



# Opening the Doors of Opportunity

**ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund**



## Law & Society

**L**awyers play an important role in all aspects of American life, and it is equally important that the legal profession be reflective of the society that it serves. To have a profession that does not, at all levels, contain a healthy representation of racially and ethnically diverse members is to reduce the trust and confidence that Americans have in our justice system.

By the year 2050, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that nearly half of all Americans will be people of color. Within that timeframe, it is predicted that the Hispanic and Asian populations in the United States will triple in size and the African American community will increase by 71%. Despite the extraordinary growth of these populations, a recent report by the ABA Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession confirmed that fewer than 10% of the nation's one million attorneys are people of color.

As the country grows more diverse, there will be enormous implications for America's justice system if it fails to represent fully the diverse nature of our population. It is imperative that the legal profession discover ways to become more representative of its constituency and keep pace with the rapidly changing ethnic and racial demographics of the country.

Ensuring racial and ethnic diversity in our justice system needs to be a fundamental goal of the legal profession. Unfortunately, the legal profession lags significantly behind other professional groups in the diversity of its members. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, lawyers of color make up 9.7% of all lawyers in the United States. However, total minority representation among physicians and surgeons is 24.6%; among economists it is 20.3%; among computer scientists, 23.1% are minorities; and 20.8% of accountants and auditors are minorities.

To achieve diversity in the legal profession, there must first be a presence of racially and ethnically diverse candidates to pursue a career in law. A key factor in increasing diversity is to address the need for financial assistance among racially and ethnically diverse students to ensure that they have the opportunity to attend law school. It is the shared challenge of the legal profession to diversify its ranks—one that begins with making entry to the profession a desirable and achievable option for all students.

**“We can best serve society if members of the legal profession come from all segments of the population, reflecting the diversity of the United States - and financial aid during law school must be a vital component of any effort to increase diversity in the profession.”**

**William G. Paul**  
**Former ABA President and**  
**founder of the ABA Legal**  
**Opportunity Scholarship Fund**

### **Diversifying the Profession**

The American Bar Association is committed to enhancing diversity and promoting equal opportunities, so that all people, regardless of their social or economic background, can develop their talents and contribute to the field of the law. Working together, we can help achieve the full and equal participation of all in our profession.

## The Program

**P**roviding opportunities for students of color to attend law school is the first step toward increasing diversity in our justice system, and granting financial assistance for law school is a vital component of this effort. Responding to this need, former ABA President William G. Paul established the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund to help ensure that the members of the legal profession come from all segments of the population and reflect the diversity of the United States.

Every year, the Scholarship Fund awards scholarships to 20 racially and ethnically diverse students to ensure that these students have the opportunity to attend an ABA-accredited law school. The scholarships consist of \$5,000 awarded annually to each recipient, resulting in financial assistance totaling \$15,000 during his or her tenure in law school. The awards are made to entering first-year law students, and assuming the recipient achieves satisfactory performance in law school, the scholarship may be renewed for two additional years.

With the generous support from William and Barbara Paul, and his law firm, Crowe & Dunlevy, the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund announced the first class of recipients during the 2000-2001 academic year. As of the 2008-2009 academic year, 180 deserving students from across the country have received the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship.

The American Bar Association has partnered with nearly 70 law schools around the country to participate in a matching program for the Scholarship Fund. These schools have committed to providing either matching funds or a tuition waiver equivalent to the amount provided by the Scholarship Fund for any recipient attending their law school.

Nearly 1,000 students apply for the Scholarship each year. A committee comprised of representatives from ABA entities, the national minority bar associations and at-large members screen the applicants and select the final 20 recipients. Among these recipients are law school class presidents, members of law reviews and journals, and students dedicated to serving their communities.

Housed within the ABA Fund for Justice and Education, the charitable arm of the American Bar Association, the Scholarship Fund commits \$300,000 annually to its scholars. Through the generous support of law firms, corporations, individual donors, and ABA members and entities, the Scholarship Fund continues to afford promising young scholars the opportunity to pursue a career in law.

## Special Thank You to ABA Entities

The ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund would like to extend a special thank you to the American Bar Association entities that have generously supported the Scholarship Fund since its creation in 1999. Through their ongoing support, the Scholarship Fund will continue to make a positive impact on the diversity of the profession for years to come.

**“Thank you very much for the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship. It helped my family and me in innumerable ways over the past three years. Knowing that the ABA believed that I was worthy of this honor is extremely humbling. I remain indebted and hope to use my law degree to help others as the ABA helped me.”**

**Jamidi Daiess  
2002 Scholarship Recipient**

## The Facts

**A**ccording to the following statistics reported by the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar regarding ABA-accredited law schools, there is a severe shortage of diverse students entering the legal profession. Any one of the statistics taken alone is a cause for concern. Taken together, these numbers indicate the pervasiveness of the problem.

- In fall 2007, only 1.8% of Mexican Americans, 6.7% of African Americans, and 7.9% of Asian Americans accounted for total law school enrollment.
- Between 1998 and 2007, the number of first-year African American law students rose from 3,478 to 3,486 – a mere 0.3 % increase.
- Of the 49,082 students that enrolled in law school during the 2007-2008 academic year, fewer than 450 were Native Americans.
- Over the past several years, the total enrollment of Mexican Americans in law school dropped 7.3% from 2,695 students in 2004 to 2,498 students in 2007.
- Total minority representation among law students has increased by only 1% since the 2000-2001 academic year.

**“The ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund made it possible for me to gain valuable work experience in multiple unpaid and low-paid public interest internships in law school and beyond. Most of my classmates felt obligated to pursue higher-paying positions at large law firms in order to pay down their loan debt. I will be forever grateful for this opportunity.”**

**Taja-Nia Henderson  
2002 Scholarship Recipient**

## Profiles of Scholars

**R**acial and ethnic diversity is vital to the legal profession and to the American justice system. Such diversity not only fosters greater public trust and confidence in the law, but helps ensure fairness in the legal system.

The ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund helps to diversify the profession by supporting 20 exceptional students each year. From poorly funded schools to situations of abuse and neglect, many of these recipients have faced overwhelming social and economic hardships, and they have each excelled despite their circumstances.

The following pages highlight the obstacles and celebrate the achievements of the ABA Scholars. These students exemplify the struggles facing today's youth and are a testament to what can be achieved with the support of family, friends, and the community. The report profiles both current and past recipients, all of which have overcome adversity, proven themselves through academic success and public service, and demonstrated the tenacity to excel within the legal profession.

