

# THE DIVERSITY GAP:

BLACK AND LATINX REPRESENTATION  
DISPARITIES IN THE LEGAL PIPELINE

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## **Introduction**

The mission of the New York City Bar Association's Office for Diversity and Inclusion ("the Office") is to promote a more diverse and inclusive legal profession through research, partnerships, and programming. Since 2004, the office has worked with a cohort of more than 160 signatory law firms and corporate legal departments, regularly tracking their progress on key diversity representation metrics and publishing these findings in the annual Diversity Benchmarking Report. In addition, the Office and the New York City Bar's ("the City Bar") eight Diversity Cluster Committees host numerous programs to support diversity and inclusion in the profession, and run a comprehensive pipeline initiative.

The Office's Diversity Pipeline Initiative focuses on ways that pipeline programs can increase their capacity to support underrepresented students with supplemental resources along their pathway to becoming attorneys. The City Bar views the 'Diversity Pipeline' as "integral to the goal of increasing the number of diverse and underrepresented groups who enter into and progress within the legal profession. Underrepresented groups include racial minorities and women, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and attorneys with disabilities."<sup>1</sup>

This past year, in conjunction with the Office and senior leadership of the City Bar, the Legal Education and Pipeline Task Force of the Committee to Enhance Diversity in the Profession<sup>2</sup> published "Sealing the Leaks<sup>3</sup>: Recommendations to Diversify and Strengthen the Pipeline to the Legal Profession Report."<sup>4</sup> The Task Force had been formed to address the stagnation in fully diversifying the legal profession, especially after recognizing breaches in the pipeline that disproportionately affect Black<sup>5</sup> and Latinx/Hispanic students who might otherwise be candidates for becoming attorneys.<sup>6</sup> The report found that while there has been "slow ascension to leadership and elevated attrition rates for racial minorities and White women, more troubling is the failure of the pipeline into the profession to promote diversity, which directly impacts the pool of talent considered for law firm leadership."<sup>7</sup> In response to this and other troubling conclusions, the report identified, "challenges to solving the pipeline issue that confront students, legal pipeline focused organizations and the legal progression generally," and further identified how there are "distinct challenges that affect Black and Latinx students compared to the experiences of other groups."<sup>8</sup> These findings provided the Office with a specific target to further investigate how pipelines can become more effective in their efforts. This study followed.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sealing the Leaks: Recommendations to Diversify and Strengthen the Pipeline to the Legal Profession Report 2019*

<sup>2</sup> The Legal Education and Pipeline Task Force of the Committee to Enhance Diversity in the Profession is comprised of representatives from student-pipeline programs, Signatory Firms, corporations, and other pipeline experts.

<sup>3</sup> Pipeline programs that specifically aid racial minorities have been "likened to a series of pipes that conduct candidates through the stages of the educational system and into the legal profession." *Sealing the Leaks* at 6

<sup>4</sup> *Sealing the Leaks: Recommendations to Diversify and Strengthen the Pipeline to the Legal Profession Report 2019*

<sup>5</sup> Black as a racial category includes those who self identify as African American, Black, and/or Caribbean.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 6

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 1

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 2

## ***Purpose of the study***

While the Office has steadfastly worked to diversify the legal profession by focusing on accessibility, in 2017 when the City Bar released its annual "Benchmarking Report"<sup>9</sup> it provided sobering statistics on the state of diversity at signatory law firms. In 2016, covering the previous year, 36.2% of first-year associates were racial minorities — however, this diversity is eroded as minority associates turn over at higher rates than their White male colleagues.<sup>10</sup> The data shows that for Black and Latinx/Hispanic lawyers, entry into large firms and career advancement have failed to keep pace with other minority groups. According to the latest data collected by the American Bar Association, of the 27.6% of racial minority associates, Black attorneys and Latinx/Hispanic attorneys each make up only 5% of the percentage of racial minorities.<sup>11</sup> Nationally, Black law students represent 8.11% of all law school students while representing 13.4% of the total US population. Latinx students represent 12.8% of all law school students while representing 18.1% of the total US population.<sup>12</sup>

The challenges for many aspiring Black and Latinx/Hispanic lawyers originate from academic, economic, and systemic challenges arising at much earlier stages in their lives and educational journeys. Factors such as the segregated New York City public school system, financial pressures that leave little time and resources for career exploration, and the inconsistent participation in pipeline programs from elementary school through college, combined with the lack of exposure to the legal field, all play a role in the leaky pipeline problem. Therefore, addressing why these students continue to be underrepresented in the legal profession starts with identifying the grade levels at which these students either gain or lose interest in pursuing legal careers, how students progress throughout their career development, and how pipeline programs impact students' careers.<sup>13</sup>

Both the "Benchmarking Report" and "Sealing the Leaks" provide crucial information in identifying the problem. However, they do not contextualize the role that identifying as Black and Latinx/Hispanic can play in accessing the legal profession via pipeline programs. The purpose of this study is to build upon the existing understanding of barriers to entry in the legal profession, and examine ways law-specific pipeline programs support successful outcomes for Black and Latinx/Hispanic participants. By targeting the needs of two systemically vulnerable communities, the Office can use this data to provide recommendations for ways that the legal profession can empower pipeline programs to increase their efficacy in recruiting Black and Latinx candidates to become attorneys.

