

Attorney Beth Luoma asks: How have your life experiences influenced your view of our legal system?



Veena A. Iyer

"I am the child of immigrants who were well-educated but still had difficulty fitting into America. It has made me sensitive to how hard it is for those whose immigration status is precarious, who speak limited English, and who do not understand American cultural norms to navigate the legal system. As lawyers, we have the unique ability to show newcomers that they are part of our community and entitled to justice. Going through the system is that much scarier when you face cultural barriers, but having a positive interaction with someone in the legal system—which could be any one of us—is that much more beneficial."

Veena A. Iyer

Attorney, Nilan Johnson Lewis

"My parents came from a dictatorship in Uganda, and I have served in countries where the rule of law did not protect people's rights. My experience as a first-generation American and a combat veteran make me appreciate how important a stable and fair legal system is for a peaceful and safe society."

Scholastica Baker

Associate Attorney, Bowman and Brooke



Scholastica Baker



Ivory Umanah

"I have been blessed by experiencing a richly diverse life journey. From birth to now, I have lived and immersed myself in different cultures and have been positively influenced by all of them. That history has provided me with a layer of understanding of the world not many possess. Each of the places I have lived has taught me much about humankind and the laws that govern their lives. As a father, I am acutely aware of the social struggles inherent in raising children of color in our society today. However, this background has taught me that our legal system works best when we understand and appreciate the intent of the various laws that govern organized societies."

Ivory Umanah

Attorney, Engelmeier & Umanah

"Prior to law school, I worked as a child advocate at a domestic abuse agency. Through this experience, I saw how the legal system impacted children even though their voices were rarely heard. I also observed how having quality legal counsel could shape the outcome of cases in family and juvenile court. This is why I volunteer with Children's Law Center of Minnesota and other organizations."

Marian Saksena

Attorney, DeWalt, Chawla + Saksena



Marian Saksena



Bridget Nason

"Prior to starting law school, I spent a year as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer with Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation in Champaign, Illinois. This experience opened my eyes to the significant need for free and low-cost legal services providers to assist low-income individuals with civil legal matters, including family law matters and civil legal issues. Seeing individuals struggling with the complexity of the legal system without the assistance of an attorney made me appreciate the importance of attorneys who work for legal assistance organizations and see the need for attorneys to strive to provide pro bono representation as part of their commitment to the legal profession."

Bridget Nason

Partner, LeVander, Gillen & Miller

"My view of the legal system is influenced by my experiences as the child of immigrant parents. Watching them battle discrimination and bias, I decided early on to help the underserved and disadvantaged by becoming the first in my family to earn a law degree. I believe our legal system is capable of justice if we can continue to improve access and eliminate bias."

Summra Mohammadee Shariff

Pro Bono Coordinator at Robins Kaplan



Summra Mohammadee Shariff