

THE WIG





A Note From Our Editors

Dear Readers,

It is now the end of the 2021-22 academic year and a successful first year of publishing for *The Wig*, the University of Bristol Bar Society's magazine.

Creating a magazine from scratch was far from an easy task. Working for *The Wig* whilst balancing the ebb and flow of university exams and commitments has certainly taught us many lessons, from overcoming time-management challenges to taking the risks and overtime that are so often integral to this line of work. Running a student paper is certainly demanding, but with a team as incredible as ours it has been an undoubtably rewarding experience. Firstly, we would like to thank our wonderful writers: Lenia Konstantinidou, Will Sargent and Lucia Cipolat, as well as of our Creative Director and writer Nafisa El-Turke. Their articles have exemplified the hard work they have put into *The Wig* throughout the year and the past two publications have been a true testament to Nafisa's beautiful artwork and design. Our gratitude must also go to James Woods who, alongside Lenia, helped us manage the promotions of the magazine and reach out to a vast number of chambers and schools.


We would also like to acknowledge and thank Michelle Leong, former Co-Editor-in-Chief, for all of her hard work during the first edition of *The Wig*; although having to relinquish her position due to academic commitments, our inaugural edition could not have been at such a high standard without her incredible effort and dedication. In fact, the central theme of the current edition, 'What Law School Didn't Teach Me', is the res-

ult of Michelle's creative vision and her departing contribution.

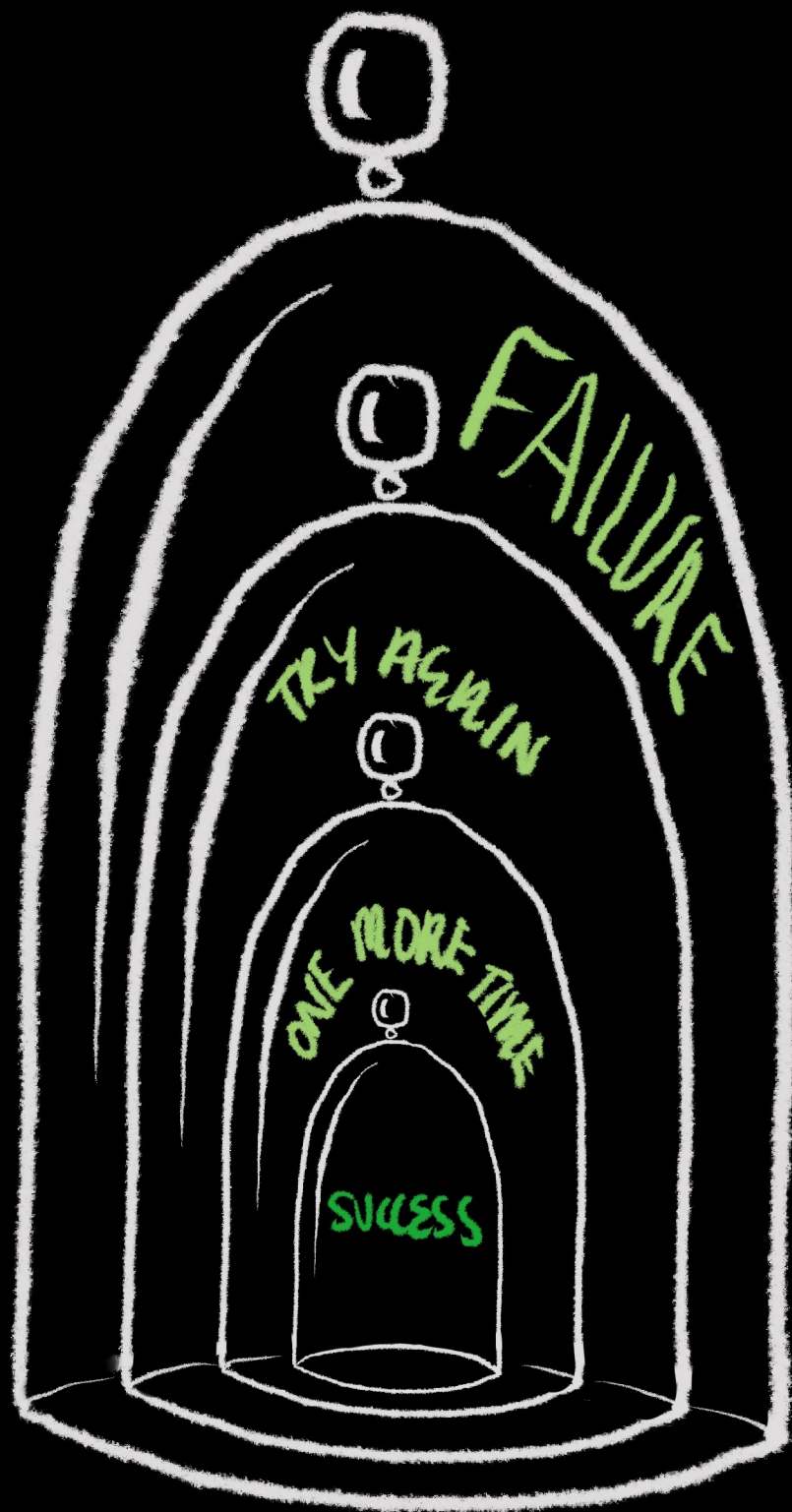
This is a theme that we have greatly enjoyed exploring with our team as the present Co-Editors-in-Chief, and one which we hope proves particularly useful to our readers. The content of this edition is based on the belief that the learning of the law can, and should, go beyond the classroom; even where Law School provides the foundational education which many Law students require, it by no means encompasses all of the useful lessons and skills that make a good lawyer a great lawyer. In reading this second edition, readers can expect to find interviews discussing client relationships and work-life balance as well as articles on mental health within the legal sphere, imposter syndrome and the implications of intense competitiveness in law. *The Wig* has also continued its tradition of including letters written by barristers to their younger selves in the hopes of providing readers with insight, advice and encouragement through an alternative and engaging medium. Our team is also incredibly honoured to include the entirety of Lord Reed's speech on 'what law school didn't teach him' as delivered to the guests of this year's Bristol Bar Society Annual Networking Dinner. We sincerely hope that this second edition of *The Wig* provides our readers - from pre-university students to non-Law students, to practising lawyers - with a collection of learned experiences, information and guidance that are valuable both now and in the future.

