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Ten Reasons to Attend Law School

*C. Steven Bradford**

Each year, approximately 1.5 billion otherwise sane college graduates enter law school.¹ (This figure includes at least 350 students a year in countries other than the United States.²) These new law students come from all walks of life—laid-off brokers, laid-off autoworkers, unemployed M.B.A.s, disillusioned public school teachers, political science majors, political science majors, and more political science majors. Three years later, they emerge—the best and brightest nonproductive professionals that any struggling debtor nation has ever produced, the core of America's hopes for the twenty-first century.

Why do they do it? What is it about law school that attracts so many otherwise intelligent students? Of course, every present and former law student knows the answer to this question, or they wouldn't have attended law school. However, current statistics show that a few unfortunates, many of whom live in isolated sections of Montana, Wyoming, and Staten Island, still have not enrolled in law school. Obviously, information concerning the benefits of law school has not yet filtered out to these isolated areas. Those people must be contacted to help ease this nation's severe shortage of lawyers.

* Associate Professor, University of Nebraska College of Law. The author attended a law school. He can't remember why.

I want to thank the editors of the *B.Y.U. Law Review* for being silly enough to publish this article, and the B.Y.U. Law School for being silly enough to make these students law review editors. If, as the B.Y.U. motto states, "The Glory of God is Intelligence," this article is utterly devoid of religious content.

1. I have no source for this number. It, like 98.43% of all statistics, was made up.

2. Most of the foreign students intend to immigrate into the United States because many countries are able to survive with only a small number of lawyers. As everyone who has followed the recent debate on the legal profession knows, Japan has only one lawyer. That's why Japan is so much more productive than the United States. Our declining industrial base and insulated managerial corps have nothing to do with it.

Therefore, I offer the following ten reasons to attend law school.

1. *To preserve your options.* Law school leaves open a number of career opportunities. Currently, law school graduates have the option not to be hired by a large, struggling, overextended law firm; the option not to be hired by a large, uncompetitive, American business; the option not to be hired by a budget-cutting government agency; and the option to practice law on their own and starve.

2. *To learn to think like a lawyer.* Law schools focus a great deal of attention on teaching students the analytical skills necessary to think like a lawyer. You too can learn to think like Dan Quayle, Richard Nixon, and the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Law school education is somewhat miraculous in this regard. Law schools take extremely bright, motivated students whose success on standardized tests show that they think logically and, after three years of intensive education (and lots of tuition dollars), turn them into extremely bright, less motivated students who can think logically.

3. *It's cheap.* For those of you considering buying a fifty-foot yacht or purchasing a seat on the space shuttle, law school is a less expensive alternative. Law school costs compare quite favorably to those of similar institutions such as prisons or insane asylums.³ I have been out of law school for only eleven years and my law school education will be fully paid for by the end of the decade.⁴

4. *To visit exotic locales.* Most law schools are located in exotic, romantic vacation spots like New Haven, Connecticut; Lincoln, Nebraska; Lubbock, Texas; and Cleveland, Ohio.⁵ You can live for three years in places that you otherwise might only have dreamed about.

5. *As a respite between college and work.* Law school is a welcome break between the grueling demands placed on today's undergraduate students⁶ and the even more grueling demands

3. The comparison is not totally favorable. Many prisons and insane asylums attract better people. Further, unlike law students, prisoners can get time off for good behavior.

4. Unless I need to buy food to feed my children, in which case I'll have to refinance.

5. I have a colleague who actually likes Cleveland. Of course, he also liked me enough to vote to grant me tenure, so why trust his judgment?

6. Some of the *Cliff's Notes* volumes are over 50 pages long.

of a job.⁷ You have three years to recover in a low-pressure atmosphere that provides plenty of free time for you to relax and enjoy yourself. As everyone who has seen the movie *The Paper Chase* knows, law school is the Club Med of the educational world.

6. *To enter a satisfying, enjoyable profession.* In almost every state, a law school diploma is necessary to practice law. Law school thus offers an entryway to one of the world's most enjoyable and satisfying professions. Lawyers' job satisfaction ratings consistently equal the ratings of some of the world's most satisfying jobs, such as undercover narcotics officers, manure tank cleaners, and parking attendants at the World Trade Center.

7. *To learn a foreign language.* Without law school, you wouldn't know about terms like "res judicata," "jus tertii," "res ipsa loquitur," and a phrase particularly relevant to those considering law school, "quae mala sunt inchoata in principio vix bono peraguntur exitu."⁸ Law school teaches you to use these words in sentences. Unfortunately, most of these words are in dead languages, so you'll never be able to use them in your world travels (unless in your world travels you meet other American or British lawyers). That's probably best anyway, because most law professors and lawyers mispronounce these words; people actually speaking those languages wouldn't have the slightest idea what you were talking about (which is okay, because you won't either, even after law school).

8. *Anyone can do it.* Why struggle to get into schools of medicine or engineering, where one has to be qualified? Law schools are egalitarian—anyone can get in. There are more than three million accredited law schools and at least another two billion non-accredited ones. Some of these schools have tough admissions standards—you must be a living human being with lots of money; others are easier to get into—requiring only the money. Beware of the elite schools, such as Harvard, Yale, Chicago, and Horace's Night Law School and Auto Body Repair. They also admit only living human beings, but their admittees must have much more money.

7. The wait at some golf courses is over 50 minutes long.

8. "Things bad in principle at the commencement seldom achieve a good end." If you were a law student, you could look this up in a legal dictionary. Of course, if you were a law student, you wouldn't have time.

9. *To work for justice.* Law school is the place to be if you're interested in justice for all. Lawyers are central to our system of justice, often as defendants. Law school gives idealistic, public-spirited students the tools to benefit society by representing less fortunate victims of our legal system. When multinational corporation Exxon lost thousands of gallons of oil in Alaska and was struggling to survive, its lawyers were there to help it through the trauma. When billionaire investment banker Michael Milken was accused of illegal insider trading, lawyers were there to make sure the legal system didn't take advantage of him. When poor people are unjustly accused of crime . . . well, lawyers can't be everywhere.

10. *To support law professors.* The most important reason to attend law school is, of course, that law schools pay law professors' salaries. Without your tuition dollars, law professors such as me would lose their jobs. Law schools thus perform an important welfare function: employing people who, because of their various personality disorders and sartorial problems, are otherwise unemployable.⁹

If you find these ten reasons convincing, you're a prime candidate for law school. Go immediately to your nearest law school admissions office and pick up an application. Better yet, go to *my* law school's admissions office and pick up an application.¹⁰ If you hurry, you can make it into next year's class.

9. Ask anyone at the law firm I used to work for.

10. See Reason 10.