With your support, the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund will continue to make a positive difference in diversifying the legal profession – one that is observable first in our nation's law schools and, ultimately, throughout the ranks of our profession.

## Snapshot of ABA Scholars

- In 2008, nearly 1,000 applicants competed for 20 scholarships. The applicant pool consisted of 46% African Americans; 24% Hispanics; 20% Asians; 2% Native American; and 8% other.
- More than 50 law schools from across the country are represented among the Scholarship recipients.
- Former ABA Scholars have practiced at some of the most prestigious firms and organizations across the country, including Jenner and Block, the New York Attorney General's Office, Skadden Arps, and the U.S. Department of Labor, among others.
- All of the Scholars have committed themselves to public service either prior to, during, or after law school. From volunteering with at-risk youth to participating in their firm's pro bono projects, these Scholars are serving the needs of those within their community.



**Jennifer Rodriguez**  
**2001 Scholarship Recipient**  
 University of California, Davis; J.D. 2004  
 University of California, Davis; B.A. 2001  
 Staff Attorney, Youth Law Center

### Fostering Hope

A ward of the state for most of her formative years, Jennifer Rodriguez’s personal experience with the foster care system made her intimately aware of the need to improve the child welfare system. For six years, Jennifer was shuttled through a seemingly endless series of shelters, group homes, and institutions. “I traveled through three different counties, seven different cities, and even more homes and institutions. By my first semester of high school, I had been labeled by child welfare workers as a child who would not succeed and placed in ‘Severely Emotionally Disturbed’ special education classes in continuation schools. After spending years moving through institutional group homes and psychiatric placements, and struggling through special education alternative programs, I felt hopeless about my life and the world in general.”

Wards of the foster care system “age out” of the system when they turn 18 years-old. Becoming a legal adult, Jennifer was forced to leave her group home and face the world with no money, no high school diploma or equivalency, no job skills, and no home. Saddled with three garbage bags containing all her worldly possessions, Jennifer’s prospects were bleak. After being homeless for several months, Jennifer fortunately discovered Job Corps, a federally funded residential vocational program. There she received many of the basic necessities that she felt should have been provided under the state’s care: a GED, vocational training, job referrals, and some financial support to achieve independent living.

These experiences formed the foundation that led Jennifer to later attend community college and eventually graduate from law school in 2004. Throughout her college years, Jennifer dedicated herself to educating the public about the problems faced by foster care youth. She served as the Legislative and Policy Manager for the California

Youth Connection, a nationally recognized foster youth advocacy organization. Her position allowed her to play a vital role in developing foster care reform legislation and participate on numerous state foster care task force groups and planning committees.

“I know firsthand the challenges children growing up in foster care face, and as a lawyer I am now equipped with the tools I need to address the systemic problems that cause them. After graduating from law school, I spent years organizing current and former foster youth, like myself, to work on reforming California state foster care policy and laws. I had the opportunity to learn from the experiences and insight of thousands of foster youth about their priorities for change, and the solutions that would have the greatest impact in their lives.”

### Making an Impact

“Growing up in foster care, my dreams were not about one day being a lawyer – my dreams were of having a family and a normal life. I didn’t have a single adult in my life, desperately longed to live in a home, and to have anybody who wasn’t a paid professional spend time with me. The child welfare system wasn’t able to help me realize these dreams of normalcy for myself, but those same dreams are what drive me to advocate for other foster youth today.”

Working in San Francisco, Jennifer is a staff attorney for the Youth Law Center, a public interest law firm that works to protect children in the nation’s foster care and juvenile justice systems from abuse and neglect. According to Jennifer, “I have the opportunity to use the legal training I received to ensure that children and youth in foster

care have the precious childhoods they deserve and get the support they need to become happy adults. The Youth Law Center is a leader in reducing the use of institutional care for children in foster care, improving the conditions of foster care for children, and ensuring children and youth have access to the supportive services they need.

“Now, as an attorney, I can start moving foster care solutions forward by using the power lawyers have to hold agencies accountable for their duty to uphold and implement the law. Currently, I’m working on projects to improve oversight of group home placements, improve conditions for infants and toddlers in foster care, and support connections between parenting youth and their children in the foster care and juvenile justice systems. And, as a single mother of two young children, I never forget the urgency of these needed changes.”

### Saying Thank You

“The Legal Opportunity Scholarship gave me two things that are so important, yet so rare for former foster youth: financial resources and an affirmation that I had potential. Receiving the Scholarship offered much needed financial assistance to accomplish my goal of completing law school, and has allowed me to help change the foster care system. I came to law school to develop the ability to help children in need, and I did so without the burden of excessive debt.

“I am so grateful to have received this support, as that has been rare in my life. Receiving the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship represented both an investment in my future, as well as an investment in the lives of the thousands of children living in foster care who need more strong advocates for change. I’m committed to using my career to fulfill that investment by fighting for change for other children in foster care.”

### Influencing Change

- Board of Directors , California Court Appointed Special Advocates, 2006-present
- Member, California Blue Ribbon Commission on Foster Care Reform, 2006-2007
- Coordinated all aspects of the California Youth Connection’s development, drafting and advocacy on important legislation
- Bergstrom Child Welfare Law Fellow, 2002
- Student Liaison, ABA Steering Committee on the Unmet Legal Needs of Children, 2002
- Co-Chair, Advocates for the Rights of Children, 2001-2003

**“I know firsthand the challenges children growing up in foster care face, and as a lawyer I am now equipped with the tools I need to address the systemic problems that cause them.”**



**Lartease Tiffith**  
**2004 Scholarship Recipient**  
 Northwestern University; J.D. 2007  
 Northwestern University; B.A. 1998  
 Attorney, Kirkland & Ellis LLP

**Mentor and Advisor**

Prior to attending law school, Lartease served as the Director of Community Program Development for New Concepts Tutor/Mentor Connection, a non-profit organization that provides tutoring, mentoring, and educational programs to disadvantaged students in Chicago. He knew that the students who crossed his path were capable of attending college, but often lacked the confidence and resources to make the effort. Growing up in Chicago's Robert Brooks housing project, three 16 story buildings sheltering over two thousand tenants, Lartease hoped that sharing his personal experiences would serve as proof "that attending college and creating a better life was not an unattainable dream, but an achievable reality."

**"To me, going to law school was an opportunity to empower not only myself but also my family, friends and community."**

"Living in the Brooks homes was similar to living in most inner-city housing projects. We had our fair share of crime, debilitated buildings and playgrounds, and rampant deviant behavior among youth and adults who suffered depression era-like unemployment. For children like me, we thought the environment in which we lived was the same environment that everyone else in the world lived." An avid reader, Lartease discovered that a better way of life did exist, one "where your friends, family, and neighbors do not get shot, raped, or murdered on a weekly basis."

