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MENTORS

APPRECIATIONS OF GUIDANCE & SUPPORT

Legal professionals write about their mentors

Yuri Calderon

GCR

The phrase, “no person in history has completely pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps” is mostly right. I think this is especially true for legal professionals. The practice of law is so complex that every young attorney needs some degree of mentoring.

My mentor, Yuri Calderon, has been a wonderful teacher and has been critical in my development as a first-year attorney. Yuri’s most profound influence on me, however, has not been in helping me as a first-year attorney, but in taking me in as a college student that had never met an attorney. Yuri allowed me, as a 19-year-old, to experience the practice of law firsthand and instilled in me the notion that minorities could be successful in the legal profession.

As the son of two Mexican-American immigrant parents, there was no person in my family or community that worked as an attorney, or even in the legal field. I had never considered ever being an attorney for this reason. The law, it seemed, simply wasn’t a career for minorities.

As a college sophomore, when the time had come to clearly define my career path, my studies in political philosophy piqued my interest in the law. I became determined to find someone in the legal field to help me put a face to the profession. I called family, I called friends, I called friends of friends, and no one personally knew of a single attorney in my home town. It wasn’t until I called our family priest, Arturo Lozano, that I was finally able to get in contact with a young and inspiring attorney, my mentor, Yuri Calderon.

Yuri took me under his wing and allowed me to work with him at his law firm. I soon not only found out that Yuri was a great attorney, but also a world-class human being. Yuri gave me the chance to sit in on school board meetings, to sit in on labor negotiations, and to see how he had helped the local community. By allowing me to experience his world, Yuri became an example that I could sit at a negotiating table as an



Yuri Calderon

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equal, that Latino lawyers could indeed make a difference in their communities, and most importantly, an example that I could make it in this profession. Yuri inspired me by leading by example.

Had Yuri not given me the opportunity to see firsthand that Latinos do belong in the legal profession and that Latino lawyers can make a meaningful difference in their professions and communities, I can sincerely say I would not be an attorney now. All it took was for Yuri to give me a chance and allow me to experience his world. I hope that anyone reading this is inspired to reach out to someone and do the same. It will change their lives.

— Rodrigo Guevara, GCR