

# Becoming Black Lawyers

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE LAW SCHOOL EXPERIENCE



[www.BecomingBlackLawyers.com](http://www.BecomingBlackLawyers.com)

A FILM BY EVANGELINE M. MITCHELL

RELENTLESS VISIONARY FILMS LLC PRESENTS AN EVANGELINE M. MITCHELL PRODUCTION

CINEMATOGRAPHER ANDREW LEIBMAN EDITOR RYAN MAYERS ADDITIONAL EDITORS VINCENT VALENZUELA NAUMAN ALI

SOUND DESIGNER MICHAEL MAGILL EXECUTIVE PRODUCER EVANGELINE M. MITCHELL CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JALENE MACK

"BECOMING BLACK LAWYERS" VERONICA N. DUNLAP PAULA T. EDGAR NATASHA N. NURSE MARCUS SANDIFER ALEXI THOMAS

ORIGINAL SONGS BY EVANGELINE M. MITCHELL VOCALS BY SAKARI AND AJADA REIGNS CREATED AND DIRECTED BY EVANGELINE M. MITCHELL

[www.becomingblacklawyers.com](http://www.becomingblacklawyers.com)



# AVAILABLE FOR SCREENINGS




*Trailer -*

*<https://vimeo.com/549307447>*

*25-Minute Documentary -*

*Available Upon Request*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



<b>LOGLINE AND SYNOPSIS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>STATISTICS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>SPECIFICATIONS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>BEHIND-THE-SCENES SNAPSHOTS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>FILM CAST MEMBERS / STORYTELLERS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>DIRECTOR &amp; EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>PRAISE</b>	<b>10-11</b>
<b>FILM FESTIVALS AND LAURELS</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>CREDITS</b>	<b>13</b>

# Becoming Black Lawyers

*Law school is hard. Being Black in law school is harder.*

## LOGLINE

When these five Black lawyers set out on their journeys to receive a professional legal education, they did not realize that they would have to struggle against additional daily battles even more challenging than the rigors of learning the law in a hypercompetitive environment. They discover the paradox of studying in an institution that idealistically represents “justice” for all.

## SYNOPSIS

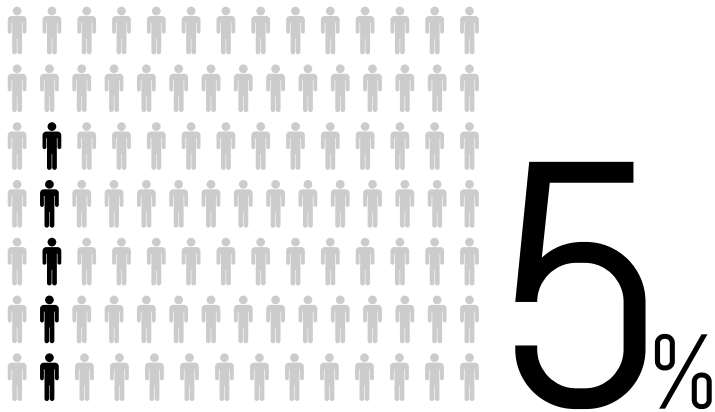
With transparent, no-holds-barred interviews, the uninterrupted voices of these Black lawyers take center stage. They candidly share what it was like attending predominantly White law schools, the significance of Blackness in law school, what it means to them to become “Black” lawyers, and their best advice for aspiring Black lawyers coming behind them.

This film reveals a paradox not often discussed – that American law schools are not places of justice and fairness for Black law students, but institutions where they often experience the very same unfair bias and prejudices that they would in society at large

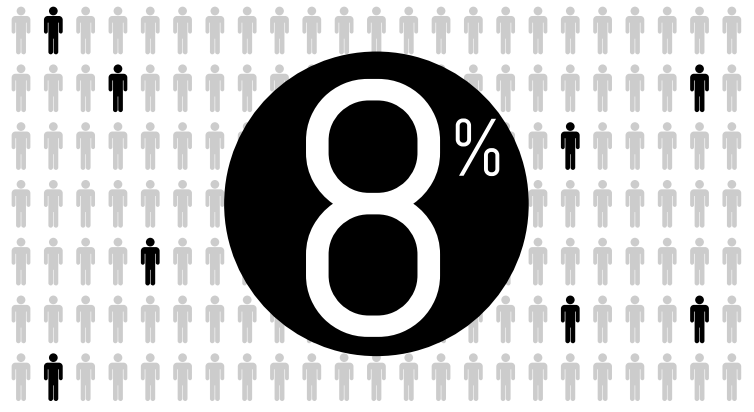
# STATISTICS



## The Statistics Regarding Black Lawyers and Black Law Students



5% of all lawyers identify as Black.



Less than <8% of all law students are Black.