After graduating from Northwestern University with a double major in Economics and American Studies,

Lartease devoted several years to New Concepts. Within a few short years, he helped redefine the organization, stabilize the funding, develop key partnerships with local universities, and expanded business relationships. He also helped to secure an additional \$275,000 in funding and raised the total operating budget from \$125,000 to \$400,000, thus effectively increasing the number of children served by the program by 30%.

"Although I loved the work I did helping the lives of dozens of children, I wanted to do more to help improve the condition of those who reside in tough social economic situations. To me, going to law school was an opportunity to empower not only myself but also my family, friends and community. I realized that the work I did would be magnified exponentially if I were to concentrate on uplifting neighborhoods through economic and community development."

**Proof Positive**

Lartease certainly demonstrated to himself, and those he mentored, that the dream of a better life was attainable. Returning to Northwestern University, armed with the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship, he obtained his J.D. and M.B.A. in three years. In spite of his rigorous academic schedule, he managed to co-chair the Diverse Admit Day and co-fellow the African American Male Recruitment Initiative at the law school.

A recent recruit at Kirkland & Ellis, Lartease hopes to combine his passion for law, politics, and business in a way that will further his goal of helping youth escape a world filled with poverty and violence.



**Mei Li Zhen**  
**2007 Scholarship Recipient**  
 University of Michigan; J.D. 2010  
 Princeton University; B.A. 2007

**Inspired and Humbled**

Mei Li spent much of her adolescent years in a world radically different from her home environment. From an elite private high school to her undergraduate studies at Princeton, Mei Li was surrounded by students accustomed to a privileged lifestyle. However, it was financial assistance and a gifted placement program that allowed her to attend some of the most prestigious academic institutions in the country. Emigrating from China at the age of 5, Mei Li was raised in an impoverished neighborhood void of the opportunities often available to her classmates.

"I used to be slightly ashamed of my mother in high school because she lacked the social grace, fashion sense, and education of all the other mothers I met at my posh private school. She wore acid lime green jeans instead of black jersey Ann Klein slacks, worked as a seamstress instead of as a doctor, and dropped out of the second grade in China instead of graduating college in the United States.

"Nevertheless, beneath the simple façade, my mother had persistence, unconditional kindness, and optimism. She worked twelve-hour days doing piecework at a garment factory, using her meager check to raise three children and send money to support family in China. She bore her burden and still managed to smile and laugh."

Her experiences as a child motivated her to study law, but it was her mother who singularly influenced her decision to become a lawyer. "She showed me the meaning of good character and unintentionally guided me towards a profession that uniquely requires good moral character," reflects Mei Li.

"I grew up in a poor, immigrant neighborhood, and witnessed my parents and their friends struggle to survive in a country where they did not speak the

language and could not navigate the system." As a result of her mother's guiding spirit, Mei Li hopes to practice immigrant rights law so that in the future she can "provide help and effect change on a broader basis."

**Saying Thank You**

"The Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund has made a substantive and real impact on my life as a law school student. The scholarship has freed me from constant worries about finances, such as the dilemma in choosing between purchasing a study guide or groceries for a week. Because of the Scholarship, I can afford new or good-quality used textbooks that allow me to learn the material independent of someone's old notes in the margins or excessive highlighting. I do not have to find a part-time job to supplement my income, and have more time for academics. More importantly, I do not have to depend on my family for income and strain their already tight budget.

**"She showed me the meaning of good character and unintentionally guided me towards a profession that uniquely requires good moral character."**

"I wholly credit my successes to scholarship programs, such as the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund, because they gave me an opportunity. Without opportunity, I would have never been able to receive the quality of education that I did nor would I be where I am today. Kids in my situation have potential, but potential needs an opportunity in order to blossom. I want to thank the ABA for that chance."



**Juan A. Arteaga**  
**2000 Scholarship Recipient**  
 Columbia University; J.D. 2003  
 Boston College; B.A. 1999  
 Attorney, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP

### Justice for All

Unlike many of his peers while growing up, Juan had a passion for American history. He was impressed by the principles of the Civil Rights Movement put forth by attorneys, both white and black, who were fighting to vindicate the rights of African Americans, specifically, and all Americans in general. Juan pronounced that, "The courage and conviction that these attorneys demonstrated in fighting for these principles of equality inspired me to pursue a legal education so that I too could be a source of positive social change."

Being a vehicle for change is indeed important for Juan, a former resident of an inner-city public housing project. "I learned at an early age that not everyone has equal access to justice. One day as I walked home from school, I had a gun put to my head by an overzealous police officer who automatically assumed that all Latino youths within my neighborhood were gang members. I was publicly searched and verbally abused not for breaking any laws, but because of my ethnicity and where I lived."

**"I learned at an early age that not everyone has equal access to justice."**

In contrast to those within his community who turned their rage against the system into blatant disregard for the law, Juan was motivated by this presumption of guilt within the justice system and sought to eliminate such ignorance through education. Juan participated in political campaigns and grassroots organizations dedicated to registering, educating, and mobilizing Latino voters so that they too would be heard in the electoral process. Due to these experiences, Juan "decided to

pursue a legal education in hopes of helping to ensure that the doors to our courthouses are open equally to all Americans irrespective of their race or socioeconomic status."

### Taking Action

An attorney for less than 5 years, Juan is already making an impact on the lives of those in need. He was selected to serve on the Junior Advisory Board for inMotion, a non-profit organization that provides legal services to indigent women who have been in abusive relationships. This is only one example of Juan's dedication to defending the rights of those less fortunate.

In a recent case, Juan and another attorney from his firm, Simpson Thacher & Barlett LLP, joined forces to represent a young immigrant mother from Aruba who was a victim of severe financial and emotional abuse. He volunteered to take the lead role on this case involving complex litigation in Family Court, as well as a highly contested divorce in New York Supreme Court. Juan helped the young mother find shelter, secure legal residency, and obtain a divorce on the grounds of cruel and inhuman treatment by her husband. This case was a contributing factor to Juan's receipt of the inMotion Commitment to Legal Justice Team Award.

In 2000, when Juan applied to the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund, he stated that his pro bono efforts would be "aimed at illustrating to young people that, when applied correctly, the system, if given the chance, can be fair and impartial to everyone." He, indeed, is living up to his promise.



