

A Fighter for Justice With a Vision for the Bar

Meet Incoming CBA President Qusair Mohamedbhai

BY CBA STAFF

Born in Canada to Zanzibar-born immigrant parents who came to America in the mid-1970s with \$200 and one suitcase between them, Qusair Mohamedbhai (known as Q to many of his friends) came to law not by design, but as a calling. “Being elected by your colleagues to be the face of nearly 40,000 practicing Colorado attorneys and judges is an incredible honor,” Mohamedbhai says. “I’m excited to be the first Muslim and South Asian president of the bar and look forward to supporting and advancing legal professionals in Colorado.”

Volunteerism and Vision

Mohamedbhai joined the CBA in 2004 and deepened his engagement through CBA-CLE. He joined the CBA-CLE board in 2015 and served as president from 2018 to 2020. He was the first person of color to join the education-focused bar association board. As a board member, he quickly established practices and policies to increase representation and inclusion for all diverse lawyers who wished to participate in CBA-CLE, including as faculty and authors.

CBA-CLE has since named an award in his honor, the Moving the Needle Award for attorneys who advance the mission of the organization.

“Q is a passionate leader who walks the talk,” explains Judge S. Kato Crews of the US District Court for the District of Colorado. “He was instrumental in diversifying the CBA-CLE board, having recruited me and others as directors. He also effectively helped the organization expand its CLE offerings both in terms of subject matter and inclusivity of new faculty presenters and authors.”



Super Lawyers cover, 2016.

Mohamedbhai’s CBA presidential priorities are diversity in the legal profession, access to justice, and the elimination of legal deserts in rural Colorado. For example, he plans to use the CBA presidency to highlight the need for an affordable third law school physically located outside the Denver metro area. Mohamedbhai would also like to see a service-based component upon graduation that rewards bringing legal services to Colorado’s most rural areas.

The Making of a Civil Rights Lawyer

Mohamedbhai graduated from the University of Wyoming College of Law in 2003. Since then, he has been a plaintiff’s attorney advocating for employee and student rights, and for the civil rights of all individuals against governmental

and institutional abuse of power. He founded Rathod Mohamedbhai LLC with Siddhartha Rathod in 2011. His law firm has secured many of the largest jury verdicts and settlements in the areas of employment discrimination and civil rights in state history. Mohamedbhai prides himself on having facilitated many policy changes across countless government agencies and school districts.

Mohamedbhai will never forget being a law student in Wyoming on September 11, 2001. Like all Americans, Mohamedbhai was shaken by that day’s horrific attack. But as a Muslim-American, his experience had another dimension. “Members of the Laramie community called the law school to see if I was actually an enrolled student or if I was a terrorist in disguise.” While the law school remained a welcoming and supportive environment for Mohamedbhai, fighting for the underdog became his calling as he observed and experienced the increase of Islamophobia across the country and in his backyard.

Awards and Accolades

Mohamedbhai is recognized as one of the nation’s most formidable employment discrimination and civil rights litigators. One highlight of his career was a 2022 White House invitation alongside his client Sheneen McClain to support President Biden’s historic executive order on police reform. This honor stemmed from his representation of Elijah McClain’s family, which resulted in a \$15 million settlement. Rathod Mohamedbhai LLC has continued to break records, securing the largest police misconduct settlement in state history with a \$19 million award for the family of Christian



Qusair and his client Sheneen McClain with President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris at the White House in May 2022.

Glass and a \$19.75 million jury verdict in the LoDo police shooting case.

Mohamedbhai further demonstrated his commitment to systemic accountability when he was appointed special counsel for the Colorado Commission on Judicial Discipline, where he successfully prosecuted a former Colorado Supreme Court justice. Mohamedbhai has also been recognized as a Civil Rights Champion by the ADL Mountain States, Hero of the Year by the South Asian Bar Association Foundation of North America, Warrior for Justice by the Sam Cary Bar Association, and Ally of the Year by the Colorado LGBT Bar Association, and was honored with the Richard Marden Davis Award by the Denver Bar Association and with multiple Case of the Year awards by the Colorado Trial Lawyers Association.

Alongside his litigation practice, Mohamedbhai taught constitutional litigation at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law and

employment law at Metro State University of Denver, and he served as a faculty member of the National Institute for Trial Advocacy. He is a proud board member of the Legal Aid Foundation of Colorado and a former board member of Servicios de la Raza Board. For over 10 years, he has represented pro bono Colorado's Mexican Consulate and Colorado's largest mosque.

A Bridge Between Communities

The relationship between Mohamedbhai and former ADL Mountain States Regional Director Scott Levin captures something essential about the CBA's incoming president beyond the courtroom. Over decades of collaboration, the two built what Levin describes as "a great friendship grounded in our shared admiration of this country's founding principle of equality for all people, irrespective of their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other characteristics."

Among many joint endeavors, together they organized a "Love Thy Neighbor" campaign to counter Islamophobic ads on Denver RTD buses, co-drafted a joint letter of solidarity after a white supremacist attack on a Sikh Temple in Wisconsin, and have stood together at some of Colorado's darkest interfaith moments.

When a gunman killed 11 worshippers at the Tree of Life Congregation synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018, Mohamedbhai took the podium before 2,500 grieving Jewish members of the community at Temple Emanuel in Denver, alongside elected leaders and police chiefs, speaking on behalf of Colorado's Muslim community. "We've been where you are," he told the crowd. "It's hard to describe, but our hearts are filled and broken at the same time."

Five months later, after the massacre at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, one of Levin's first calls was to Mohamedbhai. Within



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1 Qusair with his two sons, Amar and Tayib, in Fort Lauderdale in June 2024. 2 Qusair with actor Michael Dorn in Montreal in July 2024.

hours, 75 members of the Jewish community arrived at Masjid Abu Bakr for Friday prayers, standing outside with signs of support. As Levin has written, Mohamedbhai “has recognized the power that comes when leaders of the Muslim and Jewish communities can work together in support of good deeds and in opposition to bigotry and discrimination, whether inflicted against either of our communities or against others.”

“The CBA shapes how this profession serves the public, sets culture and policy, and either opens doors or keeps them closed for the next generation of lawyers,” Mohamedbhai says. “If I’m going to advocate for anti-discrimination and social justice in my day job, it would be inconsistent for me not to push for it within the CBA.”

Beyond the Bar

Away from the law, Mohamedbhai is a die-hard Edmonton Oilers fan and a professional

provocateur of Avs fans. He is also a confirmed Star Trek and Star Wars nerd. “One of my proudest recent moments was getting a retweet from William Shatner,” he says, grinning. “Siddhartha considers this as my most notable claim to fame. He may not be entirely wrong.” He recently met his childhood idol, Michael Dorn, who played Worf on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* at a recent Montreal Comiccon.

Mohamedbhai spends much of his personal time shuttling his two sons to soccer, track meets, and outdoor activities like mountain biking, plane spotting, and fishing. And there is one piece of family history he cannot resist sharing: his mother grew up three houses down from Freddie Mercury on the island of Zanzibar, knowing him only as a kind neighbor who helped with groceries. Whether in his role as a father, congregant, lawyer, or incoming CBA president, Mohamedbhai always aims to honor his parents’ sacrifice and to help others along the way. CL