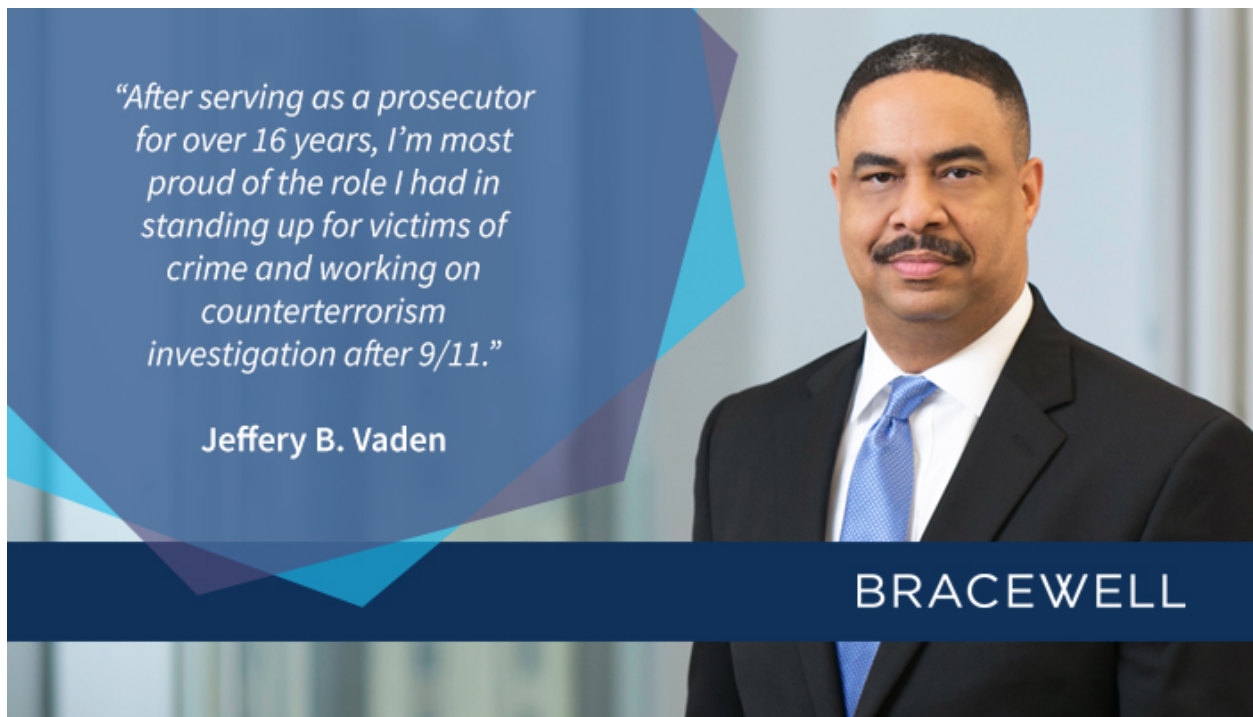


BLOG POST

Visible Leadership: Jeff Vaden

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Bracewell commemorated Black History Month by exploring the theme of visible leadership. As part of our celebration, we asked our African American partners to share their thoughts about leadership development and the leadership roles they have held in their professional and personal lives.

Describe your current practice.

I represent business entities and individuals in white collar criminal matters, with a focus on Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, economic sanctions, money laundering, bank and wire fraud and healthcare fraud. I also provide compliance advice and assist in preparing and implementing compliance policies. Prior to joining Bracewell, I was an Assistant US. Attorney in the Southern District of Texas and Assistant District Attorney in the Harris County District Attorney's Office.

What is your proudest professional moment?

It's hard to pinpoint a particular moment, but after serving as a prosecutor for over 16 years, I'm most proud of the role I had in standing up for victims of crime and working on counterterrorism investigations after 9/11.

How has your life experience made you the leader you are today?

I've had a life experience that exposed me to a wide swath of humanity — from rural to urban environments, racially and socio-economically diverse groups of people and exposure to all types of professions. It has shaped my world view and given me the ability to connect with almost anyone from juries to clients.

What figure in African American history would you most like to meet?

General Colin Powell. He demonstrates excellence across many fronts and places service to country and society above political party or affiliation.

Did anyone serve as an advocate for you at any point in your career? What difference did he or she make in your development as a leader?

I was fortunate to have many good roles models and/or supervisors during my career. Former SDTX US Attorney Angel Moreno stands out because he named me First Assistant US Attorney, which is second-in-command for the US Attorney's Office. That experience allowed me to recruit and hire new attorneys and staff, handle disciplinary issues and interface with all the district's judges on behalf of the office.

What advice would you give a young African American lawyer working toward becoming a leader in the legal profession?

First, you have to master your practice area, because as a true leader you must have a skill set that meets or exceeds those you are leading. Second, always conduct both your professional and personal life as if someone watching, because someone is always watching. Your reputation and integrity are extremely valuable assets.