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## **BOOK SHOWCASES 75 EXEMPLARY MODELS OF EXCELLENCE FOR ASPIRING AFRICAN AMERICAN LAW STUDENTS**

During Christmas vacation in 1993 when Evangeline Mitchell, then a senior at Prairie View A&M University, was in the midst of applying to law school, one of her high school friends who was also applying shared with her copies of resumes, profiles and personal statements that she had received from Black law students at a prestigious Ivy League law school that she visited. When Evangeline got home and looked over the materials, she was immediately amazed.

"During that time, I could only imagine what other people who were applying to law school were doing. I mistakenly thought they just worked on getting good grades, joined the pre-law club, and took and tried to score high on the Law School Admission Test. But being able to actually see what others had going for them really gave me a more realistic and better sense of the extremely high level of competition that was out there. My breath was literally taken away. It actually showed me what level law schools admissions officers expected truly competitive candidates to be on. It was a defining moment. At the same time, I was happy and proud to see that these people who had accomplished so much were Black people. It meant a lot to read their essays and to be able to relate to our common experiences and unique, diverse and complex perspectives as Black Americans. Most importantly, many of these people came out of situations of adversity and conquered them to achieve their dreams."

Evangeline eventually found success in the process by matriculating into and graduating from a top-tier law school - The University of Iowa College of Law. After reflecting on those memories and the very real impact that seeing those concrete models had on her and the effect that they could have had on her chances of admission arose the idea to compile and publish *Profiles & Essays of Successful African American Law School Applicants*. This book not only includes 75 profiles and over 60 essays from a diversity of outstanding African Americans who were successfully admitted into over 100 different law schools from every tier-level across the nation, but it also provides actual advice from these Black law students and graduates directed to future applicants, as well as helpful checklists to assist applicants in preparing their essays, an advice book/workbook including a number of detailed tips on writing the personal statement, the resume, profile, addenda and recommendations, a listing of useful writing resources, pre-law organizations and preparatory programs, the text of the landmark *Grutter v. Bollinger* University of Michigan Law School Supreme Court admissions decision, as well as affirmations for law school admissions success and a great deal more.

According to the author, "If I would have had this book as a high school or college student and had been exposed to this sooner, it would have drastically changed my approach to what I needed to achieve in college and how I would have handled the entire law school application process. It would have forced me to take a good look in the mirror and tell myself that if law school was something I really wanted I would need to come up with a strategic plan and step up my game a few more levels. Although I was a straight-A college student clearly 'on a mission' with a variety of talents and interests, there is so much more that I could have been involved in, initiated and achieved if I would have been more proactive, assertive and willing to create opportunities when there weren't very many readily available to me. Unfortunately, I navigated the law school admissions process alone and never came into contact with anyone who would tell me how it *really* is nor did I have any models to display in a concrete fashion that the very high level of expectation to be considered a truly competitive candidate on the professional level."

"No one told me, "Okay, you're smart, but so is everyone else you will be competing with. How do you stand out from the crowd? What truly special and unique personal characteristics, leadership qualities, achievements, unusual and interesting experiences and perspectives can you bring to the discussion in a law school classroom and which can enhance the law school community?" I was also disadvantaged in a number of ways but did not know how to mention or articulate these things in a meaningful and compelling way in my personal statement to show that I was an overcomer who actually had beaten the odds. I did not have a solid understanding of the true purpose of this part of the application package and what the admissions officers were looking for. However, what is important at this point is that this book will clearly explain what admissions committees want in the personal statement as well as other critical parts of the application, raise the tough questions and show successful models of achievement for other people and particularly aspiring African American law students."

If you are or know someone interested in going to law school, this book is a worthy investment as it actually provides solid, real-life examples of the kinds of phenomenal admissions candidates law schools around the country find attractive and are likely to admit. It also provides an abundance of information and advice that other books in its category cannot compare to.

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