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<sup>9</sup> *NYC Bar 2016 Diversity Benchmarking Report*, New York City Bar Association (the "Benchmarking Report"), <http://documents.nycbar.org/files/BenchmarkingReport2016.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 11

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* at 10

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/statistics.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/statistics.html)

<sup>13</sup> *Sealing the Leaks: Recommendations to Diversify and Strengthen the Pipeline to the Legal Profession Report 2019*

## **Methods**

From August 2019 - November 2019, on behalf of the Office, I conducted a qualitative research study on the effectiveness of pipeline programs for Black and Hispanic/Latinx law students and attorneys. During this period, I collected over 50 hours of in-depth interviews with self-identifying Black and Hispanic/Latinx current law students or those practicing law. The sample included participants of legal specific pipeline programs at any point in their elementary, middle school, high school, undergraduate, and/or law school career. To not limit the perspectives on valuable pipeline program resources, we included current Black and Hispanic/Latinx students and practicing attorneys in the study who did not participate in pipeline programs.

The participants were invited to discuss their experiences with legal pipeline programs. Topics included how they were introduced to pipeline programs, the role of the programs in their career trajectory, and their overall experience with pipeline programs designed to support aspiring attorneys. Those who had not participated in a pipeline program discussed their experiences as racial minorities pursuing a career in law. They were asked to discuss what, if any, resources or programs they believed would have further supported their efforts.

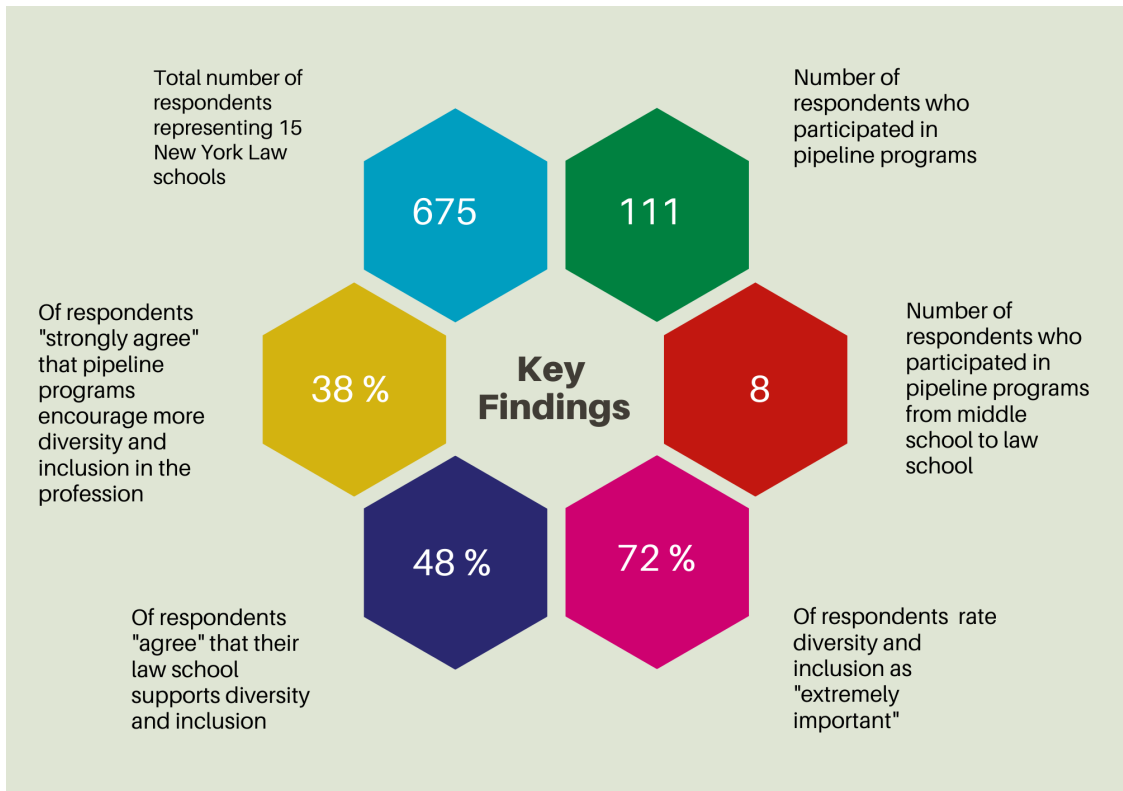
Interview participants were recruited via the Office's **pipeline participation survey**.<sup>14</sup> The pipeline participation survey was used to develop a profile of who is participating in pipeline programs by school, perspectives on diversity and inclusion in the legal profession, participation and access to legal pipeline programs, and experiences with pipeline programs for participants. In cooperation with each school's administration, the survey circulated across 15 New York State law schools' current and former student server lists. From the pipeline participation survey responses and a solicitation letter circulated throughout various legal networks, I conducted 26 interviews that included 13 current law students ranging from 1L to 4L (evening), and 13 New York-based practicing attorneys. Nine of the 26 identified attending a legal-specific pipeline program. Only one of the interviewees was pipelined continuously from middle school through law school. The most frequent point of entry for the interviewees was law school.