It has been an absolute pleasure to work on a magazine this year, and even though the both of us will now be leaving *The Wig*, we look forward to reading all of the editions to come. We hope you enjoy your summer!

Yours sincerely,

 *Ana Tolmacheva*

India Rajchel Claybourn and Ana Tolmacheva



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Highlights & Competitions of The Year





Mooting Competitions of The Year

Nominated for best mooting society in the UK, we'd like to thank all our mooters for their participation in our competitions. From our moot training sessions to our advocacy training programme, we successfully displayed our mooters' abilities through our annual moots and inter-varsity competitions. A huge thank you is due to the sponsoring chambers and volunteer barristers for making our events possible.



Second Year Moot



The Gray's Moot



Winner: Stanley Stoneman-Waite

BBP Speed Moot



Winner: Ciaran Harper

UCL vs Bristol



Winners: Chloe Wilson, Hiba Ahmed, Marie Kuvaeva, Cody Lai, Harrison Gorst, Alison Sia, Huey Lin



Battle of The Bars

On Saturday, 12th of February, the Bristol Bar Society travelled to Warwick to participate in the 'Battle of the Bars' against the Universities of Warwick and of Nottingham. The judges were impressed with our students' written and oral advocacy skills and the Bristol Bar Society won overall. Congratulations to Georgia Fox, William Shelley, Lucia Cipolat, Matthew Fox and Lawrence Leung on their excellent performance.

"The battle of the bars was a great experience, and definitely my favourite advocacy competition so far. Meeting the other universities' bar societies was a lot of fun, and it was interesting to see the differences in how they approached mooting and mock trials. It was an intense day; but working with and against great advocates was a really good learning experience and has taught me a lot." -
Matthew Fox



Bristol vs Cambridge Moot



In December 2020, we hosted this year's first inter-varsity competition.

The participants Cody Lai, Josh Rees, Cher Lyn Peh and Pippa Hill competed against Cambridge University.

The tort law problem question involved a fictional incident between vigilante Wayne Bruce and burglar Jo Kerr, and required consideration

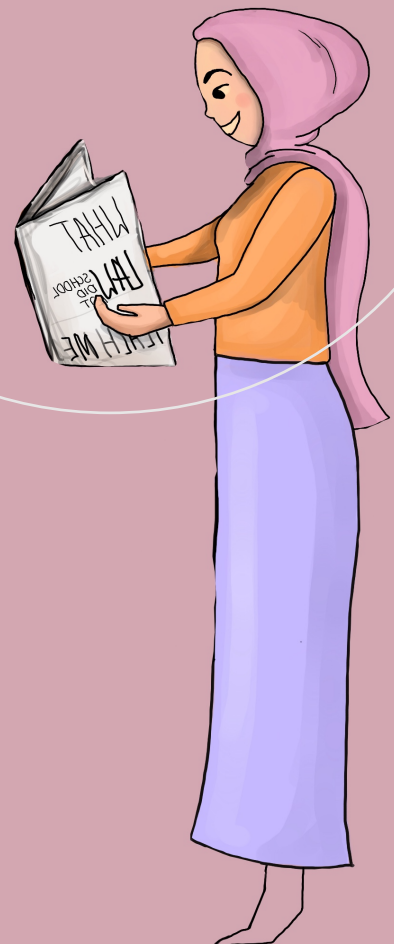
and application of illegality and vicarious liability. The competition was judged by leading Silk in personal injury and clinical negligence, Chr-

istopher Sharp QC. The judge found the competition to be a complete draw between Bristol and Cambridge, and detailed feedback and general advocacy tips were then given to the contestants. We look forward to continuing this successful inter-varsity in the future!



