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Black women could look on television shows like "Ally McBeal" and "How to Get Away With Murder" to see African-American lawyers but in today's courtrooms, real world examples may still be hard to find. The underrepresented number of African-American lawyers is one of the reasons that Legal Prep Charter Academy was created by Sam Finkelstein and Rather Stanton.



Photo Courtesy of Michelle J. Miller Esq.

Legal Prep is also one of the places where Chicago lawyer Michelle J. Miller Esq. enjoys speaking. As a law school student who was also a single mother, she has first-hand knowledge of how difficult it is to pursue a legal career.

"I didn't know any other single mothers in law school," said Miller. "I was pretty determined as far as

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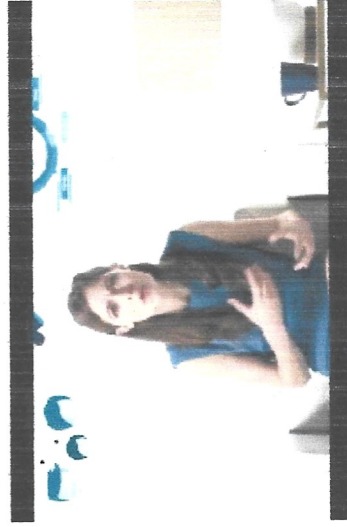
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I don't know any other single mothers in law school, said Miller. **Facebook** limited as well as my education was concerned. I recall taking my daughter to school with me. During that time period I took time to meet with lawyers to get myself more informed."

Four percent of partners in private law practices are from a minority group, and 9.1 percent work in general counsel, according to Diversity Inc. Black women's enrollment has slowly declined in recent years from 64.3 percent to 61.7 percent. But that didn't stop Miller from pursuing and earning her law school degree from DePaul University and currently working on her L.L.M. (Masters of Law) for International Business at John Marshall Law School.

Initially Miller started off as an assistant state's attorney before moving into her current position as corporate counsel for senior-level business clients.

"I'm a first-generation college graduate lawyer of the family," said Miller. "One of the things that I love to be able to do is be actively involved in the strategies and growth of a corporation. I didn't really see this in law school due to my limited understanding or experience with corporate lawyers. On a day-to-day basis, I strive to be someone that a number of leaders look to for guidance, direction and interpretation of law."

Fortunately for Miller, she found a position that fit exactly what she wanted to do in the long run. But she still makes sure to volunteer and encourage other students to pursue their legal passions too.

"In this process of going to law school, it's really easy to get discouraged and frustrated because of the competition. I tell people, 'You need to be that person who will pursue education with passion. No matter how much time it takes you, stay focused and don't quit.'"

Shamontel L. Vaughn is a professional journalist who has work featured in AXS, Yahoo!, Chicago Defender and Chicago Tribune. She's been an Examiner since 2009 and currently writes about 10 categories on Examiner.com.

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