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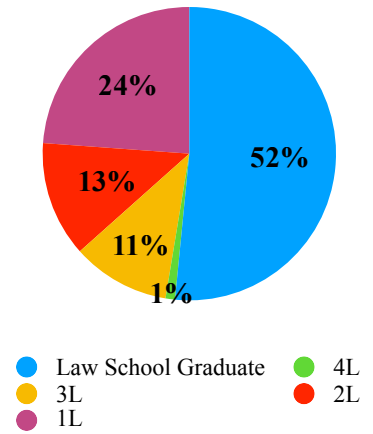
<sup>14</sup>See Survey Snapshot for an overview of the findings

# Survey Snapshot

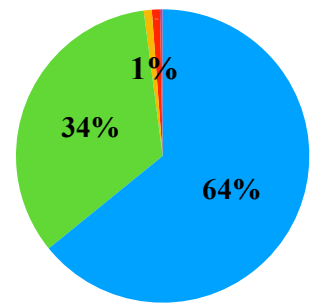
## Pipeline Program Survey



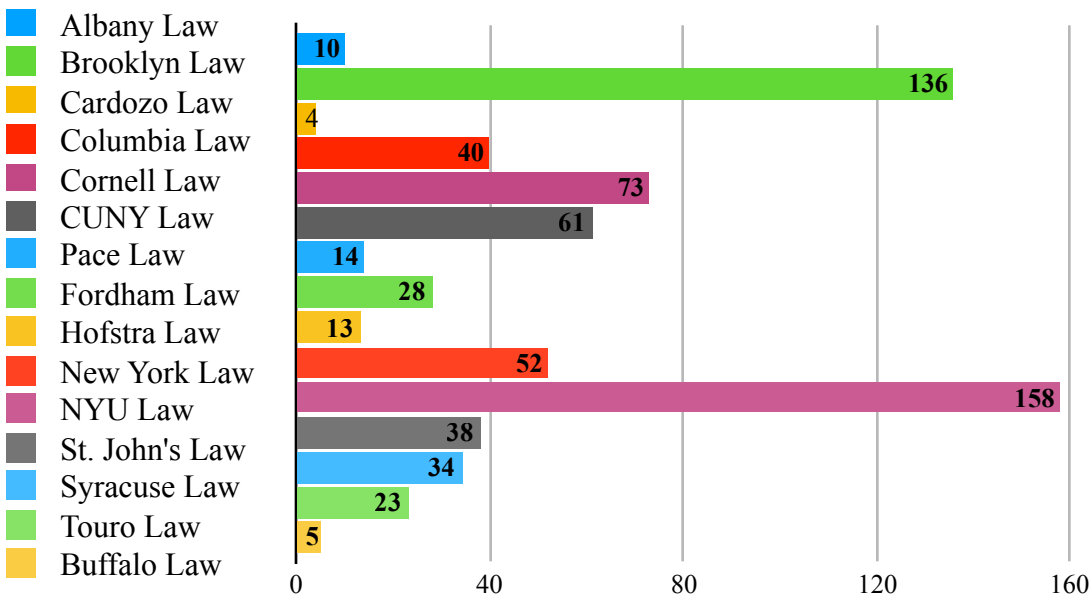
### Response by Status



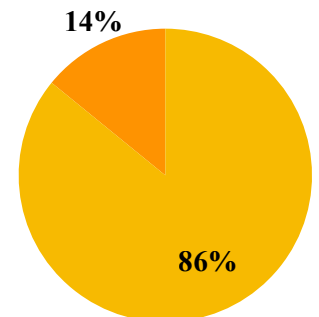
### Response By Sex



### Response by School



### All Respondents vs Pipeline Participants



## **Results**

The key findings of this report are presented in two parts. The first outlines the main issues that emerged through primarily qualitative data collection, supplemented with the pipeline participation survey. The second portion of the report identifies specific recommendations that the Office for Diversity and Inclusion can consider to address the needs of marginalized Black and Latinx/Hispanic communities who would otherwise continue to be excluded from pursuing a career in the legal profession.

There are two main limitations to this study. First, the project solely focuses on the perspectives and the outcomes for those who were successful in either gaining admission to law school, passing the bar, and/or who currently practice law. It is believed that Black and Latinx/Hispanic pipeline program participants who applied to law school and were not admitted, those who did not complete law school, or those who left the legal profession after practicing, would have a unique vantage into how pipeline programs can be more effective in serving racial minorities.

The second limitation to this project is the unidirectional approach that focuses solely on developing underrepresented Black and Latinx/Hispanic students into successful candidates. However, the findings reflect a need to also focus on the legal profession as an institution that, according to the study's sample, has not fully addressed the consequences of implicit biases towards marginalized groups.

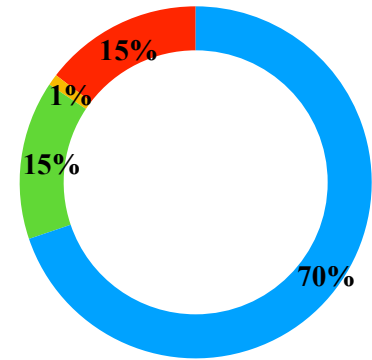
**“My only issue with pipeline programs I’ve seen is that they are helping those who are already likely to succeed.”**

*-Latinx male Big Law associate*

## **What the programs are getting right**

There are currently over 50 legal pipeline programs available to students in the New York area.<sup>15</sup> Of the 675 participants in the diversity pipeline program survey, there were 111 who responded as having attended a pipeline program at any point in their middle school to law school careers. According to the survey, Sponsors for Education Opportunity (SEO): SEO Law Program (Law School) was the most attended for New York-based students. There were only 8 respondents who reported completing the full legal pipeline to becoming an attorney. This rate of completion in full legal pipelines for survey respondents further support the claim that special attention must be made to *seal the leaks* in our legal pipeline.