The Law Cup

On the 26th of February Bristol Bar Society participated in the first ever Inter-Law cup against UBLC, UDL and Women in Law. Six fantastic students represented our society across three different fields of advocacy: negotiation, debating and mooting.



Advocates of The Year

BPP's Advocate of the Year is an annual national mock trial competition for undergraduate students of any discipline studying at a university in England or Wales. The students are marked on their submissions, advocacy, examination-in-chief and cross examination. The Bristol Bar Society was honoured to be represented by William Shelley and Margherita Locurcio who went on to win the competition.

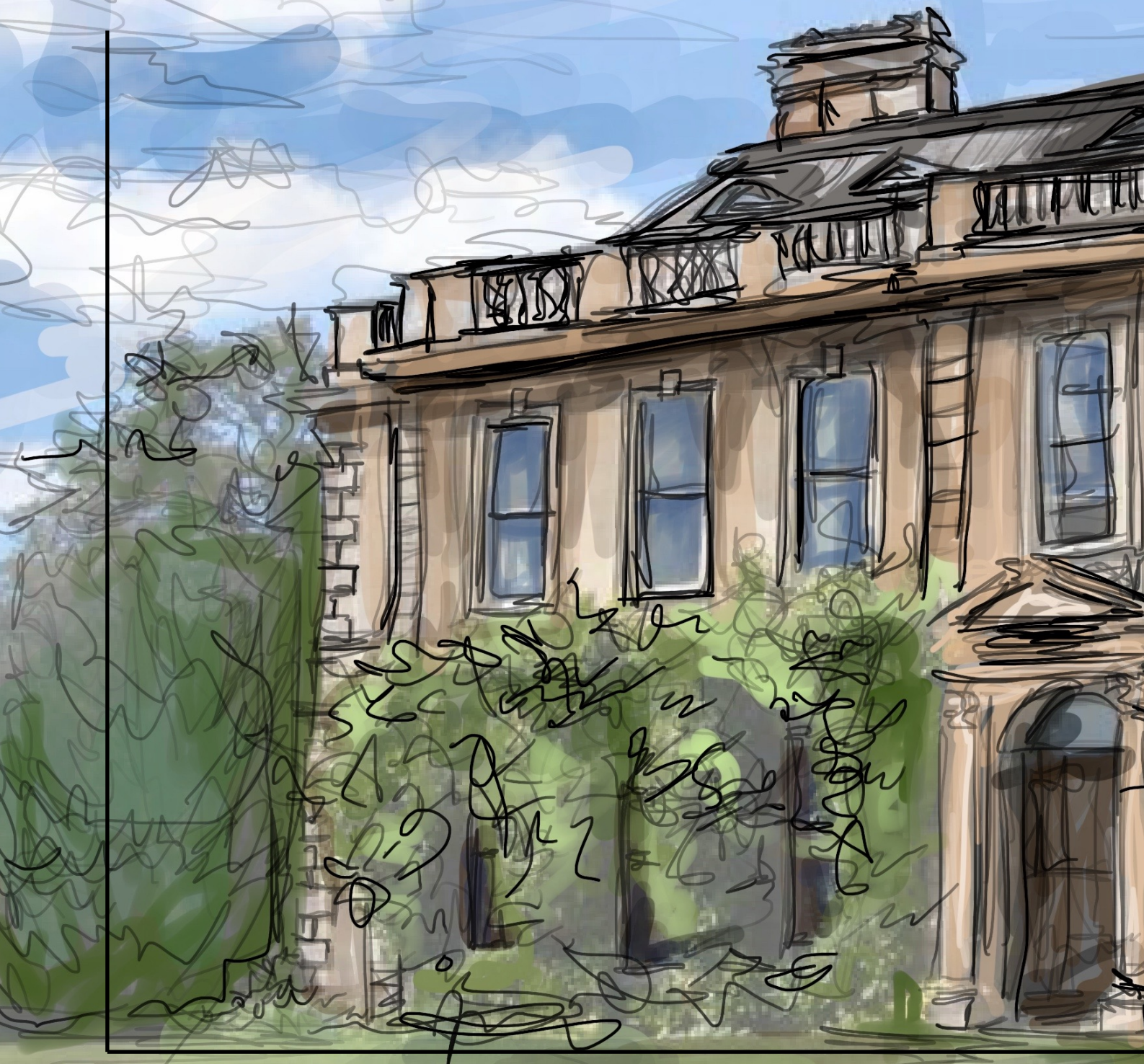
William Shelley



Margherita Locurcio



The Annual Networking Dinner





Introduction

*Written by – Vice President India
Rajchel Claybourn*

The Annual Networking Dinner has been held by the University of Bristol Bar Society since its inception in 2016, each year representing the most anticipated networking event for the university's aspirant barristers. The evening's guests included students and committee members alongside practising Queen's Counsel, Heads of Chambers, junior barristers, pupils and clerks who have graciously given their time, guidance and encouragement to our students and committee members throughout the academic year.

The dinner not only offers us the opportunity to thank the legal practitioners whose invaluable generosity continues to support the Bristol Bar Society, but it is also a time to come together as the former, present and future generations of barristers, sharing experiences and aspirations as well as forging new and lasting connections.




The night began with a champagne reception in Bristol's historic Goldney Hall, where guests congregated outside in the waning sunlight to greet one another before being led to the orangery where they would continue the evening with delicious food and good conversation; a pleasant sight after two years of stringent social-distancing and pandemic restrictions.











To encourage networking, the dinner tables seated students and barristers together: here, final-year Law Student Ishmael Liwanda is captured in conversation with commercial barrister Jack Pankhurst.



TABLE 3



The dinner ended with speeches from the society's 2021-2022 President, Maja Kościcka, and our Society Patron and President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, Lord Reed, who is pictured above.

Maja graciously thanked the current committee as she highlighted the various successes of the Bar Society over the past academic year, from an array of careers talks and social events to moot competitions and award nominations.

His Lordship then gave an enlightening speech on the very theme we have chosen for this edition of The Wig: '*What Law School Didn't Teach Me*'. His words were informative and encouraging, and there were many times when laughs rang around the hall as he drew from his personal experiences with wit and charm. The speech was a delight to listen to and is also a pleasure to read, hence why we have included it in this magazine where it can be found on page 21.



An enthusiastic first-year Law student raises his hand to ask Lord Reed questions during the Q&A that followed from his speech.

Lord Reed of Allermuir

*What Law School Didn't
Teach Me*



