

**In This Issue**

Specialty Bars Feature ..... 4  
 CWBAF Raising The Bar ..... 5  
 ABA Gender Gap Study ..... 9  
 Public Policy Update ..... 10  
 Programs Update ..... 12  
 Upcoming Events ..... 16

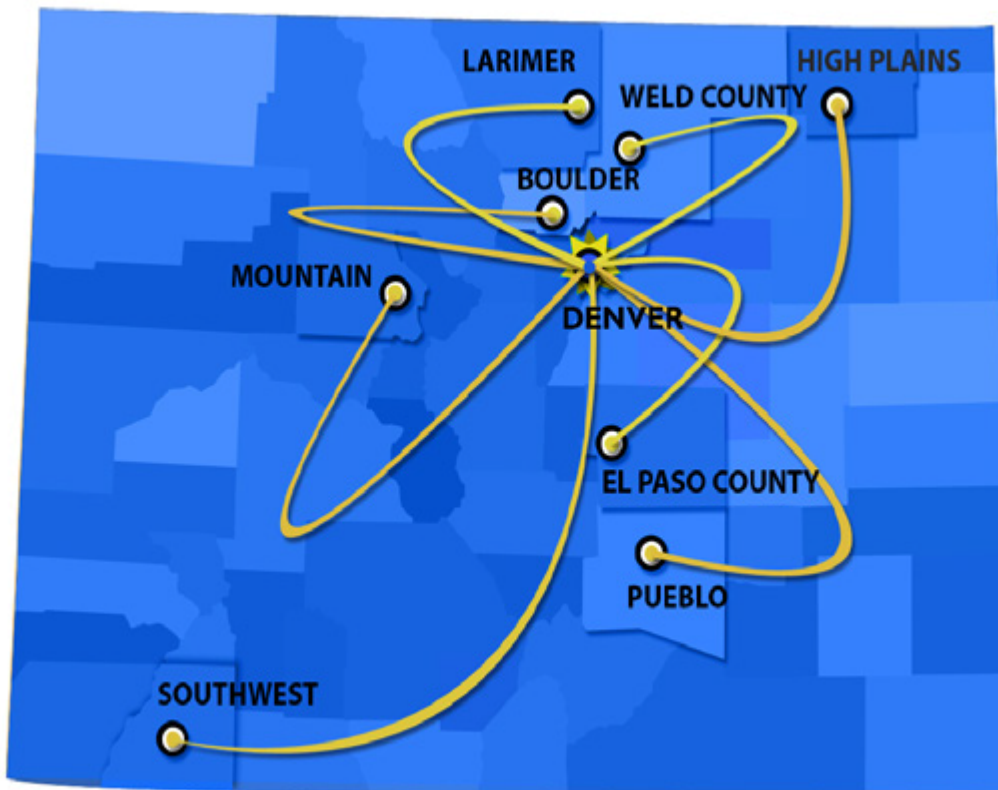
**Features**

President's Letter ..... 2  
**Perspectives** ..... 3  
 Someone's Gotta Say It ..... 6  
 Inside The CWBA ..... 7  
 Confetti ..... 15

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# We Are All Connected To A Common Purpose



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|| Perspectives ||

Hon. Christine M. Arguello || By Megan Rose



## Hard Work & Serendipity: A Recipe For Success

I sit down at a table with a poised, confident young woman. We start talking about the internship she held at the Denver City Attorney’s Office and how she had the opportunity to work on some complex legal issues and helped attorneys in many different departments. Afterwards, she discusses how Cristal DeHerrera, deputy city attorney, was not only a wonderful boss, but a mentor who introduced her to many attorneys throughout the summer. This young woman followed up with many of these attorneys, developed relationships, built her network, and gained valuable advice. You might think this young woman was a third year law student, but in fact this young woman is **Alexis “Lexi” Clark**, a Fellow in LAW SCHOOL...Sí Se Puede.

LAW SCHOOL...Sí Se Puede (LAW SCHOOL...Yes, We Can!) is a program developed by **Federal District Court Judge Christine M. Arguello** and members of her Dream Team. Judge Arguello remembers sitting around a table in her chambers talking to her law clerks about how Colorado law firms are still lamenting that they cannot achieve the diversity they



want because they can’t find diverse lawyers willing to move to Colorado. During the discussion, the group came to the realization

that it was an issue that started far before law school. In order to increase the number of diverse attorneys in Colorado, young diverse students with a tie to Colorado and who were interested in becoming lawyers needed to be identified, encouraged and assisted along that career path.

Judge Arguello credits a good amount of her success to both very hard work and a lot of serendipity. Judge Arguello discussed how she wanted to introduce young students who are interested in becoming lawyers to practicing attorneys who could mentor the students and continue to help develop the students’ networks. These attorneys are integral to empowering a student to get through college, get into law school, and find a first job (hopefully, in their home state of Colorado).