During the course of the interviews, not one participant spoke negatively of any pipeline program he or she attended. While many participants made recommendations on how to improve pipeline programs in general, the overwhelming consensus among attendees was that they were grateful for having access to the program. They also credited pipeline programs for their overall success in pursuing the legal profession.



- Better
- Worse
- About the same
- I am not sure

The key benefit program attendees spoke of consistently when reporting their outcomes was the quality of resources the programs had to offer. The diversity pipeline survey further supports this finding. Of the 111 participants, 68% believed that pipeline programs better positioned them to be placed in their position of choice after graduation. Over 80% reported that they would "highly recommend" a pipeline program to an aspiring attorney.

## ***Areas of Concentration***

Outside of the participants who were more than pleased with their outcomes as a result of participating in a pipeline program, participants spoke more directly to what the programs offered substantially. Each program offers one of four main areas of concentration to help strengthen skills needed for Black and Latinx/Hispanic students to succeed. The programs vary in which area they cover, but each program includes at least one of the following: academic support and preparation for law school, career exploration, networking and mentoring, and substantive and professional skill development.<sup>16</sup>

Regardless of the program's focus, each participant interviewed discussed the importance of having these resources available to support their efforts in becoming an attorney. One participant credits a diversity pipeline as the reason they pursued a career in law. When asked about the most valuable aspect of their program, the 3L student replied, "the programs that stood out the most were those that offered resources supporting the transition from undergraduate to 1L year." The students and attorneys spoke of programs that provided exposure to the legal profession as the most valuable resource. The overwhelming majority of the participants identified as first-generation aspiring attorneys, where there were no immediate or extended family members who attended law school. They believed that if not for the pipeline programs, they would have not been successful during their first year.

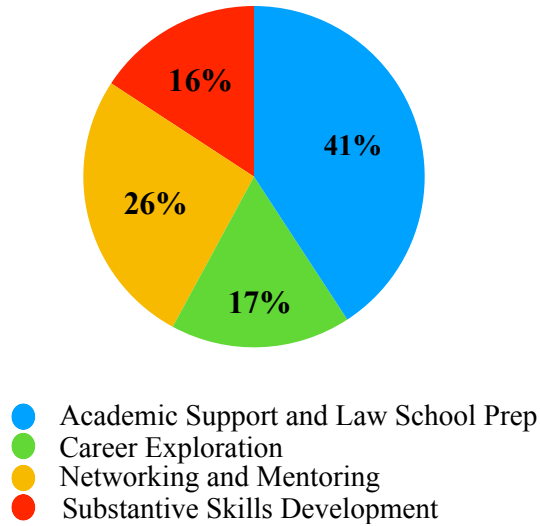
<sup>15</sup> See Pipeline Directory in *Sealing the Leaks: Recommendations to Diversify and Strengthen the Pipeline to the Legal Profession Report 2019*

<sup>16</sup> See Pipeline Directory in *Sealing the Leaks: Recommendations to Diversify and Strengthen the Pipeline to the Legal Profession Report 2019*

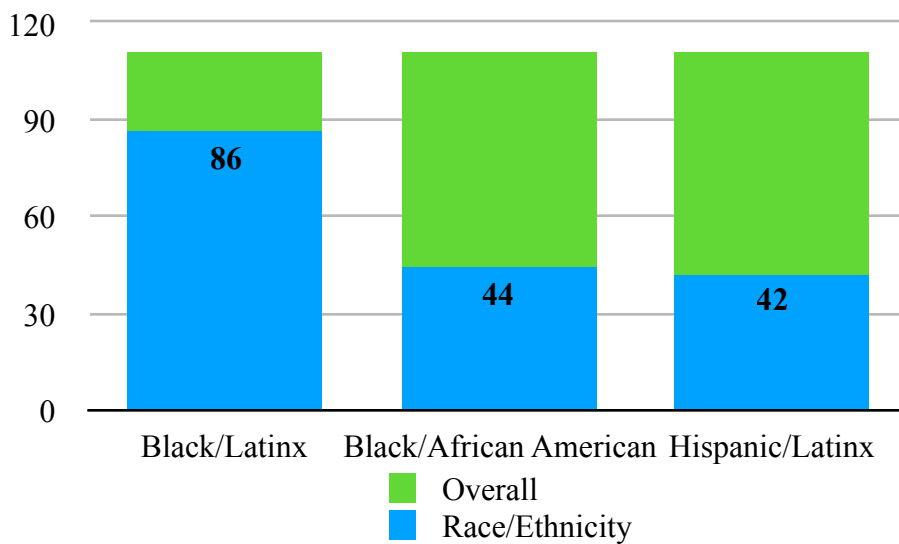


The other most valuable resource is mentorship. For first generation law students and attorneys alike, there was a strong desire to have someone to “hand hold” them through the process. Legal mentors, even if not Black or Latinx/Hispanic, were said to be invaluable.

**Most Valuable Area of Concentration**



**Black and Latinx Pipeline Participation by Race/Ethnicity**



## **Barriers to Pipeline Programs**

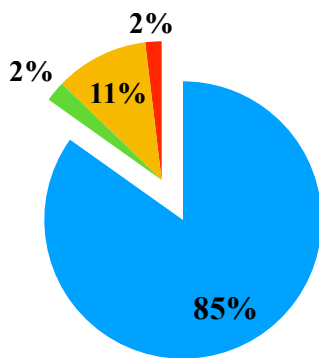
Since survey participants did not have grievances connected to a particular program, the discussion was broadened to include ways for pipeline programs to increase their efficacy in serving Black and Latinx/Hispanic participants, more generally. *Barriers to participating in pipeline programs* emerged as a theme through discussions with Black and Latinx/Hispanic law students and attorneys who had not participated in any type of pipeline program. Barriers to participation in pipeline programs for Black and Latinx/Hispanic students included program visibility, lack of financial support, and lack of support for pursuing public-interest law.