There is no end to the matters that fall under the heading, "What Law School Didn't Teach Me." But there are a few points that come immediately to mind.

The first is that advocacy is the art of persuasion. So you need to think about how you are going to persuade the judge or jury in front of you. You need to know your judge, to find out as much as you can about his or her likes and dislikes, and to think about the hearing from his or her perspective. You can take it that all judges appreciate brevity. They also appreciate helpfulness. One of the best counsel who regularly appears in the Supreme Court is very good at putting himself on the judges' side. He always provides a meaningful answer to our questions, rather than giving us a face-saving brush-off. If we raise a difficulty, his response is along the lines, "I see we have a problem here, but I think we can find the solution to it". He doesn't waste out time telling us what we already know.

On the other hand, I remember my now retired colleague Lord Wilson once asking another counsel, after he'd been addressing us for ten or fifteen minutes, "When are you going to tell me something I don't already know?" Some time later, he asked the same counsel, "Mr X, you have had a long time to prepare for this hearing, haven't you?" "Yes, my Lord." "You haven't used it very well, have you?" "No, my Lord." You also need to think about your opponent. How would you argue the case if you were in his or her shoes? What points would you be making? How would you be responding to the argument you are planning to present?

The second point is that you mustn't trust witness statements.

I learned this the hard way. As a newly called barrister, junioring for the Crown, I would read the witness statements and wonder why on earth the defendant wasn't pleading guilty. The evidence against him was overwhelming. Then, in court, the penny dropped. What witnesses say to the police or the CPS, and what they say to the court, are two entirely different matters.

But the worst experience was my first ever trial flying solo. It was an undefended divorce, which still existed in those days. As usual, the wife was planning her next wedding for almost immediately after the trial, on the assumption that the divorce would be granted - that seemed safe enough. What could possibly go wrong? I had a statement from the wife in which she explained how her husband used to assault her, and I had a statement from her mother, describing how her daughter used to arrive on her doorstep in floods of tears and with a black eye. In court, the daughter gave her evidence as expected, but the mother was a different story. I began with the usual questions, being careful not to lead the witness. "Was it your impression that your daughter had a happy marriage?" "It always seemed happy enough to me." "Did your daughter sometimes come to your house?" "I hardly ever saw her." "When you did see her, did you notice anything about her appearance?" "I can't say that I did." 'The judge, needless to say, was enjoying this enormously. His day had suddenly become more interesting than it had looked. I asked my solicitor what on earth was going on. I learned that the mother and daughter had come to court together on the bus, had had a quarrel, were no

longer on speaking terms, and that the mother was determined not to help her daughter out. Fortunately, with some help from the judge, my client was able to get her divorce, and to marry her next husband.

