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HBCU GRADUATE INDEPENDENTLY PUBLISHES THE FIRST AND ONLY LAW SCHOOL ADMISSIONS BOOK WRITTEN ESPECIALLY FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

"I have not seen any law school admissions books written especially for African Americans interested in pursuing a law degree. The book I've written serves to fill that void," says Evangeline M. Mitchell. a June graduate of the Harvard Graduate School of Education with a Master of Education (Ed.M.) in Administration, Planning and Social Policy. She also holds a Doctorate of Jurisprudence (J.D.) from the University of Iowa College of Law. She earned her first degree, a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) magna cum laude in English with a minor in Integrated Social Sciences, from Prairie View A&M University, a predominantly and historically Black university (HBCU) outside of Houston, Texas - Evangeline's hometown. She believes that the Black college experience helped instill in her the importance of one's 'giving back' and contributing something positive to the community.

"While at Prairie View, I was determined that when I achieved my goals that I would not be one of those people with an 'I got mine, go get yours' mentality. I know what it's like to not have support and it would be unwise to perpetuate that kind of thinking, even if I felt that there weren't people always around or willing to give me a helping hand in my pre-law school days."

Her new book *The African American Pre-Law School Advice Guide: Things You Really Need to Know Before Applying to Law School* is her way of doing what she's always hoped to - giving back. Mitchell is adamant that taking the time to write such a book was a requirement, a social responsibility, not an option.

The book is written in memory of her foremothers and forefathers. "For my parents and my grandparents and obviously the majority of poor Black people generations before, even the mere idea of going to college and law school was unthinkable, way beyond reach. It is because of the struggles of previous generations that we have the opportunities that we do today, but it would be foolish for me to sit around and be complacent just because I have my law degree. It's about more than I, me and my. We all have a legacy to leave. We have a responsibility to those who come behind us to make things better. There's still a lot of work to do."

The book is dedicated to all past, present and future African American law students. In the opening preface, Mitchell provides a detailed personal account of her struggles to overcome low expectations to become the first in her family to earn a college and law degree and she describes how her personal experiences motivated her to write this book.

"I truly believe that people are blessed with opportunities in order to somehow share the fruits of their blessings with others. For me to have had the opportunity to have gotten into a top law school and successfully completed it and to know firsthand how tough it is to not have access to the same types of information that my more advantaged counterparts did, I believe it would be simply wrong for me not to take the time to pass on this valuable information. We all know that anyone who "makes it" does so because someone somewhere along the way helped him or her out. Nobody makes it completely alone."

She goes on to state that, "there are a lot of young Black children being asked what they want to do when they grow up, and some say they want to go to law school and become a lawyer one day. Many of these young people may come out of households where they will be the first generation to even go to college. This book is for them. I was one of those children. My father had a sixth grade education, and my mother had a high school diploma when I was growing up. We did not have lawyers in our family or that were friends of the family either. People who were 'professionals' seemed worlds away and I did not have access to their guidance or advice. There was just so much I didn't know."

Mitchell says her contribution is more than just a typical law school admissions book in Afrocentric packaging. Recognizing that this book is one that will certainly benefit any person interested in going to law school, she says "this book was especially intended for African Americans, particularly those from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds who don't have the privilege of well-educated family members and friends. This book is written for so many of us who have high aspirations, but simply don't actually know what is required in the highly competitive application process."

"Children of well-educated and professional parents are expected to succeed and they are much more likely to have people around them who are willing to do everything they can to make certain that happens. For children who are not from such backgrounds, the expectations for achieving society's definition of success are lowered, particularly for Blacks and other students of color. They are also less likely to receive the guidance and mentorship that everyone needs to follow the road to their dreams."

"Much of the work of being admitted into law schools occurs long before a prospective law student even fills out the application forms. The book is not a quick fix. I stress the importance of students beginning to plan and strategize for law school acceptance as early on in the students' educational careers as possible if this is what they aspire to do."

Mitchell also talks about the challenges of the LSAT, the Law School Admission Test, a standardized test which determines the admissions fates of law school prospects at most law schools and has historically had a detrimental impact on the admissions chances of many African Americans. She tackles common misperceptions about affirmative action, mentions the importance of appreciating and understanding the legacy of those Black lawyers that have come before them, among other things. She even touches on the unfortunate reality that even with a law degree Blacks will still be faced with daily racial discrimination and people's refusal to acknowledge their educational status.

"Some people may not realize that a law degree does not make you immune from racial prejudice and discrimination on an everyday basis. When people see you, they don't know that you have legal training. All they see is a Black person and they treat you accordingly. Despite this grim reality, I encourage young people to get as much education as possible because armed with it, they are in a much better position to feel empowered and to improve their circumstances."

Other books fail to discuss these types of things in addition to the other critical information. These are things that Mitchell says "are not a part of everyone's reality, but are things that we as African Americans really need to be aware of and think about."

"Through the book, I want future law school applicants to know that preparing admissions applications was not as easy and straightforward as I would have hoped, but I make sure to tell them in the beginning and in the end that despite bumps in the road and obstacles that will certainly come and try to stand in the way, if they really want it they can have it."

Mitchell decided to save her money and invest in her own publishing company in order to self-publish the book because "I am a bit impatient. I could not wait any longer. I had the idea to do this type of book since 1995 and just wanted to see it happen."

Additionally, she made a concerted effort to make the book one that is accessible to anyone. She wants junior high school, high school, and college students, as well as graduates to be able to pick up her book, read it and understand it. Moreover, the book is not written in a traditional way, and is written in a numbered format and in a down-to-earth style. In it, she gives essential facts, useful insights, needed advice, keen observations, real-life antidotes and anecdotes.

If you would like more information on how you get a copy of the book, please go to <http://www.hopespromisepublishing.org>.

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