### ***Program Visibility***

Overall, the biggest critique across survey respondents and interview participants related to program visibility. It was overwhelmingly reported that Black and Latinx/Hispanic aspiring attorneys were not aware that pipeline programs were available. This finding was also consistent among all other survey respondents.

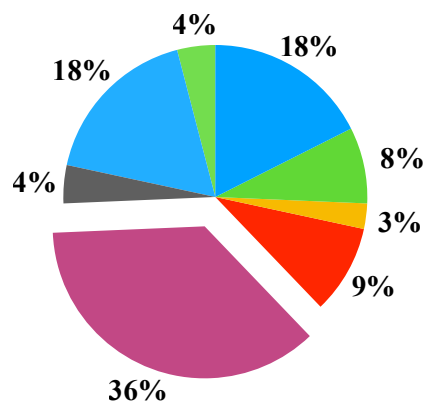
Even for participants who attended pipeline programs, their main source of information on various programs were personal internet searches or happenstance. Students as young as 14 were using online search engines to identify programs or scholarships. Of the eight interview participants who attended a legal pipeline program, only three students participated during more than one educational level. Black and Latinx/Hispanic students were not engaging with pipeline programs until college, when they were determining whether or not they wanted to pursue a career in law. This proved to be a significant barrier in the process for Black and Latinx/Hispanic students because those who had not participated in pipeline programs expressed desire for the support.

**Black/Latinx Non-Participation**



- Not Aware
- Not Interested
- Not Accepted
- Work

**Exposure to Pipeline Programs**



- Teacher
- Pipeline program visited my school
- School Recruiter
- Guidance Counselor
- Online
- Community Event
- Family Friend
- Admissions

“Law school is a LOT of money. Before you even start you have to pay for the LSAT, LSAT prep courses, application fees, credentialing services”...

- *Black female 2L student*

### ***Financial Support***

After accessibility, Black and Latinx/Hispanic participant and non-participant respondents, consistently spoke of the financial burden for pursuing a career in law. Non-participants voiced that opportunities were available, but they could not participate because they could not afford working in an unpaid program. In addition, the time commitment of the program did not allow for both work and participation in a pipeline program.

As a program director of a legal pipeline program, one interviewee spoke about the unintended consequences of the program's structure. As the director recalls,

“A barrier to more participation is timing. Like for the summer SEO program. I know at least 4 or 5 applicants that wanted to participate in the pre-law program but they couldn't. They couldn't because they couldn't afford to leave their full-time jobs for 4 weeks to participate in this daytime program.”

Many of the programs are structured to offer short-term intensive support. The Black and Latinx/Hispanic respondents discussed how they could not afford to take off from work to attend structured, time-consuming programs. The consensus was that having alternative schedules or programs for non-traditional students would address various unintended consequences on low-income students. Many of the programs, especially those offered in law school, do not accommodate students who are responsible for contributing financially to their household.

Low-income Black and Latinx/Hispanic students also find their financial circumstances are especially challenging during Bar Exam prep. They spoke of being at a significant disadvantage, as they could not afford to "take off" for the months leading up to the exam. When compared to their law school counterparts, many believed that it was an unfair class-based burden to expect that all students can forego work, and remain essentially economically dormant, while preparing to take the exam. The traditional course of action for graduates who sit for the exam is to study during the months leading up to the exam post-graduation. With the exception of those working for “Big Law” firms who had their exam prep course paid through the firm, the participants believe that the entire system is biased against the less affluent, which overall disproportionately impacts Black and Latinx/Hispanic students who have limited access to major law firms. While the students acknowledge that moving beyond this obstacle is possible, as there are poor Black and Latinx/Hispanic students who have successfully navigated this barrier, they believe it speaks to the overall exclusionary impacts of the current system felt by aspiring attorneys.

Each step in the process serves as a barrier for the poor. From LSAT prep costs, LSAT exam costs, tuition, unpaid summer internships, Bar exam prep courses, and three-month Bar prep sabbatical, the financial commitment for the most vulnerable seems insurmountable. Many feel that the required investment isn't necessarily commensurate with the potential outcome of becoming a successful, practicing attorney. For many, the likelihood that they will secure Big Law placement without attending a top tier school is almost nonexistent.

## ***Public Interest Resource Support***

During the interviews, an interesting phenomenon emerged. While discussing their legal area of interest, many felt that Black and Latinx/Hispanic students and attorneys were being funneled into areas outside of Big Law. For the participants, many spoke of their schools' ranking and personal experiences with the justice system being a catalyst for pursuing public-interest law. Out of 26 interviewees, half were either practicing in public-interest or they are currently pursuing public-interest law. For the practicing attorney participants, six of the 13 were associates at Big Law firms. The other participants included five law students who had not selected an area of focus, and two were litigation attorneys at small firms.

