

"I am the first generation lawyer in my family. My parents emigrated from Mexico in the late 50's. My dad came here as part of something called the Bracero program, a Mexican migrant farm worker program. The day I graduated law school, the thing I remember most of that day was my parents being there and my father, who was only able to attend the third grade in Mexico, standing in Rockefeller Chapel, a very impressive structure, a big building, and see me walk up and obtain my degree and hear his last name being called in an institution like that, which in his wildest dream wouldn't have been possible when he was growing up in Mexico."

(Jesse Ruiz, Partner in Corporate & Securities
Department of Gardner Carton & Douglas LLP,
Chicago, Illinois)



WEBSITE

A website is available to expand on the themes of the Project as described throughout this brochure, but in a format that is more interactive and attractive to students who enjoy surfing the web. The website can be found at www.abanet.org/yld/chooselaw.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Project or to order copies of the DVD and written materials, please visit www.abanet.org/yld/chooselaw

American Bar Association,
Young Lawyers Division
321 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60610
Phone: (312) 988.5000
Email: yld@staff.abanet.org

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CHOOSE LAW: A PROFESSION FOR ALL



A project developed and implemented by the American Bar Association, Young Lawyers Division, to educate high school and junior high school students about lawyers and the legal profession, and to encourage students of color to consider a career in the legal profession.



MINORITY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SHOULD BE EXPOSED TO THE LEGAL PROFESSION AND ENCOURAGED TO BECOME ATTORNEYS

Although strides have been made, individuals of color continue to be underrepresented in the legal profession. The Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association (the "YLD") is committed to increasing diversity in the legal profession by assisting and encouraging individuals of color to become attorneys. Although there are many existing diversity initiatives focused on law school and college students, there are insufficient resources targeting high school students of color. The YLD believes that it is crucial to encourage students at an early age to consider legal careers so that they can begin to prepare themselves accordingly.

Many young individuals of color have few or little opportunities to be favorably exposed to the legal profession and may have few financial opportunities to prepare themselves for a career as an attorney. Students may not have family members who are in the legal profession or have role models who are in the legal profession. Therefore, additional time and effort must be devoted to educating students of color about the profession of law and encouraging them to consider law as a career.

To address this gap, the YLD has developed a project focused on educating students of color about the legal profession and exposing them to actual attorneys who have overcome many of the challenges that the students may face. The Project emphasizes the importance of law in society and introduces students to the important, rewarding and diverse careers a law degree can provide. The Project also highlights attorneys and judges of color who have played a crucial role in obtaining and enforcing civil rights and in ensuring opportunities for members of racial minority groups. Finally, the Project stresses the importance of education and instructs students on the steps they need to take to go to law school and become lawyers.



VIDEO

The primary motivational tool of the Project is an 8 minute video featuring attorneys and judges of color discussing why they became attorneys, some of the challenges they faced, some of their more rewarding experiences as lawyers and the importance of diversity in the profession. The goal of video is to grab the students' attention and inspire them to consider a career in the law.

The video is available in DVD format and can be shown to students by a teacher. Where available, local attorneys can also show the video to students. Teachers, counselors, attorneys and youth groups can use the video as an introduction to a law related class or as part of a career day event or inspirational program.

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the DVD please visit the Choose Law web site at www.abanet.org/yld/chooselaw. You can purchase copies of the DVD there.

I became a mother when I was a very young woman. It would have been so easy to say, well, maybe I'll just work in a grocery store or something else that doesn't require the years and money that law school requires. I don't think any of these things should deter you from going on your path. You can always find people who will help you. If you are really serious about wanting to become an attorney, nothing should be in your way. You should look for anything to help you along in achieving your goal. I did, and so can you."

(Georgene Louis, attorney at the Chestnut Law Offices, Albuquerque, New Mexico)

"No one in my family had been a lawyer and, frankly, no one in my family had graduated college. There was just a desire that was almost metaphysical, that started when I was 8 years old. I was walking on the beach with my grandmother in Cuba (from Cuba where I lived until I was 14 years old). She asked me what I wanted to do when I grew up and I said a lawyer. I never wanted to do anything else and I'm not sure I could do anything else that would make me happy."

(Stephen N. Zack, Chair, House of Delegates, American Bar Association 2004-2006 and partner in law firm of Boies, Schiller and Flexner, Miami, Florida)

WRITTEN GUIDE

A multi-page written guide is available on the Choose Law web site. The written guide is an instructive and motivational introduction to the legal profession. The guide can be provided to students who express an interest in the law or used by teachers and guidance counselors to lead discussions after showing the video to students. In addition, the written guide can be maintained in school counselors' offices for future use by students interested in learning about the legal profession.

The written guide is designed to provide students with a description of the legal profession in a simple and straightforward manner they can understand. The guide describes the numerous opportunities available to someone considering the legal a profession and the steps students need to take in order to become an attorney. The written guide will demystify the process of becoming a lawyer and empower students to consider this profession. Students will be informed about what attorneys do, the importance of law and lawyers in society, and the opportunities available to someone with a law degree. It will also provide information about other resources available to students considering the law as a career.