Identifying this need, Judge Arguello and her Dream Team developed LAW SCHOOL...Sí Se Puede which selects between twelve and fifteen rising college freshmen, all of whom are Colorado high school graduates, as Fellows and matches each Fellow with three mentors (two attorneys and one law student). The mentors make a four-year commitment to guide the Fellows through college with the goal of helping them gain admission to the law school of their choice.

Many mentors understand the importance of serendipity and also faced similar challenges that the fellows have faced: not having any family members who have attended college, not knowing any attorneys, and not knowing where to start the process of applying to law school. In addition, LAW SCHOOL...Sí Se Puede provides bimonthly programs on hard and soft skills such as what law school admissions committees look for in an applicant, networking, professionalism, the importance of internships, etc.

LAW SCHOOL...Sí Se Puede has already seen many successes. Out of the twelve Fellows in the 2014 inaugural class, in either his or her freshman or sophomore year of college, three Fellows had higher than a 3.8, and the remainder had over a 3.0. In addition, two Fellows, including Lexi, worked at the Denver City Attorney’s Office as interns for the summer, while another Fellow interned at an immigration law firm.

**Cristal DiHerrera, Deputy City Attorney**, discusses her experience with the two Fellows at her office: **“As a leader in the legal community, I see it as one of my responsibilities and abilities to create opportunities for others.** Being able to supplement the Denver City Attorney’s Office’s intern program with two college interns this past summer created a win-win situation. The interns provided support to paralegals and attorneys on a variety of issues and showed that you don’t need a law degree to add value in a law office. At the same time, the interns regularly observed court proceedings, assisted with a variety of legal topics and developed important relationships within the city attorney’s office. My team continues to ask when the interns can return.”

*continued on page 11*

*Perspectives continued from page 3*

As Judge Arguello states in the program’s first newsletter, which can be found at its [website](#): “LAW SCHOOL...Sí Se Puede is a paradigm shift—a new model and way of thinking that will benefit society and the legal community as a whole: it will change how minorities are viewed and treated by our judicial system. LAW SCHOOL...Sí Se Puede is about creating professional bonds stronger than the stigmas that can hold us back.”



Judge Arguello plans to grow the program to include at least 60 Fellows. As each class of Fellows gets to the point of taking the LSAT, Judge Arguello hopes that LAW SCHOOL...Sí Se Puede can fund scholarships for a prep course and the LSAT fees for each Fellow. These goals will require lots of resources and help from the legal community. The program will have a continued need for attorney mentors, but will also need help from law firms and other organizations to offer internships for students and to donate money to help fund LSAT Prep Courses and fees.

**“Growing up I always knew I wanted to be a lawyer, and being a fellow in Law School Si Se Puede has made this goal possible. I have already been given opportunities, and I have never felt more satisfaction. It is one thing to say you want to be a lawyer and it is quite another to be in that environment and see that it is truly possible for me.”**

When I asked Lexi how she chose her college major, business, her answer was revealing of the type of character and perseverance that she continuously

exudes. Lexi responded that she went to the internet and researched top attorneys in New York, picked out a few, called their offices and asked them what college degrees they earned and what they would suggest for her. Lexi is the perfect example of a young student who has all of the qualifications, ambition, and work ethic needed to be successful. And just like Judge Arguello, she will benefit from a little serendipity.

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*Someone’s Gotta Say It continued from page 6*

One of the key tenets of transformation and innovation is cultivating a dynamic work environment, comprised of diverse and engaged employees. Such an environment leads to increased business outcomes and up to five times higher returns on investment for company shareholders.<sup>3</sup> Suggesting that women must alter their behavior, speech and dress in order to conform to a historically male-dominated professional environment not only stunts the dynamic cultural growth that is critical to the success of today’s companies, but it also promulgates the message that “companies don’t need to change, women do.”

If change is not only inevitable, but also absolutely necessary to drive growth and prosperity, then we must promote nonconformity, diversity, and dynamic cultures. We should encourage women to be themselves, to embrace what makes them women and use their unique qualities and perspectives to bring about innovation and change.

So, when it comes to professional advice for women, the answer needs to be simple: **A woman should wear, say or do what she feels, in her best judgment, is the most appropriate thing at the time, given her understanding of the circumstances.**

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1 [Did You Know? 6.0: Change to Thrive](#)

2 *Id.*

3 A dynamic culture and engaged employees leads to a 240% rise in performance-related business outcomes. *Id.*

**“Someone’s Gotta Say It” is a regular fun feature of The Advocate, committed to bringing you true, relevant, and/or hilarious information.**

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