A third point I would make is the importance of charm, or at least common courtesy. Like some other professions, the Bar has a reputation for arrogance. Unfortunately, there are some people whose behaviour merits that description, although they are not typical. But when you are starting in practice, and indeed at later stages also, the path to success will be easier if you maintain a pleasant demeanour. Junior clerks in chambers matter. So do solicitors' staff. Clerks of court, in particular, can be invaluable in giving you assistance.

A fourth point I would make is that you need to be able to tell the time. Even the most experienced and senior counsel, appearing in the Supreme Court, often run out of time, gabbling like maniacs to try to cram into the remaining time available all the points that their instructing solicitor expects them to make. In a case we heard a few weeks ago, for example, counsel had two hours to address us. He began by telling us that the case raised a short point of statutory construction. He did not turn to the section we had to construe until the final minute of his two hours. The best counsel, on the other hand, are not hurried. They have put their submissions into their written case. They use the time for oral submissions to focus on the points which they regard as critical.

On the same subject, we allow a maximum of 50 pages for written submissions. Most counsel prod-

uce exactly 50 pages, presumably so as to keep their solicitors happy. The consequence is that I only skim read their submissions: I haven't got the time to read 50 pages by every party to the case, especially when the 50 pages are usually repetitive and padded out by extensive quotations. The best counsel only put in 20 or 30 pages, focusing on the essentials. Their submissions get read in full.

There are some other points, perhaps more profound, that I should also make. The first is about professional objectivity. It is something which lay people have always found difficult to understand. For example, when the Supreme Court decided the prorogation case against the Government, it was widely assumed that they must have decided the case that way because the judges were opposed to Brexit. And the same sort of assumption is sometimes made about barristers who represent people or causes which other people find objectionable: whether it is people accused or convicted of appalling crimes, or people with unfashionable opinions, or wealthy Russians.

Professional objectivity is particularly important for barristers. Most of us have causes that we feel strongly about. It is possible that arguing a case that you agree with personally may have some advantages, although that wasn't my own experience. You may be more persuasive when you have first persuaded yourself. But it's equally a potential trap. You may be less able to see the defects in your case, and you may alienate the bench by the stridency of your advocacy. That can be a problem when a court is dealing with an issue which engenders strong feelings. If the

judges feel that counsel has abandoned legal analysis for emotional rhetoric they are liable to stop listening.

A few years ago, for example, there was a case about the right to use imperial measurements rather than the metric ones that our membership of the EU required us to adopt. Some traders felt very strongly about that, and their refusal to obey what they felt was an unjust law led to the decision in *Thoburn v Sunderland City Council*, the Metric Martyrs case. The case is an important one in constitutional law, but for my purposes I am interested in what the judge, Sir John Laws, said about counsel for the traders:

"... in summarising his arguments I have not sought to give any impression of the passionate rhetoric with which they were delivered. It did not advance his clients' case. They are entitled to dispassionate justice according to law."

Of course, Sir John was right. Barristers should be dispassionately serving the cause of justice under law. One of the reasons I say that is that the contrary practice encourages the belief that lawyers are to be associated with their clients. That way lies a grave danger to access to justice, which is why the UN's Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers stress that "Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions." That principle addresses the risk that third parties may identify lawyers with their clients; but they can hardly be blamed for doing so if the lawyers themselves identify with their clients' cause and demons-

trate by their conduct that they are personally committed to one side of the argument.

An example of the problem is the criticism recently aimed by students at Magdalen College, Oxford at the President of the College, who is the distinguished QC Dinah Rose, for her role in representing the government of the Cayman Islands when they were arguing in the Privy Council against the existence of a constitutional right to same-sex marriage. She rightly explained the importance of everyone having representation, even if you disagree with them. But such incidents may only become more common if lawyers associate themselves personally with their clients' causes.

The next point I would like to make is the importance of professional integrity. If you practice at the Bar, you are liable to come under pressure, at one time or another, to compromise your standards of professional ethics. I was reminded of an incident of that kind when my appointment as President of the Supreme Court was announced and I received messages of congratulation from former colleagues. A number of the letters referred to something which happened not very long after I had been appointed to the Bench. Despite being a recently appointed judge, I was asked to sit on an important appeal, essentially to make up the numbers. I took a different view of the case from the rest of the court, whose judgment was drafted by the presiding judge, and so I drafted a dissenting judgment. Other members of the court then came to see me, telling me that the presiding judge felt that my dissenting judgment would undermine his authority. I was advised that I should withdraw my judgment,

and that if I did not do so it could have ramifications for my career. I didn't withdraw my judgment. In fact, many years later, my dissenting judgment was upheld, and the majority decision was overturned. I wasn't aware until recently that this incident had become widely known.