Overall, there were six participants who attended a top-tier school in the New York area. There were nine tier II participants and 11 that attended tier III schools. Of the six attorneys representing Big Law, three were graduates of top tier schools, the other three were at lower ranking schools but still managed to secure summer placement at firms through high GPA's and having made Law Review. These participants spoke candidly about their placement in Big Law firms as representing an exception to the usual path into Big Law. They believed that while it was necessary to have guidelines and rubrics for viable candidates, it becomes exclusionary when too much value is placed on school rankings, where Black and Latinx/Hispanic students remain underrepresented at tier I schools. For instance, according to several of the participants, the lower the ranking of the law school, the stricter the guidelines for on-campus interviewing. One 2L spoke about how she did not receive any on-campus interviews because her school's ranking made their students less desirable. She stated, "I didn't make the cutoff because I am not in the top 10% of my class. If I had the same grades at Columbia I would have made it to OCI, basically everyone at least gets an interview."

The privilege of school ranking is a well-known phenomenon in the legal profession, but should be noted when discussing persistent barriers for Black and Latinx/Hispanic students pursuing legal careers, especially in Big Law.

While most spoke of Big Law placement as a measure of achievement for aspiring attorneys, what was most interesting in the responses among those practicing or interested in pursuing Big Law was that only two of them actually wanted to remain in Big Law for the duration of their career. The other Big Law lawyers viewed practicing at a major law firm as a means to an end financially. For these participants, they were only interested in the opportunity to eliminate the massive debt they accrued in law school or related to familial obligations. Those who felt limited in pursuing Big Law expressed passion for public-interest law, but would have also been interested in having the freedom to participate in OCI.

With the exception of the two participants who saw an extensive career in international law at a major law firm, each of the other participants spoke of paying it forward given their personal experiences as Black and Latinx/Hispanic people practicing law. Black and Latinx/Hispanic lawyers who work for Big Law firms also pay it forward through their pro bono work, but the participants felt more compelled to make public interest their full-time commitment as an attorney. One respondent stated that it was her "responsibility" to "give back" in a substantially meaningful way. When discussing how she was introduced into the legal profession and how she came to practice immigration law, the associate explicitly identified her family's experience with previously being undocumented and the struggles she witnessed as a child of immigrants. It was her experiences with immigration law that inspired her to pursue a career as an immigration rights attorney. She was not the only one to speak to this sentiment. From issues ranging from per-

**"I have to give back. We need people in the courtroom who look like me."**

*- Black female 3L student*

sonal interactions through criminal, family, or immigration court, the Black and Latinx/Hispanic participants spoke emphatically and positively about their roles as attorneys.

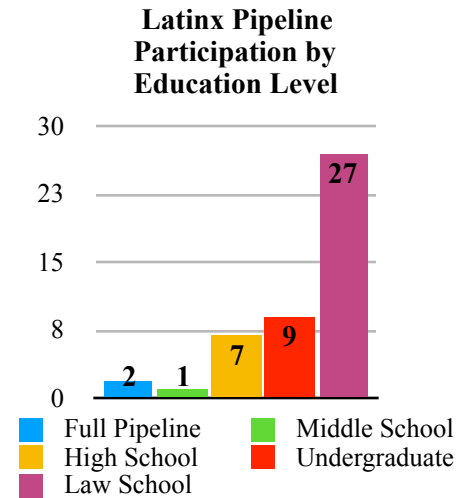
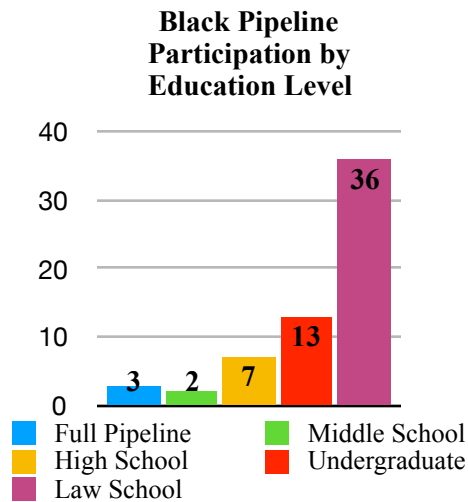
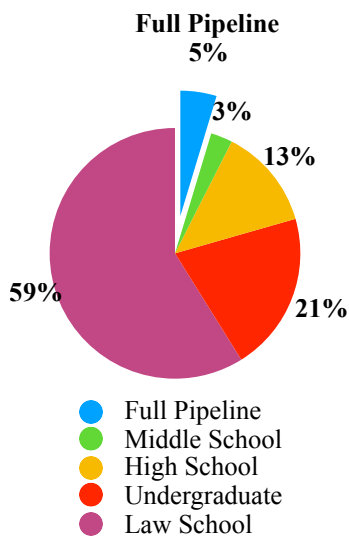
Another 3L student teared up as she recalled all she had gone through and subsequently accomplished as a first generation college and law school student. She said, "I have to give back. We need people in the courtroom who look like me." She, along with the others, expressed that their dedication to public interest is the result of seeing so many Blacks and Latinx/Hispanics on the other side of the legal process.

Whether through process of exclusion or self-selection, Black and Latinx/Hispanic law students I spoke with believed they are being funneled into public interest and there is a hidden cost that may serve as a barrier for Black and Latinx/Hispanic students. The participants expressed disappointment in their schools prioritization of resources for those pursuing Big Law, especially for tier II and III schools. They discussed their frustration of having to navigate the public-interest arena blindly. With the exclusion of NYU Law School, the participants felt there was an overall disinterest in assisting students with job placement in areas outside of Big Law firms. One participant said, "You know it would be cool to have something like OCI for public-interest. [For public-interest students] you just have to just go out and see what's out there."