# SPECIFICATIONS



Title: Becoming Black Lawyers

Genre: Documentary

Shooting Format: Digital

Aspect Ratio: 16:9

Sound: Stereo

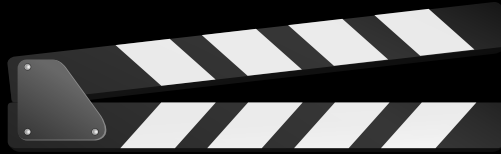
Date of Completion: 2021

Language: English

Captions/Subtitles: English (Available with or without)

Supplementary Materials: Discussion Guide and Toolkit

# BEHIND-THE-SCENES SNAPSHOTS



*Lawyer Alexi Thomas*



*Lawyer Natasha M. Nurse*



*Lawyer Marcus Sandifer*



*Lawyer Paula T. Edgar*



*Lawyer Veronica N. Dunlap*

# FILM CAST MEMBERS / STORYTELLERS

(IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)



## **Veronica N. Dunlap, Esq., M.B.A.**

*Attorney Dunlap graduated with both her Juris Doctor and Master of Business Administration in Finance in 2014.*

*She is the state program director at a public interest law organization where she spearheads technology initiatives that empower people in need to resolve their legal problems and strengthen the work of advocates serving them.*

*She is the recipient of the New York County Lawyers Association Pro Bono Honors Award and the National Bar Association Women Lawyers Division Outstanding Pro Bono Service Award.*

## **Paula T. Edgar, Esq.**

*Attorney Edgar graduated from law school in 2006. She is the CEO of a consulting firm that provides innovative and strategic solutions on organizational diversity efforts, intercultural competence initiatives, sexual harassment prevention and EEO compliance.*

*She has demonstrated leadership in numerous civic organizations, and is the past President of the Metropolitan Black Bar Association (MBBA), New York State's largest Black bar association. She was recognized by The Network Journal Magazine as a "40 Under Forty" Achievement Awardee, a Ms. JD "Woman of Inspiration" and a "Rising Star" by A Better Chance.*



## **Natasha M. Nurse, Esq.**

*Attorney Nurse earned her Juris Doctor cum laude with honors in 2013. She is the founder of a lifestyle-focused blog, podcast co-host, speaker, trainer, coach, and content creator.*

## **Marcus A. Sandifer, Esq.**

*Attorney Sandifer earned his law degree in 2017. He was recognized as the Most Outstanding 3L at his law school commencement.*

*He serves as general counsel for a corporation. He has been recognized by Black Enterprise Magazine's top 100 "Modern Men" and The National Black Lawyers as "40 Under 40."*



## **Alexi Thomas, Esq., M.B.A.**

*Attorney Thomas earned both her Doctor of Jurisprudence and Master of Business Administration in 2019. She is the youngest Black person to do so at her university.*

*She is an associate on the Capital Markets team at a major international law firm.*

*She is a bar association leader.*

# DIRECTOR & EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



*Evangeline M. Mitchell, Esq., Ed.M.*

**Creator | Director | Executive Producer**

*Evangeline M. Mitchell is an author, non-profit founder, entrepreneur, lawyer, and documentary filmmaker. She is a graduate of Prairie View A&M University, the University of Iowa College of Law, and the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. She is currently working on her Certificate in Documentary Arts from Duke University's Center for Documentary Studies and her Certificate in Film & TV Industry Essentials from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Born in New Orleans, Louisiana and raised in Houston, Texas, she currently resides with her family in Cambridge, Massachusetts.*



*Jalene Mack, Esq.*

**Co-Executive Producer | Production Attorney**

*A barred attorney with nearly 30 years of experience, Jalene Mack is a sole practitioner whose focus is largely now on the provision of expert legal services in the areas of entertainment, trademark and copyright registration and small business administration. Also, a best-selling author, playwright, actress, TV/film producer, public speaker, non-profit founder and community servant, Jalene is passionate about using her legal skills to further the arts and entertainment and support artists and other business professionals in the pursuit of their gifts.*

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

*“This film reveals that when it comes to anti-Black racism, prejudice and discrimination in America, the walls of law school offer no protection.”*

Evangeline M. Mitchell, Director, *Becoming Black Lawyers*

I was shocked about what I experienced as a “Black” law student. I wondered if what I experienced was real or just something in my head because it was so hard to believe and process. I had attended a predominantly Black high school and a historically Black university in the South. So, although I was nervous about going to a predominantly White law school in a Midwestern state that wasn’t very diverse, I honestly didn’t expect to encounter issues around race. I didn’t really understand or have a true sense of what racism looked like. For some reason, because I was going to “law school,” I thought that it would be a place filled with people who believed in and wanted this ideal of “justice” and “fairness” including racial justice and social justice - for all. The fact that what I had envisioned in my mind and the reality I was faced with was so different was disheartening to me.