So, you need to remember that the law is a small world, in which a reputation for integrity is vitally important. It can be lost in an instant, and once it is lost it can never be fully regained. But if you can succeed in maintaining your integrity in the face of pressure, you will gain the respect and confidence of others, and also keep something which is even more important, your self-respect.

The next point I would like to make is that there is room at the Bar for different kinds of people with different kinds of talent. Some successful barristers are wonderful speakers, but others, equally successful, are unimpressive speakers. Some successful barristers have outstanding intellectual powers, but not all, by any means.

But there are certain characteristics that I think almost all successful barristers have in common. One is wholehearted devotion to the case in hand, so that you know it completely and intimately, so that you can always put your finger on the point that you need when you are leading evidence or trying to answer the judge's questions. This, unfortunately, requires hard work: there are techniques which you can learn, and which will help you, but it is unavoidably a time-consuming task. Another valuable characteristic is the ability to focus on the essentials of a case, to identify the key points on wh-

ich you may win, and also the weak points on which you are liable to lose, and to prepare accordingly. Another vital characteristic is clarity of reasoning and exposition. Another is independence of judgment. You should welcome discussion with others, especially with more experienced colleagues with the know-how that cannot be read up in books. But you need to adopt a critical attitude towards authority, whether it is the view of a colleague, or the view expressed in a textbook. They may be right nine times out of ten, but they won't always be right, and you won't know when they are right and when they are wrong unless you examine the matter for yourself.

The final point I would like to make is that being a barrister is not a job like any other. It's not just a means of earning a living. It confers privileges, and it also imposes obligations. It is a privilege to be in a position to advise other people about their rights and obligations in a situation where they are likely to act on that advice, and to represent them in court when their rights or their liberty are at stake. It is a privilege to be able to put questions to witnesses who are obliged to stand in the witness box and answer them. And those privileges are accompanied by responsibilities to uphold the values of the profession, and to conduct ourselves in a way that exemplifies those values and merits the respect which most people are willing to accord to members of the Bar.

It's not just what the profession stands for, it's what it stands up for. In this country, and in other democratic societies, barristers have for centuries stood up for justice and for the rule of law. At a time when we cannot be com-

placent about respect for the rule of law, and when intolerance of other people's views seems to be increasingly common, barristers can set an example. They can conduct a debate that is courteous and rational, listening attentively to the other person's point of view and giving a reasoned response. We need more than ever people with a barrister's habit of mind, weighing evidence carefully, and considering arguments rationally. Perhaps above all, we need barristers who think about what the world feels like to those on both sides of every debate, to those for example who have to exercise power in difficult circumstances, and to those who are vulnerable to the misuse of power.

That's why we need all of you who are planning to go to the Bar. It will be your vocation to give people reason to believe that justice is possible. Barristers have the duty to do their best to make justice happen every day, to try to make the world more just for all our citizens. You students are our hope for the future.

“It’s not
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A group of five people, three men and two women, are posed for a photograph. They are all dressed in formal evening wear. From left to right: a man in a tuxedo, a woman in a light-colored floral dress and a pink hijab, a woman in a black dress, a woman in a white dress with a blue floral pattern, and a man in a tuxedo with a bow tie. They are standing in front of a window with a large, elaborate floral arrangement of white and pink flowers. The background is a light-colored wall with a decorative pattern.

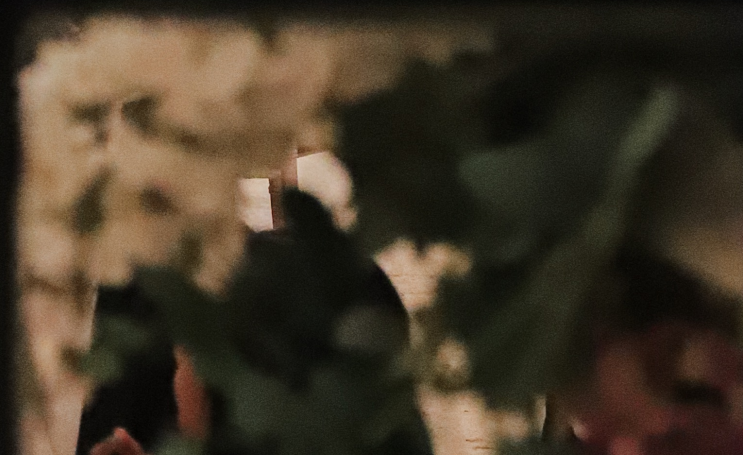
The Wig Editorial Board Honourable Lord


[From the left: James Woods, Nafisa El-Turke, Lucia
Tolmacheva, William Sargent and Lenia Konstanti
Eduardo F



2021-2022 with The Right d Reed of Allermuir

a Cipolat, India Rajchel Claybourn, Lord Reed, Ana
nidou. Absent from the photo is one of our writers
Robinson.]



