schichtel, John Stalmack and Lou Varchetto
receive Defense Attorney Career Achievement Awards

PLUS: The biggest settlement
of the year – \$160,000,000

HIGHEST REPORTED ILLINOIS VERDICT OR SETTLEMENT

\$160,000,000

SINCE THE JVR 2013 AWARDS

Racial Discrimination Alleged by Financial Advisors in Class Action

SETTLEMENT
\$160,000,000

Class action of over 1400 African-American Merrill Lynch financial advisors and trainees alleged that they had been systematically discriminated against based on their race. Among other things, the plaintiffs charged that Merrill Lynch steered them away from the most lucrative business opportunities so that under a production-based compensation system, they earned less income than Caucasian advisors. Merrill Lynch denied that the alleged discrimination had occurred.



The largest reported verdict or settlement in the year leading up to the 2014 Jury Verdict Reporter Awards was a \$160,000,000 class-action settlement achieved by five attorneys at Stowell & Friedman. Present to receive their awards were George Robot (left) and Suzanne Bish, with JVR Editor John Kirkton (right).

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Mary Stowell Founding Partner

Mary is a founding partner of Stowell & Friedman, Ltd. and remains of counsel to the firm. She developed a concentration in sex discrimination, sexual harassment, pregnancy and glass ceiling issues in the securities industry. Ms. Stowell successfully represented thousands of plaintiffs in civil rights actions, including the landmark nationwide sex discrimination class action lawsuits *Cremin, et al. v. Merrill Lynch* and *Martens et al. v. Smith Barney*.

Ms. Stowell has handled single and multiple-plaintiff cases and class actions and has obtained judgments and/or substantial settlements for clients on claims for age, race, sex, and pregnancy violations, First Amendment and Due Process Constitutional claims, W.A.R.N. Act, disability discrimination, sexual harassment, retaliation, wrongful discharge, Fair Labor Standards Act, breach of contract and defamation actions.

Linda D. Friedman Founding Partner

Linda is a founding partner of Stowell & Friedman, Ltd. where she has practiced law since 1989. Ms. Friedman was lead and class counsel in landmark discrimination cases that sought equal opportunities for women and African Americans on Wall Street, including *McReynolds v. Merrill Lynch*, *Cremin v. Merrill Lynch*, and *Martens v. Smith Barney*, cases which recovered hundreds of millions of dollars for class members and achieved substantial injunctive reforms.

Ms. Friedman has represented clients nationwide, including in private mediation and arbitration, EEOC arbitration, Merit System Protection Board, federal district court jury and bench trials and appeals. She is a frequent speaker at bar association functions and CLE seminars.

CASE REPORT

JR JURY VERDICT
REPORTER

**MCREYNOLDS, ETAL. V. MERRILL LYNCH PIERCE FENNER & SMITH
05C-6583 U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
ILLINOIS**

SETTLEMENT \$160,000,000

PLTF ATTY(S) Linda D. Friedman, Suzanne E. Bish, George S. Robot, Jennifer Schoen Gilbert and Mary Stowell of Stowell & Friedman for pltf's.

Class action of over 1400 African-American Merrill Lynch financial advisors and trainees, alleged that they had been systematically discriminated against based on their race. Among other things, pltf's charged that Merrill Lynch steered them away from the most lucrative business opportunities, so that under a production-based compensation system, they earned less income than Caucasian advisors. Merrill Lynch denied that discrimination had occurred. Reportedly, the average payout will exceed \$111,000 per pltf.

Stowell & Friedman represents plaintiffs in individual, collective and class-action cases, with a particular concentration in sex and race employment discrimination and glass ceiling issues. The firm also has successfully represented victims of discrimination based on disability, pregnancy, age, national origin and sexual orientation and has successfully prosecuted claims for violations of the First Amendment, Due Process and Equal Protection clauses of the U.S. Constitution, the Fair Labor Standards Act and the WARN Act. Where appropriate, the firm also represents employees in arbitration and mediation.

Suzanne Bish
Trial Lawyer

Suzanne has successfully represented victims of discrimination, harassment and retaliation in court and in arbitration, including in trials that resulted in multi-million dollar verdicts for her clients. Suzanne represents employees as individuals and in groups, and she has extensive class action litigation experience. Recognizing that the best outcome is often one that avoids litigation, Suzanne regularly assists clients in attaining favorable out-of-court resolutions that further their career and personal goals. Suzanne routinely counsels employees through career issues and transitions and negotiates employment and severance agreements.

Prior to joining Stowell & Friedman, Suzanne worked at a national law firm, representing corporate and individual clients in large, complex financial and commercial litigation in federal and state court, as well as in arbitration. Suzanne also represented individual executives and board members in governmental and corporate internal investigations and represented criminal defendants and grand-jury targets in white-collar matters.

George S. Robot
Partner

George is a partner with Stowell & Friedman, focusing on employment discrimination. He has represented and counseled hundreds of female and minority clients in a wide range of discrimination matters, including landmark lawsuits against Merrill Lynch and Smith Barney. Originally trained as an engineer, George not only brings legal and trial expertise to plaintiffs' cases, but also technical and analytical expertise critical to winning discrimination cases in today's legal environment.

George is a member of the Trial Bar for the Northern District of Illinois and has successfully represented clients in trials and arbitrations resulting in multi-million dollar verdicts. As part of his practice, George regularly represents clients in private arbitration and mediation proceedings, as well as before administrative agencies including the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Illinois Department of Labor and Human Rights and the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA). George currently serves on the U.S. 7th Circuit Court of Appeals Electronic Discovery Pilot Program.

Jennifer Schoen Gilbert
Partner

Jennifer is a partner with Stowell & Friedman, focusing on employment litigation and representing clients in court as well as in arbitration and mediation proceedings. Before joining the firm, she was a defense lawyer at a Chicago law firm in its securities & commodities practice group and represented broker/dealers in a wide range of investor and employee disputes. Jennifer works to combine her training and experience in both sides of the industry to help her clients obtain favorable results both in and out of court.

Jennifer's clients include executives and senior management of Fortune 500 companies. Areas of the law in which she has successfully prosecuted cases include Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age and Discrimination Employment Act, The Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act and common law claims. Jennifer was drafted to play professional softball and spends a great deal of her spare time working as an officer of Teb's Troops, Inc., a not-for-profit organization dedicated to funding the fight against melanoma cancer. Jennifer was appointed class counsel in *Martignago v. Merrill Lynch*, a nationwide wage and hour collective and class action.