**Colleen Lamarre**  
**2008 Scholarship Recipient**  
 Cornell University; J.D. 2011  
 Dartmouth College; B.A. 2007

### Honesty & Community

In the first few sentences of her application essay, Colleen revealed the source of her strength to succeed and appreciation of diversity.

"My commitment to honesty and community is an innate value of my heritage and experience. Raised in the bicultural memory of my mother's European heritage and father's Native American roots, my parents' legacy of tradition and integrity is a guiding factor of my life."

It was her father's death, resulting from an alcohol-related accident, which drove her to become a Drug and Alcohol Peer Advisor in college. Active in the Native American community and a member of a sorority, Colleen witnessed many incidents of drug and alcohol abuse. According to Colleen, "Alcohol related infractions were often accepted and normalized by these communities. Seeing the behavior of my peers spurred me to seek ways that I could provide support for responsible choices."

During her senior year, Colleen became actively involved in Dartmouth's Committee on Standards, a group composed of students, faculty, and college deans charged with the responsibility of reviewing individual violations against the school's Honor Principle. By serving on the Committee, Colleen improved her analytical skills, expanded her idea of fairness, and sharpened her ability to make sound decisions based upon facts rather than impulse.

Before pursuing law school, Colleen sought an environment where she could give back to the community and honor the memory of her Iroquois father. Immediately after graduating from Dartmouth with a degree in Government Middle Eastern Studies, Colleen enrolled in the Hoopa Valley Tribal Civilian Community Corps, an AmeriCorps program targeted at restoring and

reviving Native lands and people. Colleen completed over 1,700 hours of community service while living on a reservation with a group of her peers. This unique experience cultivated her interest in Environmental and Indian Law.

**"My eyes are clear with enthusiasm, vision and purpose, and I look forward to a career based on community and integrity."**

"My service work heightened my understanding of the relationship between the United States and tribes as sovereign nations and developed my conviction of personal obligation to assisting those less able than myself," states Colleen.

Within the first few months of entering Cornell Law School, Colleen was elected class representative of the Native American Law Student Association and became a member of the Environmental Law Society and the Public Interest Law Union.

### Saying Thank You

"I feel honored to begin my legal studies and career with the support of the ABA community. Without the financial support of the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship my legal education would be limited and my career hindered by tremendous looming debt. My eyes are clear with enthusiasm, vision and purpose, and I look forward to a career based on community and integrity."



**Vinay Hardit**  
**2005 Scholarship Recipient**  
 Vanderbilt University; J.D. 2008  
 University of Alabama; B.S. 2005

### The American Dream

“My father immigrated to the United States from the war torn northern region of India in 1974, in the wake of the second Indo-Pakistani War. He arrived with \$25 dollars in his pocket and a dream of making a better life for himself in America. Settling in Greenwood, Mississippi, a small rural town in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, he soon met and married my mother, who is African American. With the help of relatives, the two of them eventually opened up a small fast food restaurant. In just a few short years, my father had achieved the American dream; he had transformed himself from a poor immigrant into a small business owner.”

Unfortunately, the dream soon turned into a nightmare for his parents. When the local townspeople discovered that the newest restaurant in town was owned by an interracial couple, Vinay’s parents faced anger and disbelief. “Racism is still quite prevalent in many parts of Dixie, and my family often found it difficult to gain acceptance. Greenwood was especially harsh towards interracial couples. It didn’t take long before both blacks and whites stopped patronizing my parent’s restaurant and forced it out of business,” states Vinay.

It was Vinay’s experience as a biracial child in the South that led him to study Political Science and secure an internship at a civil rights law firm during his undergraduate years. “The clients I met who had lost their jobs and whose lives had been ruined because of racism and discriminatory practices became a major influence on my decision to become a lawyer,” says Vinay. He was astonished to discover that some of the clients had “lost their cases because, in many situations, juries simply found their claims too incredulous to believe. They couldn’t fathom that in the 21st century, major corporations could still have discriminatory policies in place or that a CEO could actually use the “N” word.”

“I realized from my experiences that far too many Americans are oblivious to the racial problems which continue to plague the United States. Too many people are complacent about race relations and feel that racism is no longer prevalent in our society. Others wish to pretend that it no longer exists, or to isolate themselves from the problem in the hopes that it will simply go away or eradicate itself. As a lawyer, I hope to reform the legal system and take steps to educate the public about the problems afflicting our society.”

### Giving Back

“Due to my family’s financial situation, we were forced to live in a rough, crime infested neighborhood for much of my childhood. My school district housed one of the worst high schools in the state of Alabama. Located in the inner city of Birmingham, my school consistently had among the highest crime, dropout and teen pregnancy rates.” Driven by the inadequate educational opportunities available in many impoverished neighborhoods, Vinay founded G.R.E.E.K., his own 501(c)(3) non-profit charity, to help counteract the effects of poverty and violence. Situated in his hometown of Birmingham, G.R.E.E.K. is designed to help mentor inner city and at-risk youths and will be fully operational in time for the start of the 2009-2010 school year.

Passionate about helping those in his community, Vinay is dedicated to using the profession to represent the voiceless in his community. According to Vinay, “I’ve always felt that I have a special obligation to ensure that the criminal justice system recognizes that individuals, despite their backgrounds, are not villains. Instead, they are real people, with dreams and aspirations, doubts and misgivings, who are entitled to the same dignity and

respect as any other citizen in our society. In fact, many of them are productive members of society. Unfortunately, many also lack the proper guidance and support necessary to follow through with their plans to remain law abiding citizens. And that is why I decided to go to law school, and why I ultimately made the decision to become a public defender.”

### Saying Thank You

“I am extremely grateful to have been a recipient of the Legal Opportunity Scholarship. I was the first in my family to attend law school, and I worried a great deal about the amount of debt I was going to incur to finance my legal education. For quite some time, I thought that I was going to have to abandon my dream of becoming a public defender and accept a job at a huge law firm just to keep up with my minimum monthly loan payments. Then I won the Legal Opportunity Scholarship, which gave me the

freedom to pursue my dreams in a way that many of my classmates were unable to do so because of their debt.

“One of the reasons why the Legal Opportunity Scholarship is such a remarkable program is because it does something that very few other scholarship programs in the nation do – it takes into account life experiences and obstacles overcome when selecting its recipients. This is important because at the end of the day, being an attorney is about so much more than being able to recall a case holding or to come up with the ‘correct answer.’ Being a lawyer is about dealing and interacting with people from all walks of life. When you’ve come from a unique background or have overcome obstacles in your life, I believe that you are better able to put yourself in another person’s shoes, which is a skill that invariably allows one to become a better attorney.”

