

In my previous post requesting that I be appointed law school industry czar, I noted that recent graduates had testified about

"how their experience in law school had destroyed their self-confidence, their self-esteem and their sense of self-worth"

That statement is based on my personal twenty-five years experience advising law students and lawyers. When asked what it is that I do, I always say that one of the most significant aspects of my advising is helping clients rebuild or gain self-confidence and self-esteem. I am not a therapist. I have NO training in that field. What I do know is that my clients are basically intelligent creative thoughtful individuals. What I also know is what has caused them to feel the way they do - attending law school, especially the highly selective ones.

As [I expressed elsewhere](#)

"I often remind clients about the role that Noah Wyle played on ER, Dr. John Carter. When he began, he was an insecure medical student. At the end of his medical training, in his residency, he is a capable, competent, confident physician. The opposite occurs in the case of lawyers as they work their way through law school and the practice of law. Capable men and women who did well in college, wrote creatively, were active socially, started businesses and traveled, entered law school feeling good about themselves. The law schools then failed to teach them what they need to know to practice law and failed to teach them how to plan their career. At the same time, through the on-campus placement system, law students are often funneled to large firms to do work that never held their interest and, in addition they often find the work boring and meaningless. They feel trapped because they do not know any options and, therefore, do not know how to make a transition. No wonder so many are bored, unhappy, dissatisfied, miserable, frustrated and depressed!"

I had nearly forgotten about a Harvard Law Review Article entitled Making Docile Lawyers: An Essay on the Pacification of Law Students, Vol. 111, No. 7 (May, 1998, pp. 2027-2044) I don't have a copy of the article but the introduction can be found [here](#) . I was certainly not surprised to read this,

"Given this status (Harvard Law School's) one would expect to find HLS full of confident, enthusiastic optimistic students who are thoroughly comfortable with themselves and fully prepared upon graduation to take on the world. In fact, one finds quite the opposite. Far from brimming over with personal and intellectual self-confidence, by the second (2L) year a surprising number of Harvard law students come to resemble what one professor has called "the walking wounded" demoralized, dispirited, and profoundly disengaged from the law school experience. What's more, by third (3L) year, a disturbingly high number of students come to convey a strong sense of impotence and little inclination or enthusiasm for meeting

the world's challenges head on. How are we to explain this "pacification of law students"? ... (as they) become subdued, withdrawn, and uncertain of their own self-worth over the course of their legal education."

I was not unaware of the 'lemming" effect that law school attendance had on students. When I was offered the position of Public Interest Career Adviser at Harvard Law School beginning in September, 1984, I accepted conditioned upon being approved to offer a six session workshop (once a week for an hour) to the entering first year students, an introduction to be given the day they registered, the first session one week later. Five years later, that introductory program was attended by 200 newly registered students. Each session began with a Harry Chapin song. For the first, I played Flowers are Red. Do you know the song? Here are the lyrics. (I am not sure that everyone who heard it knew what they were up against.)

Your son marches to the beat of a different drummer. But don't worry.
We'll have him joining the parade by the end of the term

The little boy went first day of school
He got some crayons and started to draw
He put colors all over the paper
For colors was what he saw

And the teacher said..
What you doin' young man
I'm paintin' flowers he said
She said... It's not the time for art young man
And anyway flowers are green and red

There's a time for everything young man
And a way it should be done
You've got to show concern for everyone else
For you're not the only one

And she said...
Flowers are red young man
Green leaves are green
There's no need to see flowers any other way
Than they way they always have been seen

But the little boy said...
There are so many colors in the rainbow
So many colors in the morning sun
So many colors in the flower
and I see every one

Well the teacher said..

You're sassy There's ways that things should be
And you'll paint flowers the way they are
So repeat after me.....

And she said...
Flowers are red young man
Green leaves are green
There's no need to see flowers any other way
Than they way they always have been seen

But the little boy said...
There are so many colors in the rainbow
So many colors in the morning sun
So many colors in the flower and I see every one

The teacher put him in a corner
She said..
It's for your own good..
And you won't come out 'til you get it right
And are responding like you should

Well finally he got lonely
Frightened thoughts filled his head
And he went up to the teacher
And this is what he said

.. and he said
Flowers are red, green leaves are green
There's no need to see flowers any other way
Than the way they always have been seen

Time went by like it always does
And they moved to another town
And the little boy went to another school
And this is what he found

The teacher there was smilin'
She said...
Painting should be fun
And there are so many colors in a flower
So let's use every one

But that little boy painted flowers
In neat rows of green and red
And when the teacher asked him why
This is what he said..

and he said
Flowers are red, green leaves are green
There's no need to see flowers any other way
Than the way they always have been seen.

But there still must be a way to have our children say . . .
There are so many colors in the rainbow
So many colors in the morning sun
So many colors in the flower and I see every one

Welcome to law school!!!

For the last ten years since the law review article was written my focus has been on advising lawyers and not students nor have I presented workshops or seminars at any law schools during that time. I still, however, observe the same negative characteristics in my clients but I wonder if there have been any changes in law schools since then; i.e.,

Has there been a follow-up study of the students at Harvard Law School?

Has there been a study of the students at any other law school? (I recall reading about a psychological study of law students at a law school but have been unable to find it)?

Are there selective law schools which recognize this problem?

Are there selective law schools doing something about it?

Are there any law schools recognizing and doing something about it?

What are the implications of having many law school graduates with little self-confidence going to work in some of the largest law firms in the world?

What are the implications of having many law school graduates with little self-confidence not taking positions with small law firms representing individuals and not going out on their own?

Here's an interesting factoid. Between the time the new dean of Harvard Law School announced the closing of my office in August, 1989, and the elimination of my position (as, he said, a waste of money because Harvard Law School graduates were not interested in serving the legal needs of the public) and the time I was told I had to leave the premises (and to which I have not returned in almost 20 years), I compiled a list of the first positions of the 2500 graduates of the prior 5 graduating classes. What I found was that ONLY 4 had NOT become employees, ONLY 4 had NOT taken jobs. Two had started City Year and two started a legal services program.

Anyone know how we can get our law school graduates to say “there are so many colors in the rainbow and I see every one”?