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Give Dan Your Tired, Your Poor, Yearning to Breathe Free

By **Suzy Frisch**

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Daniel Olmos

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Much of Daniel Olmos' success as a criminal defense attorney comes from the great empathy he brings to representing his clients. He spends time with them to understand their lives. He wants to know the circumstances that led to them being charged with a crime. "We are not all who we were on our worst day," he says.

After graduating from Harvard with an interdisciplinary bachelor's degree in social studies, Olmos took a job teaching first grade in Compton, one of the most dangerous cities in the country. "It was amazing—one of the most important times in my life," he says. His fluency in Spanish helped. Though he enjoyed his two years as a teacher, and even met his future wife on the job, Olmos knew he wanted to do more big-picture social justice work. So like his parents before him (his mom is noted civil rights attorney Mary Louise Frampton), Olmos decided to become an attorney.

At UC Berkeley Hall School of Law, Olmos learned about the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case, *McCleskey v. Kemp*, which essentially let stand racial discrimination in Georgia's courts. This case cemented Olmos's intention to ensure that people of all races and classes receive fair treatment under the law. "I've always been very interested in race and class," he says, "and I realized that when I went to law school that these issues are magnified 100-fold in the criminal justice system."

Olmos started out as a public defender in Contra Costa County then moved into private practice at Nolan Armstrong & Barton in 2007. Since then, he has represented clients charged with murder, attempted murder, sexual crimes and drug offenses, including medical marijuana matters.

"It's my job to protect the rights of my clients, and I think the system works when people are doing that on both sides," he says.

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