### Law School Activities

- Volunteer; Nashville Pro Bono/Legal Aid Society
- Tutor; Youth Encouragement Services (Y.E.S.)
- Mentor; Stratford High School (Nashville, TN)
- Volunteer; Habitat for Humanity
- Member; Phi Alpha Delta Legal Fraternity
- Member; Black Law Students Association
- Founder; G.R.E.E.K a non-profit charity helping inner city youths

**“When you’ve come from a unique background or have overcome obstacles in your life, I believe that you are better able to put yourself in another person’s shoes, which is a skill that invariably allows one to become a better attorney.”**



**Andrea Azuka Adibe**  
**2006 Scholarship Recipient**  
 University of Florida; J.D. 2009  
 Jacksonville University; B.S. 2006

### Labor of Love

"At the tender age of seven, I experienced my father's death and it became a driving force in my life. I was determined to never forget the man who painstakingly struggled to provide for me and my family. Before knowing what a lawyer was, I vowed to become the lawyer he never had a chance to become."

Emigrating from Nigeria, her family struggled with discrimination and had to overcome many cultural barriers. In America, Andrea's father faced repeated rejection in the job market, despite having three different degrees and a Master's Degree in Business. "It was assumed that as a foreigner and as a minority, he was incapable of doing the job," explains Andrea.

**"Every time I think about the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund, I feel very humbled and inspired by the generosity of the organization."**

Although overly qualified for the jobs he pursued, Andrea's father was forced to accept a managerial position at a fast food restaurant in order to provide for his family. Determined to succeed in America, Andrea's father applied to law school in hopes of providing a better life for his growing family. "However, his dream would never come to pass," recalls Andrea. "While at work, my father was tragically killed during a late night robbery."

With the loss of her father, Andrea's mother maintained two jobs – a labor of love dedicated to her four children and relatives abroad. It was her mother's strong work ethic and dedication to family that "planted the seed of family togetherness and self-sufficiency" in each of her children. "As

Nigerian Americans growing up in the heart of Texas, my siblings and I were encouraged by our mother to remember that regardless of where we were born or our personal success, we must always remember our people and our culture."

Throughout her law studies, Andrea has developed a passion for helping the people in her community, both domestic and foreign. Recently, Andrea worked as a legal aid volunteer at Three Rivers Legal Services, an agency dedicated to providing quality legal assistance to low-income clients in seventeen counties throughout North Florida. She also participated as a legal intern in a Family Law Pro Se/Unbundling Advice Clinic.

Reflecting on the economic and political conditions of her people in Nigeria, Andrea is determined eventually to shape international policy and protect those individuals denied basic human rights. Andrea is pursuing a joint graduate degree in law and international business.

### Saying Thank You

"Every time I think about the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund, I feel very humbled and inspired by the generosity of the organization. To know that the ABA believes in me and my future potential enough to select me for this program speaks volumes. Thanks to the Scholarship, my dream of becoming a lawyer has become more than just a dream, it has become an expectation.

"Unwavering and motivated to succeed, I believe that I am destined to change the lives of many people in this world. With this vision in mind, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to further myself, my family and, essentially, the global community."



**Ryan Townsend Rash**  
**2008 Scholarship Recipient**  
 University of Kansas; J.D. 2011  
 Haskell Indian Nations University; B.A. 2008

### Surviving the Past

Ryan Rash is not your average first-year law student. In his 44 years of life, he has survived some of the world's cruelest treatment. He was born to an unwed mother in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the capital of the Cherokee Nation. Soon after his mother met his future stepfather, Ryan became ensconced in a life full of trauma and abuse that nearly destroyed his adolescent years and provided little hope for a happy, healthy adult life.

"I recently visited the house we lived in for the first time in many years. It instantly brought back memories of the events I witnessed as I entered each room. I remember my mother weeping at the table in the kitchen," recalls Ryan. He remembered seeing his stepfather repeatedly beat his mother and soon transferring his rage onto Ryan himself. On top of the regular physical abuse, Ryan, by the age of eight, would fall victim to his stepfather's sexual assault.

"As an adult, I have learned that it is common for native men who were beaten and molested as children to grow up to be alcoholics and abuse drugs. As a result of adolescent trauma, I had been drinking heavily since the age of fourteen. I was already addicted to alcohol and would continue to drink through four DUIs before getting sober on January 10, 1992. During my teen years, I attempted suicide. Luckily I entered rehab and have been clean and sober since. I often wonder how I survived the molestations, the beatings, the alcohol – theirs and later mine. I have truly been given a second chance."

### Moving Forward

Clean and sober for sixteen years, Ryan graduated from Haskell Indian Nations University with a degree in American Indian Studies. "I am finally old enough

to know what I want to do with my life," states Ryan. Studying his first year of law at the University of Kansas, Ryan hopes to "expand Indigenous rights and assist Native Americans in getting their voices heard among mainstream America."

**"With the help of the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship I see possibilities all around me, and I try to grab as many as I can."**

### Saying Thank You

Support from the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship has helped Ryan pursue his dreams and gain another chance at life. "I still have to pinch myself at times to really know that I'm actually in law school. Many people trust me and come to me for advice, which amazes me when I think back. The world was small for me back then with little opportunity. Now the world is large and full of light. With the help of the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship I see possibilities all around me, and I try to grab as many as I can."



**Michaele Turnage**  
**2003 Scholarship Recipient**  
 Harvard University; J.D. 2006  
 University of California, Los Angeles; B.A. 2003  
 Attorney, Skadden Arps Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP

### Advocating for Change

"When I first spoke to a college admissions counselor, he told me that, despite my good grades, my public high school did not have enough honors or advanced placement classes for me to get into one of California's flagship 4-year universities. At the time, the University of California gave applicants a boost in their GPA for each honors, advanced placement, or college course taken. A "B" in an honors course counted the same as an "A" in a regular course."

**"These high schools had many of the resources my high school lacked - books, credentialed teachers, SAT prep classes, college counseling, and sometimes more than 30 honors and advanced placement courses."**

Happily, Michaele ended up at UCLA, but she was the only student from her high school to do so that year. "I was astounded to find that other high schools had sent as many as 90 of their graduates to UCLA that year," states Michaele. "These high schools had many of the resources my high school lacked - books, credentialed teachers, SAT prep classes, college counseling, and sometimes more than 30 honors and advanced placement courses."

As an undergraduate, Michaele joined forces with other students to advocate for change in the University of California admissions process. They were determined to educate policy makers about the inequities in California schools and why such differences should be taken into account when

evaluating college applications. Attorneys from the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund heard about their efforts and filed a lawsuit against the University of California system on their behalf. The lawsuit resulted in sweeping changes in the University of California's admissions process and gave millions of students a better chance at social mobility.

