

TOURO LAW JOURNAL OF RACE, GENDER, & ETHNICITY**MY FIRST YEAR OF LAW SCHOOL**
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The last two years in law school have been quite an adventure. It seems as though I blinked my eyes twice and I was in my final year. Although the days were long and the nights endless, law school has been an experience I will surely never forget. When I started this journey nearly three years ago, I was not sure what the journey would be like. Perhaps I was too inundated with episodes of law-related shows and exaggerated scenes from courtroom trials to truly form my own opinion, but nothing prepared me for law school. I knew it would be hard work and involved reading cases, but I could not have anticipated the level of difficulty of reading cases or taking a law exam.

In the beginning, I learned that despite being a professional student for many years, I was a ball of nerves during exam time. Perhaps the anxiety developed because the stakes were so much higher in law school than in my undergraduate career. To prepare and offset the nerves, my technique was simple: outline, study and review, and repeat until I physically could not do so anymore. That was not the best technique, but it gave me a sense of control. Using this method allowed me to feel I could say I did everything possible to succeed.

My first semester was the most difficult. During the second semester of my first year, I remember agonizing for days over my final exam in contracts. Though I did well on the contracts law final in my first semester, I did not like contracts. During one of my fifteen-hour study days, I found myself in the library with my hair in a knotted mess with a feeling of complete hopelessness. At around 6 pm, on my fifth cup of coffee, sitting next to the same unusually calm and confident quiet guy in the corner, I remember I began packing up my things to move to a desk on the third floor, but I started feeling dizzy. I sat down, and suddenly, I just began to cry. I remember not even caring who saw or heard me as my tears seemed never-ending. I was so tired. I just needed a moment to let it all out. The quiet guy who had sat next to me for days, never even smiling my way, moved his chair close to me. He asked me what was wrong and I cried out, "law school is so hard, and I'm so tired!" He laughed, which made me feel even worse. I began to think that maybe I was the only one struggling.

He immediately grabbed my shoulders, looked me in the eyes and said, "I know it is hard and I know you are tired, but I am sure there is no one trying as hard as you. I have seen you here for days. Why don't you trust yourself?" I yelled at him, "I do trust myself!" How dare this guy make such a comment when he does not even know me! Then he asked, "Why are you killing yourself? You know this material. There is no way you do not know it. Don't let your anxiety get to you or that will be your downfall."

I had heard this a million times from my family and co-workers, but there was a certain comfort in hearing it from another law student that made me want to listen. He told me how he also felt like he just was not going to make it at times, but he always surprised himself. I finally felt at ease. Maybe it was because I had finally let go of whatever was worrying me, or perhaps it was because he admitted that I was not alone. Either way, I was so grateful for meeting him. I never saw him after that night. Sometimes I think maybe I imagined it all in my head. Strange

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things happen when you are deprived of sleep, but I know that the advice he gave me was exactly what I needed to move forward.

I have learned to trust myself. I have learned that if you put in the time and the effort, the hard work will always pay off. Hard work leads not only to good grades, but it also instills confidence in you, which helps you succeed.

In addition, I have learned that you should always be proud of yourself. The second semester came with a bit more ease because I knew what to expect from my professors. My second year still had me experiencing those familiar and unwelcome panic attacks around the time of final exams. Ultimately, I began finding myself in the school library at 4 in the morning. When the panic attacks would hit, I would just say to myself, if law school was easy, everyone would be a lawyer. We are all struggling in different ways, even the seemingly unusually calm and confident guy in the corner. Sometimes, we just have to ask for help. Each person is capable of confidence and success. Often, you will need to stop and put things into perspective before you crash and burn, but law school is what you make of it. There will be times when you will need to cry, study for hours, or scream, but you should never ever doubt yourself or your capabilities.