

**A REFLECTION OF MY LAW SCHOOL EXPERIENCE**

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I always knew I wanted to be a lawyer. As a Filipino-American, law is not the typical or expected career of choice. Most Filipino parents expect their children to go into medicine or become engineers. There is often very little room for negotiation. My choice of career has always been met with curiosity and not always of the positive variety.

I have a number of family members who are politicians in the Philippines, but none of them are lawyers. In fact, I will be the first in my family to become a lawyer. My educational career has largely been driven by my ultimate goal of becoming a lawyer. However, when it finally came down to starting law school, I was plagued with reservations. I was often told that it was not too late to go into medicine. The dismal employment opportunities for law school graduates made faithfully pursuing my dream challenging. After my undergraduate studies, I chose to not attend law school right away. Today, I am convinced I made the right decision in finally pursuing my dream and I chose the perfect time to start.

I was filled with trepidation before starting law school. The Socratic method of teaching was never a great selling point. I was starting at a school where I did not know a single soul and I had heard my fair share of horror stories of what law school was going to be like. I had also taken a couple of years off after my undergraduate studies and was afraid I had been out of school too long to compete strongly. Despite all this, I always knew I wanted to be a lawyer.

Entering law school, I thought I knew what to expect. I had friends who had already finished their first year, others who graduated, and some who realized law school simply was not for them. I listened to stories, both good and bad, of what law school was really like outside of the fictional experience depicted in the movies. Now having finished my first year, I have come to realize that law school is different for everyone and much of it has to do with where you decide to go and the people you meet along the way.

For one, the smaller student body at Touro Law Center has made the world of a difference. I have attended large schools my entire educational career. I am a product of the New York City public school system. While in elementary school, my classes were never smaller than twenty students. Then, I attended one of the city's elite specialized high schools, Brooklyn Technical High School, which boasted a student body of well over 4,000 students. My graduating class alone consisted of 1,000 students from all over the five boroughs. I truly did not understand how special and beneficial a smaller student body can be. Even into my second year, I am still getting used to how personable and helpful the faculty and other students are.

It is not what I am used to. In larger schools, one can get lost in the monotony of students. It becomes more difficult for professors and faculty to get to know you or even notice you. Competition amongst students is also much fiercer in larger institutions as a result of this

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need to stand out. The smaller student body allows everyone to essentially flourish if they seize the opportunities allotted to them.

Before attending law school, I had never studied in a group. I was often told that I needed to form a study group when I started law school. However, this piece of advice fell on deaf ears. I always thought that friends were for socializing, and so studying in groups would be too distracting. I intended to study on my own as I always had and nothing was going to change that. After my first day of law school, I was in a study group, a rather large study group. Eventually, I noticed the benefits of forming study groups. Four eyes and ears in many hours of classes and many pages of dense material were far better than two. In my case, I had five sets of additional eyes and ears to help better understand material and challenge one another in a constructive way. My first year of law school was tremendously benefitted as a result of these five individuals. My strong support system outside of school coupled with my strong study group made my law school experience easier, though it is still a challenge.

It took time to finally push forward and ultimately bring my dream into fruition. There is no universal expectation for what law school will be like. Despite all the similarities in stories of what one's law school experience was like, there are a number of factors that can dramatically effect the end result. In my case, attending a small school and forming a strong and productive study group have been two formative factors that have shaped my law school career and will continue to shape my future.