## Pipeline Gaps

As previously stated, of the survey respondents, only **five** Black and Latinx/Hispanic participants participated in a legal pipeline starting in middle school and continuing to law school. According to respondents, they had either only participated in one program at one educational level, or were only introduced into the legal pipeline programs prior to or while attending law school. The consensus among the participants was that they would have benefited from receiving pipeline support throughout their entire academic path to becoming an attorney.

When asked about preparation for the first year of law school, the general consensus among participants was that they felt quite unprepared for the intellectual rigor of law school. They stated that reading comprehension, writing style, and vocabulary were areas where they felt the most behind compared to their counterparts. One participant explained, “I was like, how do they just know how to talk and write like this?” while another recalled, “I had moments where I was still trying to grasp certain concepts in law school that I should have gotten back in college. I felt like I was having to read everything two or three times just to understand.”



## First Generation Culture Shock

Outside of cultural inclusivity and academic preparation, mentorship was a consistent theme discussed in each interview. The idea that the majority of Black and Latinx/Hispanic students were not familiar with the specific culture of the legal profession was salient. Each Black and Latinx/Hispanic participant referred to a "culture" in the legal profession that excluded those from equal access to success in law school and beyond. They provided a very nuanced understanding of what contributed to the "othering" of most Black and Latinx/Hispanic aspiring and practicing attorneys, and racial differences were not believed to be the sole factor.

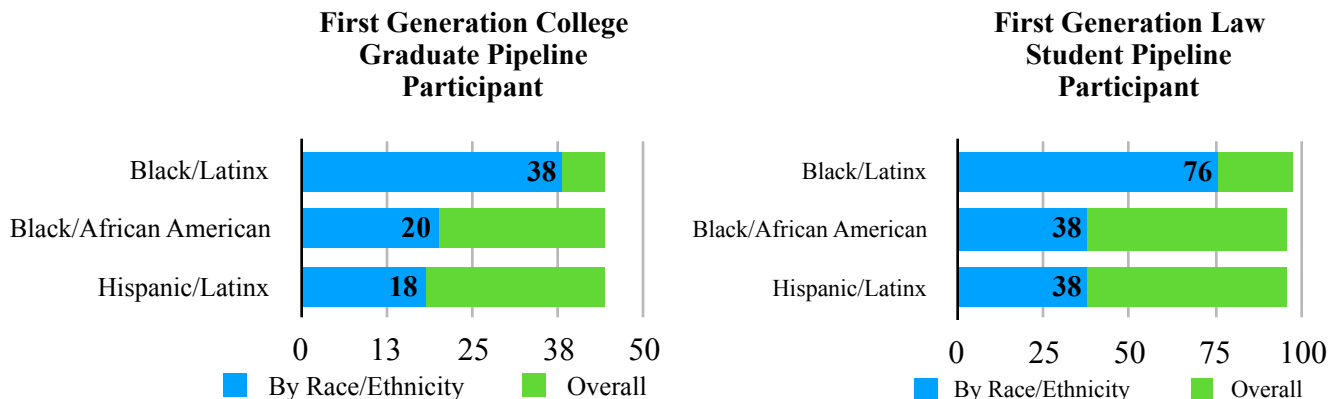
For example, Whiteness alone did not grant one access to the culture of the legal profession. One of the White-identifying Latinx/Hispanic participants felt that his presence as a White male did not erase his class or ethnicity. As many of the other participants identified, "fitting in" or being able to have conversations with those in positions of power were factors in success and/or visibility in the highly competitive field. Knowing how to relate to your professors or more senior attorneys has significance in a person's overall career mobility. The participant said that even though he was a White male, his Latinx/Hispanic identity, while not presumed superficially, excluded him in relatability. He expressed that he could not connect on topics such as golfing, popular vacation locations, or vernacular that he was not well versed in.

**“I had to figure out a lot of stuff on my own.”**

*-Black male associate*

On the surface it would appear that he would align with the status quo, but his cultural context "othered" him in a way that could not be masked. He found his support in Latinx affinity groups such as the Latinx Law Student Association (LLSA). He acknowledges his privilege in presenting as a White male, but also acknowledged that race-based inclusion is very limiting.

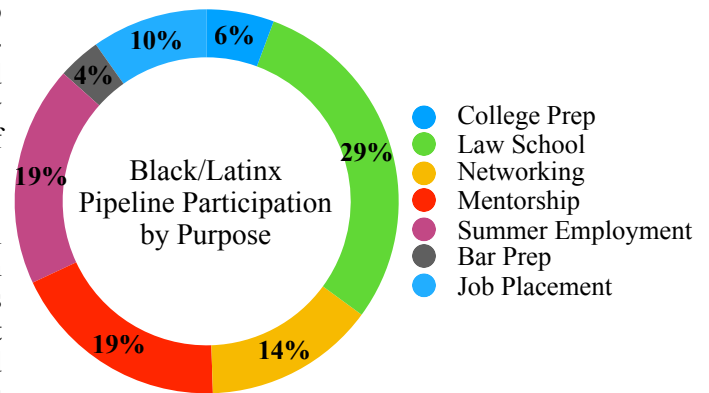
He was not the only one to highlight this experience. A Black female law student discussed how race-based programs were not enough. She said that while focusing on Black and Latinx/Hispanic underrepresentation is necessary, it should be examined intersectionally, understanding the role that race and class play in underrepresentation. She claimed that her status as a first generation law student is not the same as a Black or Latinx/Hispanic student with a legacy of practicing attorneys.



