

# A+ TRENDSETTERS

## JUDGING JULISSA

ATTORNEY JULISSA REYNOSO REPRESENTS LATINOS IN THE COURT

 By Mercedes Sanchez

**Y**ou may find Julissa Reynoso swinging her hips to some sultry *bachata*, an old *bolero* or a Brazilian beat, her bright, brown eyes shining with laughter. With curly, unruly hair and a petite frame, this 30-year-old Dominican lawyer and activist is a natural on the dance floor. Just as a talented dancer can make even the most intricate dance step look simple, Reynoso can juggle all her passions in life with graceful ease.

Her motive for helping others began early. At the age of seven, Reynoso's family left Salcedo, Dominican Republic for the South Bronx, NY in pursuit of a better economic opportunity. During her junior year of high school, Reynoso's guidance counselor encouraged her to apply to Ivy League colleges, which she had never even imagined of doing. She applied to Princeton, Columbia, Yale, NYU, Georgetown, Cornell and Harvard. She was accepted by all and attended Harvard where she majored in Government and Latin American studies. "I was motivated by my desire to learn and help my family and community," says Reynoso.

When given a scholarship at Harvard to work with one of the poorest countries in the world, Reynoso jumped at the opportunity. "I worked in Ethiopia with a human rights organization while I was in college. It was one of the most intense months of my life. I learned a great deal about the struggles of the African people," says Reynoso. "[I advise students] to travel; travel as much as you can. It'll give you great insight into humanity."

After Harvard, Reynoso received a fellowship allowing her to receive her Masters degree at Cambridge University in London. "I met people from all over the world there and made some great friends," says Reynoso. At Cambridge, she received her Masters in the Philosophy of Development Economics. She then went straight to Columbia University where she received her law degree.



While some professors recommend studying for the LSAT an entire year before the exam, Julissa suggests at least three months. "It's hard work! It requires a lot of preparation, and it's not a pleasant experience." On campus Reynoso worked in the human rights department as an assistant to professors. "That's where I learned about the opportunities we all have to help others in our community," says Reynoso. "Everyone can help in different ways depending on his or her individual potential."

Some might describe Reynoso as an over achiever. Without a doubt she works hard, but when the opportunity arises, she does not shy away from a challenge. Numerous Latinos don't pursue college or their dream careers due to many college cost misconceptions. "Ivy League loans have tremendous amounts of money (usually) and when you want to attend, there are scholarships available," says Reynoso. "Don't be afraid of taking out loans. Unfortunately, it's the way most of us get through all our degrees."

Her expensive education has definitely paid off. Today, Reynoso works as an attorney at the prestigious international law firm, Simpson Thatcher & Bartlett, where she's a member of the litigation department.

As she continues fighting for Latino rights, Reynoso advises Latino college students to "try many different things and don't be afraid of being challenged by the unconventional."