This project is what I would consider “heart work” because I have long felt that the experiences of Black lawyers in White law schools were stories that needed to be told - and that the world needed to hear them. The paradox of going to a place that is supposed to represent and stand up for “equal justice,” which at the very same time, was a place where Black students were treated unfairly and with hostility, never sat right with me. It didn’t make sense to me while I was experiencing it in various law school environments (I attended at my law school, a summer law program abroad, a law school in my home city, and a semester study abroad law program), and it still didn’t throughout the years as I spoke with Black law students about their experiences. I have remained disappointed in learning that many years later - things still have not changed - no matter where you go to law school in the United States, with the exception of those that are uncommonly diverse or HBCU law schools. That desire to share our unique stories and lived experiences fueled a fire that never went away.

I had a vision for this film well before I even put out a call to Black lawyers to participate. My inspiration and approach to the film came from watching HBO’s *The Black List* and Oprah’s *Master Class* several years ago. I loved the idea of people just telling their stories - transparently, directly - with minimal images and other footage to distract from their words. I felt that this pure storytelling would be effective, and would enable us to center these Black lawyers and their voices.

In talking to my own law school’s dean about my experiences, I recall him telling me that there was “nothing” that could be done about the mistreatment that Black students experienced by their White peers. I remember feeling like people didn’t want to talk about it and that it needed to be kept quiet, like a “secret” that we discussed with one another, but otherwise pretended wasn’t happening. There was an expectation that we suffer in silence. I felt the voices of Black lawyers - especially their sharing their struggles and the additional obstacles they had to overcome - needed to be heard and addressed. I wanted people to see the humanity of these Black lawyers, and this particular format would enable that. Before the interviews, I provided all lawyers who agreed to participate with a general list of potential questions and only requested for them to tell the truth.

Although the film and show that I modeled my documentary after were both in full color, I really liked the idea of using a Black and White color filter and aesthetic. I felt that this look was important because this was an “old” issue of how White people treated Black people and considering the history of this country in the not-so-distant past, it would give an old school feel. I also thought that the Black and White would provide a beautiful and non-distracting look that would force viewers to really concentrate on the seriousness of the topic and focus on the person in front of them as opposed to everything else.

Through poignant, vulnerable, and honest storytelling, this film reveals that when it comes to anti-Black racism, prejudice and discrimination in America, the walls of law school offer no protection. The history of the United States has shown us that “the law” has had power in determining the status of Black people. We went from property and things to second-class citizens to citizens. The law was purposely used to enslave, subjugate, and segregate us - and then to free and give us rights. Because of this “special relationship” that Black Americans have with the law, that history and that legacy still impact the current status of Black people today. In considering the central role of the legal system in oppressing Black people in the past, do the institutions that train lawyers who will help create, and interpret, and enforce the law now need to take on a leadership role in advancing diversity, inclusion, equity, and social justice? This film provides a vehicle to incite greatly needed discussion about where we were, where we are now, and the next steps for positive change in the future.

# PRAISE

## PRAISE FOR BECOMING BLACK LAWYERS FROM ASPIRING BLACK LAWYERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

*"Uplifting. Inspiring. A must-see for all future Black lawyers."*

Juanita E. Joyner, Aspiring Black Lawyer, Non-Traditional Student

*"The battles within law school to become a black attorney for me aren't seen unless we get behind the scenes and watching this film was truly what I needed to help affirm my why. The film tore back the page and revealed that yes, the journey can and will be hard, but it's not unattainable! The attorneys were raw and uncut about their experiences and courageous in their efforts. I admire their gusto and I look forward to my journey to join them in my own esquire seat in the near future. Thank you all for your dedication to black law! You are rock stars."*

Sandrian Campbell

*"I believe this film is critical for ALL black and brown children as young as elementary level. It allows them to see that contrary to what the world would have them believe, they can do ANYTHING but the fight is still just as intense as that of our ancestors. They need to be prepared to fight!"*

Brandy Johnson | J.D. Candidate, 2024 | Mitchell Hamline School of Law

*"Are you a Black, first-generation student interested in the law? Are you often alone and confused about your journey into the legal space? Are you just a documentary buff? Then, as per Law Professor Tanya Washington, this film begs the question: 'Isn't this what you prayed for?' And it very much so is. Prepare to cry, sans complaining, and be motivated!"*

Yolanda V. Aguilera, Aspiring Black Attorney, Rutgers University '14 (Newark, New Jersey)

*"This film was so impactful. I believe that every aspiring Black lawyer needs to watch this. It offers such a realistic perspective of law school and gives great advice."*

Iyanla Kollock, Aspiring Black Lawyer, Undergraduate, Rutgers University '22  
(New Brunswick, New Jersey)