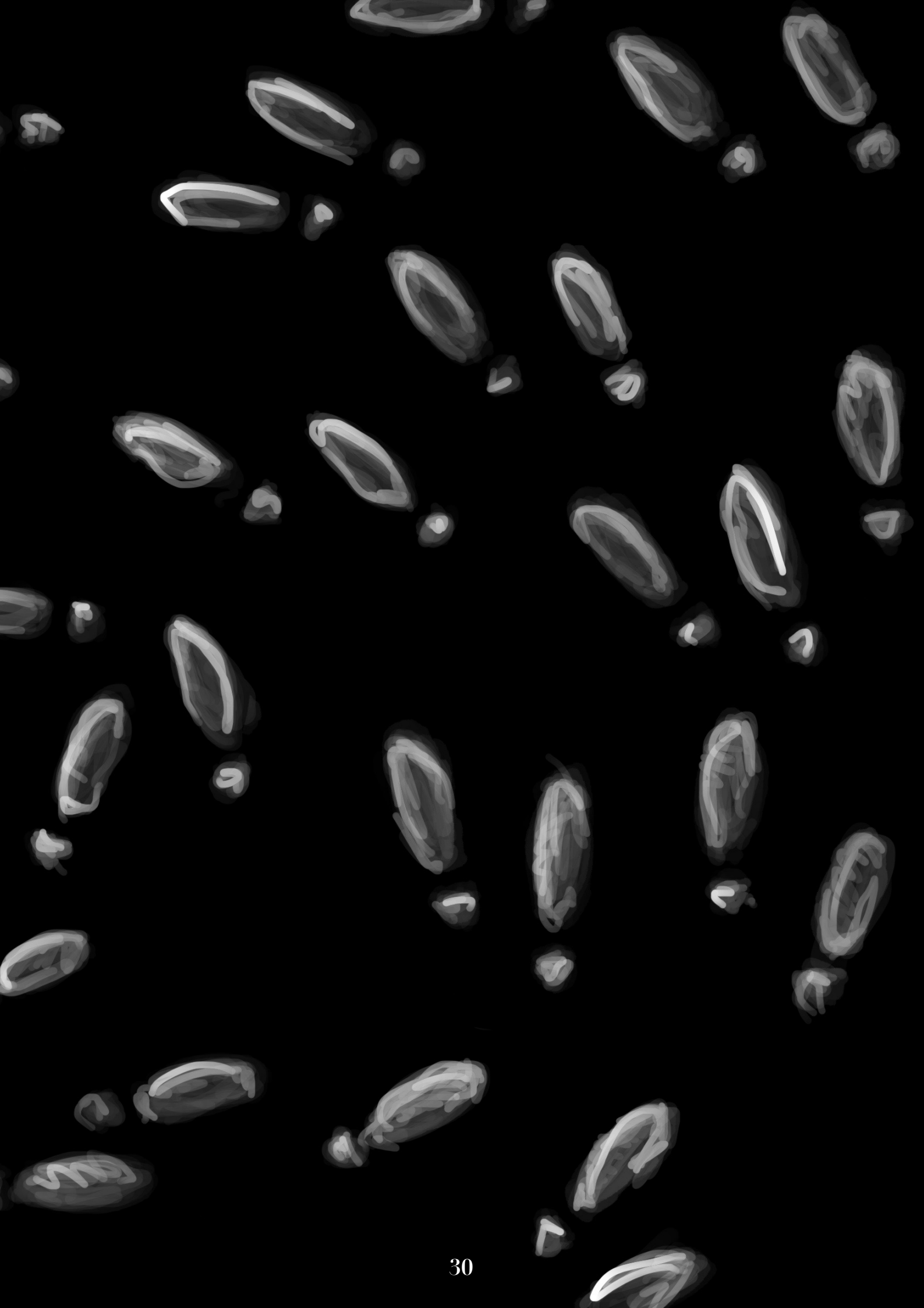


I would personally like to give special thanks to the University of Bristol Bar Society Committee, in particular our President Maja Kościcka, Treasurer Matthew Whiting and Social and Press Secretary Ana Tolmacheva, without whom this wonderful evening could not have taken place.



