

# BACK STORY

## Hispanics are Underrepresented in the Legal Profession: Latino Bar Association 5K Event is Helping to Change That

BY LEONARDO BENAVIDES, ESQ. AND BRIANA MARTINEZ, ESQ.

Hispanics continue to be significantly underrepresented in the legal profession. According to the Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA), while making up 18 percent of the country's population, Hispanics comprise only about 5 percent of the nation's lawyers.<sup>1</sup> These low numbers negatively impact the Hispanic community, especially in Nevada where Hispanics make up more than a quarter of the population.<sup>2</sup>

As part of its mission, the Las Vegas Latino Bar Association (LBA) is dedicated to increasing the diversity of the legal profession to advance the standing of Hispanics. A legal profession that is more reflective of our nation's ethnic diversity benefits everyone by increasing public trust in our legal system, assisting law firms in developing more innovative approaches to legal problems and, over time, increase judicial diversity.

### What is the LBA doing to help change these statistics?

For many years, the LBA has been a strong supporter of programs such as the four-tier mentoring program "Huellas" ran by La Voz, the William S. Boyd School of Law Hispanic student association. Programs such as these help expose our young Hispanic community to the legal field and how they can be better advocates for our community.

Inspired by programs such as these, LBA President Marisa Rodriguez realized the organization needed a signature annual event that would support the LBA's mission. An avid runner, Rodriguez felt a 5K would be a great event that could be inclusive of every individual in our community. Accordingly, she presented her vision to the LBA board of directors and it was approved.

After meeting with law school administrators, the LBA board of directors learned that a significant barrier for many Hispanics who wish to pursue a legal education is their inability to afford a preparation course for the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). Additionally, the costs of registering for the exam itself can present a financial barrier. The LSAT is a required exam for the majority of law schools in the country and serves as a factor for admissions and scholarships. With this in mind, the LBA started organizing its inaugural *¡Andale! 5K* to raise funds for scholarships to pay for Hispanic college students and recent graduates' LSAT exam and LSAT preparation courses.



### The ¡Andale! 5K

The race was held on September 21, 2019, with 359 registered participants. It offers a special shout out to Kaempfer Crowell; not only did that firm sponsor the race, it also signed up the most participants. The race had a "Latino touch" with a mariachi band singing the national anthem and La Bonita Supermarkets providing

sweet Mexican bread at the finish line. The LBA raised more than \$30,000 in sponsorships and approximately \$10,000 from registered runners.

The LBA will be able to gift more than 10 scholarships (\$1,839 each); those funds cover an LSAT in-person preparation course, the examination fee, the Credential Assembly Service fee and one LSAT law school report. The LBA received more than 20 scholarship applications. The awardees were announced at the LBA's inaugural *Inspira Awards Celebration* on October 30. At that event, the LBA also honored Associate Dean of Student Affairs Frank D. Durand from William S. Boyd School of Law for being such an integral part of Hispanic law students' lives.

Given the tremendous support this event received, the LBA will make the *¡Andale! 5K* an annual event. **NL**

1. Raul A. Reyes, 'Where Are All the Latino Lawyers?': Hispanics Scarce in the Legal Profession, NBC News, (Oct. 13, 2017, 5:51 AM), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/where-are-all-latino-lawyers-hispanics-scarce-legal-profession-n809141>; ABA National Lawyer Population Demographics, ABA, (Aug. 5, 2019), [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/market\\_research/national-lawyer-population-demographics-2009-2019.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/market_research/national-lawyer-population-demographics-2009-2019.pdf).
2. 2010 Census Nevada Quick Facts, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140731162029/http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/32000.html>.

**LEONARDO BENAVIDES** is a coordinator at the Clark County School District Government Relations office and a member of the LBA. He also served on the *¡Andale! 5K* committee and helped organize the race.



**BRIANA MARTINEZ** is an associate at Kaempfer Crowell and the VP of Communications for the LBA. She also served on the *¡Andale! 5K* committee and helped organize the race.