*"This film is pivotal for future Black lawyers in today's climate. It provides a diverse snapshot of the experience of Black law students learning in this hypercompetitive environment. If you are considering law school this is a powerful, eye-opening, and must-see documentary."*

Kristina Krozak, Aspiring Black Lawyer, University of Maryland '22

*"A culmination of generational achievement, rooted purpose, and unwavering drive!"*

Future Lawyer

*"This film is an honest account of the grit and determination necessary when becoming a black lawyer."*

Stacie L. Dukes, 3L, Southern University Law Center (Atlanta, Georgia)

# PRAISE

*"If you are a Black person pursuing the law, press play on this film whenever you need a reminder of the village that surrounds you."*

Renee S. Ingram

*"I would recommend this film to others, especially someone like myself who is looking at attending law school in the future. I appreciate the realistic experiences shared by each person. Although some of the experiences were negative, they are real and are important for future law students to be made aware of. The film was also inspiring, and has the ability to spur future law students, current law students/lawyers, on in their individual journey into the legal field."*

Future Black Law Student

*"This film edifies and encourages aspiring lawyers that becoming a black lawyer is not by chance but by design. You must see it."*

Stacy Burnett, Aspiring Black Lawyer

*"This film can be the strength of one's motivation to remain steadfast in their commitment to pursue legal education."*

Tyler L. Brumfield, Aspiring Black Lawyer, Graduate, Univ. of Missouri '19 (Chicago, Illinois)

*"Future Black lawyers will be empowered by this short film."*

Black Pre-Law Student

*"The film Becoming Black Lawyers is a must-see for all aspiring Black lawyers!"*

Tyra Sherese Peterson, Aspiring Black Lawyer, Graduate, B.A., Michigan State University 1989 and Margrave College, M.A 2009 (Chicago, Illinois)

*"The film is necessary to the conversation on inclusion based on race and gender and the future of aspiring Black lawyers."*

Donelle Simmons, Aspiring Black Lawyer, Graduate, Fayetteville State University '21 (Fayetteville, North Carolina)

*"This film was invaluable. As prospective Black lawyers, we simply cannot get enough reminders that say 'Hey, this is possible.'"*

Jasmine Thomas, Aspiring Lawyer, Graduate, North Carolina A&T '20

*"Becoming Black Lawyers is the film that every aspiring Black lawyer needs to see! The wisdom gained from others' experiences are the tools that will help propel you forward in your career."*

Kinya K. Gramblin, Aspiring Black Lawyer, UNH Law Class of 2024

*"This film provides the necessary and often unacknowledged experiences of being a Black law student and a Black Lawyer. It is a national call to action that we MUST change the fact that only 5% of lawyers and 8% of law students are Black."*

Jalyn Radziminski, Aspiring Black Lawyer, Graduate, Emory University '18 (Fort Wayne, IN)

# 2021 FILM FESTIVAL OFFICIAL SELECTIONS AND AWARDS

## OFFICIAL SELECTIONS



# 2021 FILM FESTIVAL OFFICIAL SELECTIONS AND AWARDS

## OFFICIAL SELECTIONS



# 2021 FILM FESTIVAL OFFICIAL SELECTIONS AND AWARDS

## AWARD NOMINATIONS



## HONORABLE MENTIONS



## AWARD WINS



# CREDITS



*Director and Executive Producer*  
**Evangeline M. Mitchell**

---

*Co-Executive Producer and Production Attorney*  
**Jalene Mack**

---

*Cinematographer*  
**Andrew Leibman**

---

*Editor*  
**Ryan Mayers**

---

*Additional Editors*  
**Vincent Venezuela and Nauman Ali**

---

*Sound Designer*  
**Michael Magill**

---

*Audio Post*  
**Kristofer John Caballero**

---

*Production Assistants*  
**Andrea Chavez and Jayleen Couture**

---

*Post-Production Assistant*  
**Najifa Tajeem**

---

*Original Songs (Writer)*  
**Evangeline M. Mitchell**

---

*Vocals*  
**Ajada Reigns**

---

*Vocals and Harmonies*  
**Sakari**

---

# CONTACT INFORMATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

---

## Contact Us

---


Evangeline M. Mitchell  
Becoming Black Lawyers  
c/o Relentless Visionary Films LLC  
P.O. Box 391076  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139  
Phone: 617-702-6028  
E-Mail: [info@becomingblacklawyers.com](mailto:info@becomingblacklawyers.com)  
Website: [www.becomingblacklawyers.com](http://www.becomingblacklawyers.com)

---

## Connect Via Our Social Media Channels

---

 [/becomingblacklawyers](https://www.facebook.com/becomingblacklawyers)

 [@becomingblacklawyers](https://www.instagram.com/becomingblacklawyers)

 [@becominglawyers](https://www.twitter.com/becominglawyers)

 [@becomingblacklawyers](https://www.youtube.com/becomingblacklawyers)