"The University now does a holistic review of applicants, considering not only their GPA and test scores, but also how well the applicant has taken advantage of the opportunities available to them (irrespective of whether those opportunities were plentiful or few and far between). Suddenly, going to a high school with relatively few resources didn't dash one's hopes of going to one of California's best universities."

### Making a Difference

"Since becoming a practicing attorney, I've focused on obtaining the training necessary to enable me to become the best advocate possible and a leader in my field. I also volunteer a substantial amount of my time to serve those who cannot afford legal assistance. I've been honored to facilitate adoptions, serve as a guardian ad litem, help a Hurricane Katrina survivor in his struggle to obtain aid from FEMA, and aid a prisoner with his habeas corpus claim.

"I am very thankful for all the opportunities that I have enjoyed because of the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund, and the positive role it has played in my life. I will forever be grateful for the investment in my future."



**Jose R. Almonte**  
**2001 Scholarship Recipient**  
 Rutgers University; J.D. 2004  
 Rutgers University; B.S. 2001  
 Associate, Dechert LLP

### The Help of Others

As a first generation immigrant from the Dominican Republic, Jose attributes his success to family and those within his community who fueled his intellectual curiosity. Arriving in the United States at the age of ten, Jose spoke very little English and was frustrated by his inability to socialize with his classmates. Nevertheless, Jose was determined to learn the language and sought academic assistance "from anyone who was willing to respond to my questions, which I pronounced with a heavy accent. By ninth grade, I became fluent in English despite the fact that Spanish was (and still is) the sole language spoken at home." With the guidance of his teachers and the loving support of his parents, Jose overcame the language barrier and soon discovered that education was his means of bettering himself and his family.

While working nearly full-time throughout his undergraduate education, Jose began to develop his interest in the legal profession. Joining the Pre-Law Society, Jose soon found himself elected president of the organization and interacting with lawyers from an assortment of industries and backgrounds. These lawyers shared their experiences and collectively provided Jose with a unique prospective on the law – one that encouraged his interest in the profession.

"Numerous individuals believe that the responsibility for improving one's lot in life solely rests upon oneself," Jose observes. "While this is partly true, certain conditions may halt one's progression and a person might need assistance to set their progress in motion. The Legal Opportunity Scholarship was crucial to my success as a law student. The continuation of this scholarship is essential to give those who are less privileged the opportunity to excel as law students.

"Through the kindness of many, sheer determination, and God's grace, I am now an attorney."

### Ensuring Justice

Jose's tenure at Dechert LLP has provided him with the opportunity to give a voice to those often overlooked by society. Serving as co-counsel, Jose fought to preserve the 20-year consent judgment in *Milburn vs. Goord*, a class action that created a Medical Auditor to ensure that prisoners at a New York correctional facility received adequate care. By meeting with hundreds of inmates, Jose ultimately helped force the termination of a negligent physician.

**"Through the kindness of many, sheer determination, and God's grace, I am now an attorney."**

As one of a handful of volunteer attorneys from Dechert, Jose also has helped staff a monthly legal clinic at the Alexander Abraham Residence, a New York City based shelter for homeless women and children and victims of domestic violence. Jose has contributed numerous pro bono hours helping homeless women fight for the public assistance to which they were entitled. Jose and his fellow attorneys have contested the City's denial or reduction of critically needed benefits, such as food stamps, cash public assistance, and Medicaid, for their homeless clients. Through their efforts, over \$20,000 in retroactive benefits have been won for these families in need.



**Alycia Guichard**  
**2001 Scholarship Recipient**  
 Georgetown University; LL.M. 2006  
 Fordham University; J.D. 2004  
 New York University; B.S. 2001  
 Director, Street Law Program at Rutgers School of Law

### Above and Beyond

Alycia exemplifies how one can surpass expectations and move beyond the statistics to become a successful attorney and inspiration to those in need.

“Growing up in the New York City foster care system, I remember my high school counselor telling me that I should not pursue a legal career – she did not feel that it was a goal I could accomplish. Although I attended five different high schools, dropping out before graduating and receiving only a GED from Job Corps, I always dreamed about becoming an attorney. I knew I wanted to pursue a career in law to help children, especially at-risk and foster children, as I once was. Since I turned my life around, I have volunteered with and created student organizations that help children succeed. I want to use my life as an example to teach at-risk and underprivileged children that even if they did not grow up in a traditional family, community or educational background, with hard work and dedication, they too can accomplish their goal of becoming an attorney.”

With the support of friends and others in her community, Alycia moved beyond the homelessness, abuse, and truancy that plagued her life prior to and during her experience in the foster care system. She graduated from community college and earned a scholarship to New York University through sheer hard work and determination. Graduating with a degree in Communication Studies and a Minor in Sociology, Alycia decided to further her education and pursue a degree in law.

With the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship, Alycia attended Fordham University School of Law. Fordham University is one of many law schools committed to providing either matching funds or a tuition waiver equivalent to the amount provided by the Legal

Opportunity Scholarship Fund for any recipient attending its law school. The University essentially doubled the impact of the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship by awarding Alycia an additional \$15,000 in support.

### Helping Children in Need

Alycia was the first Fordham graduate to become a clinical fellow to teach at Georgetown University. She earned a Masters of Law in Advocacy while training second- and third-year law students enrolled in the Street Law Clinic. Her education and experience equipped Alycia to become the Director and New Jersey Bar Fellow for the Street Law Program at Rutgers University Law School. Street Law is a practical and participatory educational program that promotes knowledge of legal rights and responsibilities, engagement in the democratic process, and belief in the rule of law, among both youth and adults. “I train law students to go to public and charter schools, detention centers and foster care settings to teach youth participants about many different aspects of the law that affect their daily lives,” states Alycia about the program.

By not becoming a victim of the system, Alycia has dedicated her life to advocating on behalf of children’s rights. She now serves as a Law Guardian in New Jersey for the Office of the Public Defender where she provides a voice to children seeking the protection of the legal system. Alycia’s role as a Law Guardian allows her to represent children in family court matters involving allegations of abuse and neglect and protect their interests in court proceedings.

### Saying Thank You

“The Legal Opportunity Scholarship has influenced not only my academic but also my professional career. The Legal Opportunity Scholarship helped alleviate many of my financial concerns during law school. I was able to focus on my studies and extra-curricular activities and not on paying for my legal education. In addition, as a professional, I graduated from law school with less loan debt than many of my law school colleagues—this was extremely beneficial given my career path in public interest.