There were many reasons for stating that early introduction into pipeline programs was crucial to having more Black and Latinx/Hispanic representation in the legal profession. First, both current law students and practicing attorneys alike recall the tumultuous transition from college to law school. Even those who took time off to work felt as if they struggled with their 1L year of law school. The diversity pipeline survey showed that 40% of pipeline participants valued law school prep as the most important resource offered in pipeline programs. As one 3L participant claims, “I’d like to put a how-to for colored girls<sup>17</sup> who are attending law school. There’s just so many things that I’ve learned in law school that I wished I’d known first starting.”

Many attributed the harshness of their first year to not having the cultural competence of a White upper-class environment. “Being a first generation law and college student I didn’t have the ability to really rely on family or family friends to provide that type of guidance so I had to get that elsewhere.”

From the perspectives of first generation law school students, it was not a ubiquitous state of confusion for all students. They can recall how many students just “knew what to do.” They believed that it wasn’t until their second semester, or worse their second year, that they figured out the full extent of what is expected in law school. Many spoke of the process becoming more manageable as they better understood what was expected of them. But finding out that everything counts starting “day one” is not helpful to law school students already at a disadvantage. Navigating uncharted territories takes extra time and compounds the feeling of playing “catch up” as expectations become better understood.



’I’ve been able to dodge a couple of bullets, so-to-speak, because I had mentors, people who came back.’”

*-Black & Latinx male private practice*

### **Mentoring**

Of the most valuable resources identified, 28% indicated “mentoring” as the second most valuable resource gained from a pipeline program, after law school preparation. When asked how to address the lack of understanding about law school culture, one participant suggested that, “there should be a formal process for Black and Latinx/Hispanic students to connect to Black and Latinx/Hispanic Law professors.” They believed that having a mentor would not necessarily address the overall feelings of exclusion in a White dominated profession, but having a Black or Latinx/Hispanic advisor would provide valuable support in learning to navigate the legal world as a racial minority. They also stated that, “even if it’s not one-on-one every time, we should have someone available.”

<sup>17</sup> This is a reference to a play written by Ntozake Shange called *FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE/WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF*. It’s a play that features the experiences of Black American women.



## *Student Tracking*

Student tracking emerged when discussing ways pipeline programs could better support Black and Latinx/Hispanic students. Those who participated in a pipeline program explained that while the programs were effective, they wished that a network had been formed for all current and past attendees. The participants spoke about networks such as Black Law Student Associations (BLSA) and Latinx Law Student Associations (LLSA), as necessary resources for racial minorities in the legal profession. Pipeline program participants stated that it was through these organizations that they found inclusive spaces for networking and mentorship matching. These organizations (with chapters in each school) provided support for success including, but not limited to; job opportunities, sounding boards for career plans, and feelings of belonging.

For the Black and Latinx/Hispanic participants, networks fill the gap in providing support for those who would otherwise experience isolation, career stagnation, and often times attrition in the legal progression altogether. "Programs should follow-up with us and make sure that we are good. Just a follow-up. I felt like when we were done with the program they just let us out into the world."

"Pipelines stop when they reach their goal. I think they need to take it one step further."

*-Pipeline Program Director*

## **Recommendations**

As an independent consultant, my role in the New York City Bar Association's Office for Diversity and Inclusion's pipeline efficacy project was to: 1) examine ways law-specific pipeline programs support successful outcomes for Black and Latinx/Hispanic participants, and 2) provide data-driven recommendations for ways that the New York City Bar Association can empower pipeline programs to increase their efficacy in recruiting Black and Latinx/Hispanic candidates to become attorneys.

Through the data presented in this report, it is my recommendation that the City Bar serve as a lead organization to implement a concerted effort among key stakeholders (pipeline programs, middle and high schools, New York-based undergraduate and law schools, and signatory firms) committed to increasing the efficacy of legal pipeline programs for Black and Latinx/Hispanic aspiring attorneys. As the center for New York-based pipeline programs, the City Bar's responsibilities should include:

1. Developing a program akin to the Office for Diversity & Inclusion's "signatory firm" structure. This includes creating a system, with incentives, where pipeline programs commit to working with the City Bar to increase visibility of available programs to Black and Latinx/Hispanic aspiring attorneys by focusing on expanding recruitment efforts to more New York-area schools and successful completion of legal pipeline participation spanning from middle school to law school.
2. Creating a digital, centralized location for all pipeline programs available to New York-based students, organizing the platform where students at each educational level are directed to a subsequent program based on area of concentration.
3. Encouraging each New York-based college-prep high school, undergraduate, and law school to develop pre-law seminars that acclimate Black and Hispanic/Latinx students to law school before entering their 1L year. In addition, encouraging 3L or recent graduates to mentor 1L students as they transition into law school.
4. Developing a network for Black and Hispanic/Latinx pipeline program alumni for New York-based programs. The network would serve as a resource for: building relationships among Black and Latinx students; connecting Black and Hispanic/Latinx students to other affinity groups, such as BLSA and LLSA; job opportunities; networking; and mentorship matching.
5. Recommending alternative program schedules and structures to accommodate for non-traditional students with rigid work schedules. This includes offering online courses or evening programs for those students who are required to work outside of school.
6. Assembling an accountability task force to monitor outcomes for Black and Hispanic/Latinx participants in "signatory" pipeline programs.

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