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**JAVIER LOPEZ** of Miami was presented the Young Lawyers Division’s Diversity Award at the Bar’s Annual Convention for his work with the Cuban American Bar Association, his scholarship efforts, and work with pro bono legal services. From the left are YLD President Zack Zuroweste, Lopez, YLD board member Lara Bueso Bach, and past President Katherine Hurst Miller.

## Making the grade as a trial lawyer



## ***Balancing family, faith, and practice***

By Mark D. Killian

*Editor*

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Early in Javier Lopez’s career, a senior member of his then firm called him into his office and told him to take a seat.

The more experienced, well-respected trial lawyer looked young Lopez in the eye and told him he had a problem with his work. The senior litigator told Lopez that while he had considerable skills, “You are about a B-plus, maybe an A-minus, but you will never be an A-plus trial lawyer.”

“And that’s what I wanted to be,” Lopez, now a partner at Kozyak Tropin & Throckmorton in Miami, told the [Young Lawyers Division](#) board at the Bar’s Annual Convention in Boca Raton, while accepting the division’s Diversity Award.

“And, he said, ‘Do you know why? Because you put your family and your faith before your practice,’” said Lopez, adding the partner then went on telling him about family events that he had missed because he was busy at the office.

“And if you ever want to be an A-plus lawyer, that is what you’ve got to do,” Lopez said his boss told him. “I asked him if I was fired, and he said, ‘No you are not, Lopez, but you need to think about this.’”

“So I walked out of the office and I thought: *Awesome!*” Lopez said. “That is *awesome*. I can be an A-minus lawyer and have my family and my faith and my friends as my priority. And I think, to be a trial lawyer, you need those things to be the priority in your life because it is about people, how you connect with clients, how you connect with juries.”

Lopez told the assembled young lawyers that while their practices are “absolutely a priority,” it should never be “*the* priority.”

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News HOME