“Growing up in the New York City Foster Care System, I often dreamed about having the opportunity to become a lawyer. Today, because of the ABA’s Legal Opportunity Scholarship, I am an attorney who received the 2008 Young Lawyer of

the Year Award by the Young Lawyers Division of the New Jersey State Bar Association. The award salutes a young lawyer whose personal and professional achievements merit special recognition and who has made significant community and public service contributions. Without the financial support of the Scholarship, I cannot imagine this being possible so early in my legal career.

“The ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship is a wonderful scholarship program, for which I am extremely grateful. It is sure to create many successful attorneys who can truly appreciate the meaning of the phrase, ‘to whom much is given, much is expected.’ I am extremely honored to be recognized as an ABA Scholar.”

### Activities

- Community Advisory Board Member, Fordham University School of Law, Interdisciplinary Center for Family & Child Advocacy, 2006-Present
- Program Director, Youth Business Initiative, 2005-Present
- Founder & President, Fostering Futures Inc., 2002-Present
- Children’s Motivational Speaker, Stop Dreaming, Take Action, 2002-Present
- Lecturer, Street Law Inc. Youth in Transition Training, 2005
- Lecturer, State Department “U.S. Judicial System” Multi-regional Delegation’s International Visitor Leadership Program, 2005

### Honors

- Louis Stein Scholar in Public Interest Law & Ethics
- Summa Cum Laude Archibald R. Murray Public Service Award
- Louis Stein Scholar Ethics and Public Interest Award
- Public Interest Resource Center Student Organization Leader Award
- ABWLNJ Martha Belle & Bernadine Johnson Marshall Community Service Award
- Saperstein Foundation – Thurgood Marshall Fellow

**“Growing up in the New York City Foster Care System, I often dreamed about having the opportunity to become a lawyer. Today, because of the ABA’s Legal Opportunity Scholarship, I am an attorney...”**



**Kevin A. Gooch**  
**2001 Scholarship Recipient**  
 University of Georgia; J.D. 2004  
 Emory University; B.A. 2001  
 Associate, Alston & Bird LLP

### A Tribute to Family

At the young age of seven, Kevin Gooch left his family to live with his grandmother in Covington, Georgia. Making the most difficult decision of their lives, Kevin's parents removed him from the dangers of his Los Angeles neighborhood and nestled him in a small community to be raised by a single grandparent. "They made this sacrifice to give me the best chance at being successful in life," states Gooch, and their sacrifice afforded him experiences that would forever shape his life.

"Growing up in a poor, African-American, single-grandparent home, resources were scarce during my childhood. Although my grandmother had little formal education and limited financial resources, she was vital to the development of my character. She was unable to help me with my homework, but the most important thing my grandmother taught me was that hard work could get you a long way in life. The extremely strong work ethic my grandmother instilled in me during my childhood is the reason I made it to college."

**"...she taught me the importance of overcoming adversity by giving all that you have, day in and day out, because tomorrow is not promised to anyone."**

Through the life lessons his grandmother taught him, Kevin earned a full scholarship to Emory University where he completed his undergraduate studies. Attending school near his grandmother was of utmost importance. At the age of 71, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and Kevin took it upon himself to tend to his ailing grandmother.

"I learned to keep life in perspective and not complain about the cards that you are dealt. As I watched my grandmother fight the most difficult battle of her life, and never stop fighting, she taught me the importance of overcoming adversity by giving all that you have, day in and day out, because tomorrow is not promised to anyone."

### Making an Impact

"I focused on becoming a lawyer because it allowed me to give a voice to the voiceless in my community that had been forgotten in life. I realized that the practice of law enabled the African American community to be transformed through decisions like *Brown vs. Board of Education* and the civil rights struggle. I wanted to use the law to help further advance the African American community and our country at large."

In his spare time, Kevin is combining his passion for helping others and his legal knowledge to serve those in need. He participates in "Everybody Wins! Atlanta," a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting children's literacy. Kevin's volunteer work enables him to reach students while they are young, stimulate a love of reading, and help them develop the skills needed to succeed in school and life.

"Today, my legal education has given me the opportunity to inspire disadvantaged kids," states Kevin. "I was able to work with disadvantaged teenagers through the Atlanta Bar Association Summer Law Intern Program. Additionally, I'm serving as the General Counsel of the Washington Street Community Center in my hometown of Covington, Georgia, in an attempt to give back to the community that gave me so much."



**U. Pamela Rivas**  
**2004 Scholarship Recipient**  
 Rutgers University; J.D. 2007  
 New York University; B.A. 2000  
 Associate, Kaye Scholer LLP

### Foreign and Domestic

"My commitment to a career in public service is inspired by my mother's story, who at the age of twelve, suffered the loss of her mother and assumed the responsibility of raising her five younger siblings in Chile. Her struggle to maintain her family in South America and ability to build a new life in the United States provided me with a unique perspective of the needs of children and families, especially those who become parentless or who are immigrants. As such, I empathize with and understand the struggles of immigrant families seeking support through our many public and private systems."

Pamela's empathy guided her throughout her academic career. As an undergraduate at New York University, Pamela joined "America Reads," a program that provided her with the opportunity to tutor first graders in an underserved public school. In this position she observed first-hand the effectiveness of New York City's education system on children who were homeless, neglected or hungry.

To maintain an international perspective, Pamela studied abroad in Buenos Aires. While studying international economic development, Pamela took it upon herself to volunteer with Chicos de la Calles, a community based organization supporting children who lived on the street.

"These hands-on and often poignant experiences helped me recognize and appreciate how the conditions in which underserved children and families live are dominated by legal systems."

During law school, Pamela participated in the Rutgers School of Law Child Advocacy Clinic. Serving as a Law Guardian for children before the Essex County Superior Court, Family Division, Pamela ensured that the legal interests of the youth she represented were met.

Now an associate at Kaye Scholer LLP, she has participated in several pro bono opportunities with organizations such as the New York Legal Assistance Group, Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, and the Legal Aid Society. "My pro bono work has included assisting a domestic violence victim obtain a divorce from her batterer and assisting low-income individuals, including those with medical disabilities and Spanish speakers, to prepare their wills, living wills, health care proxies and powers of attorney."

**"I credit the scholarship for its foresight to support emerging lawyers during their first steps in the education process."**

### Saying Thank You

"The support I have received from the Legal Opportunity Scholarship provided the financial assistance critical to my success as a law student. Furthermore, it gave me direct exposure to the legal community's activities and provided me with a greater understanding of the professional development resources and the networking avenues that were available to practicing attorneys.

