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CRAIN'S CHICAGO BUSINESS

A CRAIN FAMILY BRAND

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# Meet Crain's Chicago Business' 40 Under 40 class of 2026

To witness the forces transforming Chicago's economy and communities, consider the work of Crain's 40 Under 40 class of 2026. They're advancing emerging technologies and established brands, investing in companies and developing real estate, rethinking health care and strengthening neighborhoods. They're stepping into leadership roles in law, finance, government and civic organizations. Their work reflects both the opportunities across the region and the difficult problems that demand solutions. And although their career paths are diverse, they share an appetite for taking on consequential work. Meet 40 young leaders already putting their imprint on the businesses, institutions and communities that will shape our future.



(Photography by Organic Headshots)

# Amanda Brown, 39

Partner

Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom

During one of her biggest cases, with more than $2 billion at stake, Amanda Brown was annoying her clients.

“I had a couple of witnesses, and I am so sure that they were so sick of me by the time they took the stand, because I was not shy about asking them for what I thought we needed to get ready,” Brown says. “The prep, it can be grueling. But it is necessary.”

The high-profile case, where Brown served as a co-leader of Skadden’s victorious defense team, involved former floor traders seeking damages from CME Group related to the shift to electronic trading. A jury found in favor of CME Group over the plaintiffs, who’d been seeking $2.1 billion in damages from the exchange operator.

“It was a lot of fun, in the way that something where the stakes are really incredibly high and there is very little room for error can be a lot of fun,” says Brown. “I think that it is a

tightrope act. The payoff is also tremendous."

Brown, who in 2025 became one of the first two Black partners in Skadden's Chicago office, has always enjoyed working on high-profile issues. Those include representing Bank of America early in her career in a case involving mortgage-backed securities.

"There was the great financial crisis, and all that stuff was in the news," she says. "It felt really relevant."

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Brown has also had ample opportunities to represent more than just corporate clients. Her pro bono work includes securing asylum for a transgender man facing persecution at home and representing incarcerated people facing civil rights violations. She also successfully defended corrections officers accused of failure to protect inmates.

"There has always been a feeling of growth for me, a feeling of helping," Brown says.

Outside of work, she sits on the board of Legal Aid Chicago, which provides civil legal aid to people living in poverty and other vulnerable groups, bringing much of her skill set with her.

"She is really an easy person to talk with, who has consistently shown up for us," says Katherine Shank, CEO and executive director of Legal Aid Chicago. "She just gets it, because she has seen and done the work herself."

—Mark Weinraub

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