"I credit the scholarship for its foresight to support emerging lawyers during their first steps in the education process. The Legal Opportunity Scholarship is a giant step forward in supporting diverse students who have the potential but not the resources to become great leaders and professionals in the legal community. In return for the support I have received, I promise to be a credit to the scholarship and to the profession I serve."



**W. Michael Smith**  
**2008 Scholarship Recipient**  
 Stanford University; J.D. 2011  
 Emory University; B.A. 1997

### Formula for Success

For Michael, the road to law school required personal and academic exploration. As an African American attending high school in the deep South, Michael discovered firsthand that certain parts of America still struggled with racial equality. He grew passionate about the role morality, politics, and the law play in shaping society while living in a community still wrestling with racial segregation. After completing his undergraduate studies in Religion at Emory University, Michael decided to pursue a Ph.D. in Philosophy at the University of Chicago. Michael explored the theory of recognition and the social dimensions of identity politics, using his personal experiences to provide context to his studies.

**"...my mother always reminded me that intellectual and personal achievement is relatively trivial if not utilized in the service of others."**

According to one of his professors at the University of Chicago, "Mike is an excellent philosopher and part of me is sorry to see him leaving the discipline. He has all the tools: excellent analytical abilities, a knack for unpacking arguments to identify their parts and to assess whether they are valid and/or sound...On the other hand, Mike is also a socially committed person. A law degree will permit him to be more effective in pressing for social change, either as a public interest lawyer or, perhaps, as a legal academic."

However, it was Michael's late mother who played the strongest role in determining his career path. In his opinion, she instilled some of the most crucial

ideas and values that have shaped and sustained him.

"First, she emphasized the idea that in life one must not focus on things outside of one's control but on those things that he or she can impact. Second, my mother was also firmly committed to a simple formula: success is the result of preparation meeting opportunity. With these ideas, my mother always pushed me to achieve and to excel, often despite many palpable difficulties. Finally, my mother always reminded me that intellectual and personal achievement is relatively trivial if not utilized in the service of others.

"Through the process of mutual recognition, respect and dignity are bestowed upon individuals within a social setting and when someone is not recognized or is misrecognized — say, in cases of racism, sexism, and homophobia — a real harm has been committed in the form of disrespect."

Inspired by his mother, motivated by his past, and armed with a unique understanding of social theory, Michael hopes to pursue civil rights law and help overcome prejudice in all its forms.

### Saying Thank You

"The ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship has given me a great opportunity to offset my law school debt, which will curb the compulsion to make career decisions based solely on economic factors. With this scholarship, I can better think about employment in a much broader way. Also, I see the Scholarship as giving me the opportunity to network with other recipients and, through such community building, to impact positively the legal community and larger society as a whole."

## Jennifer T. Duong

### 2003 Scholarship Recipient

University of Minnesota; J.D. 2006  
 Millikin University; B.A. 2003  
 Associate, Denk & Brinkman

### Sacrifice Turned Opportunity

"Everyday of my life, I live free and well because of my parents' sacrifice. In Vietnam, my parents were educated and privileged, but when the war ended, they found themselves in the precarious position of being supporters of a failed government. They had to leave because of fear, not for themselves but for us, their children. They could not imagine raising their children in a society where they would not have the opportunity to learn and succeed without compromising their ideals."

Describing the circumstances of her arrival in America, Jennifer is awed and inspired by her parent's decision to settle in a foreign land in order to provide the best possible life for their children. As a young couple in an English-speaking country with hardly any English skills, saddled with a toddler and an infant, Jennifer's parents had to make sacrifices and endure indignities they never would have faced in their home country. However, despite their struggles, "they never focused on the negative experiences, but always emphasized the goodwill shown to them by others," notes Jennifer.

"They highlight the people who supported them and helped them along the way, whether it was a trip to the grocery store, help on an employment application, or a visit to the doctor's office. For my parents, the point has always been that without the people in the Vietnamese community who came before them, those that were willing to help others despite their own circumstances, their struggles would have been much worse."

It was her parents, and the stories of others like them, that motivated Jennifer to pursue a profession that would one day benefit her community. Since the age of eleven, Jennifer has served as an interpreter to the Vietnamese community. In her youth, she would spend days at welfare agencies and hospitals translating the advice of social workers and

doctors. As an adult, Jennifer practices immigration law and utilizes her skills to assist those confronting the same obstacles that her parents once faced.

**"Ultimately I chose the legal profession because I saw the need for an advocate and advisor who can help the Vietnamese navigate through a complex legal system."**

"Too often the Vietnamese have found themselves beyond the constraints of the law or foregoing legal protection simply because they were uninformed. Ultimately I chose the legal profession because I saw the need for an advocate and advisor who can help the Vietnamese navigate through a complex legal system. While our community has its share of other professionals, there is a distinct lack of advocates. I truly hope that my work in the community will inspire others to advocacy."

### Saying Thank You

"I am grateful to the ABA for its generosity and encouragement in my pursuit of a legal education. It was important to me not to burden my family when I chose to attend law school, and the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund helped in that endeavor. It also allowed me to volunteer time during the academic year and during the summers to legal aid agencies, which I would not have been able to do had I been more worried about financing my legal education. The education I received from those experiences was invaluable."

## **ABA Fund for Justice and Education**

The ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund is just one of nearly 200 ABA programs that receive funding each year through the ABA Fund for Justice and Education. Linking the American Bar Association's commitment to public service and its ability to address the legal needs of our communities, the ABA Fund for Justice and Education aids the Association in its efforts to represent the impoverished, counsel youth in crisis, diversify the profession, and defend our human rights.

**“I am asking that you grant me a scholarship so that I may continue to not only knock at the door of educational opportunity but proudly walk through, and eventually stand at the threshold and assist others in doing that which I have been told too many times is impossible.”**

**Andrea S. Harris  
2001 Scholarship Recipient**

## **ABA Center for Racial and Ethnic Diversity**

For over 20 years, the American Bar Association has demonstrated its commitment to racial and ethnic diversity through a wide-range of programs, projects, and initiatives. Most recently, the ABA reconfirmed the importance of this commitment when it established diversity as one of only four primary goals for the Association. The ABA Center for Racial and Ethnic Diversity serves as the centralized resource for diversity in the Association.

If you have any questions about the ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund, please contact the Director of the ABA Fund for Justice and Education or the Chair of the Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fundraising Committee at (312) 988-5927.

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[www.abanet.org/fje/losfpage.html](http://www.abanet.org/fje/losfpage.html)