India Rajchel Claybourn
Vice President





The Competitive Edge

Written by – William Sargent



It would come as no surprise to any aspiring lawyer if I were to say that law is an extremely competitive field. People often say that you are going to have to work hard in order to become a lawyer, but what does this entail? The surface level perception of ‘hard work’ alone does not always consider the implications of the **high-pressure environment, cut-throat work culture and hyper competitiveness** which characterises the experience of many junior lawyers.

Competitiveness within law is clear from the first stages of university due to its reputation as one of the most sought-after degrees. As a result, the typical grade requirements to study law are high and the demand for places significantly outweighs the supply, especially at the more prestigious institutions. Navigating university and pushing yourself to achieve a top mark in your degree is the next challenge. The legal sector is such that it is practically impossible to have a competitive application without at least a 2:1, a range of impressive co-curricular activities and work experience. The latter, in itself, is a fierce process as students are pitted against each other to achieve a much coveted and ever-elusive vacation scheme or mini-pupillage. Furthermore, the success rate for securing a training contract is roughly 18%, and 13% for pupillage. It quickly becomes apparent that, due to stiff competition, **indicators of commitment and drive are essential to set oneself apart** from the crowd and improve your chances.

The demand for places significantly outweighs the supply

As such, there is great emphasis on **ambition, dedication and hard work, which seem to be the golden traits** needed to wade through the competitive mire. Whilst these are valuable characteristics, they can also be extremely damaging on a personal level. Th-

is is because “you are always trying your absolute best to impress,” as highlighted by Rachel Murphy, President of the Bournemouth Junior Lawyer Division. Focusing on these unhealthy forms of motivation in order to stand out leads to long hours fuelled by competitiveness. These can also be exploited by employers who are all too aware of the alternative candidates ready to snap up the opportunity if it were to come their way. Richard Collier of Newcastle Law School, who has conducted research into anxiety and wellbeing amongst junior lawyers on behalf of Anxiety UK, accurately labels this dynamic of drive and fear “**a toxic mix**”.

A recent example is the case of Sovani James. A junior at a London law firm, James began to suffer from health issues as a result of the stress and pressure she was under. This led her to making a mistake which she was subsequently too scared to report, and as a result her license to practice was revoked in a judgement that was seemingly “harsh and unforgiving given the mental health context”. As seen here, the fear of admitting failure creates a tendency to avoid showing any weakness, which in turns only strengthens the unhealthy stigma around resilience and perfectionism in law. This often goes beyond what are considered healthy, beneficial expectations of diligence and productivity. They instead acts as **a guise for overworking** that is often fuelled by the belief that any shortcomings will harm career progression. The outcome is **a perfect storm for burnout and health issues** that stem from endlessly trying to obtain a competitive advantage.

These consequences are evidenced in a report carried out by the charity LawCare in 2021 which found that over two thirds of respondents had experienced mental health issues. Additionally, 29% found that their mental health problems had also manifested as physical health issues. Yet only 57% of those who experienced mental health issues reported or discussed them at work, citing that their main concern was **the stigma and**

potential implications for their career as it may damage their reputation. The Chief Executive of LawCare, Elizabeth Rimmer, hopes that this will be the “catalyst to create change”. A suggestion made by LawCare as a result of the report, which seems to get to the heart of these issues, is that firms should avoid using statistics such as hours worked and comparative individual rankings to measure success. These approaches which pit employees against one another feed into the competitive mindset which exacerbates the intensity of the workplace and can lead to burnout.

Change is needed now more than ever in the wake of the recent exodus of professionals from the legal sector following the Covid pandemic. Working from home only heightened the lack of work-life separation and pushed many past the precipice, ultimately leading to a career change. An unintended result of this was the recent salary war between firms to attract talent which has seen newly qualified salaries skyrocket into six figures. Such an eye-watering starting wage leaves quite some speculation as to what is expected of these employees in return for a particularly large pay at such an early stage in their career. This is not to say that a high salary translates to a licence for unfair treatment, however, it is not a stretch of the imagination for some firms, and equally the lawyers themselves, to accept the unreasonable workloads as an expected part of the role.

Working from home only heightened the lack of work-life separation

Whilst these experiences are a very real and shared manifestation of the route into the legal profession, it is by no means the whole picture. The fact that these aspects are increasingly being brought into discussions

represents the motions of change and progression. Improvements are being seen through better well-being and mental health training in order to enhance support for employees, instead of a one-size-fits-all approach. This is alongside efforts to improve openness in the workplace and pushing for the de-stigmatisation of prioritising one's own health and happiness. Businesses are also starting to recognise that employees' quality of work often improves as a result of better support and a more equal work-life balance in turn compensating for the shorter work hours meaning that profits do not necessarily need to suffer.

Pushing for the de-stigmatisation of prioritising one's own health and happiness.

There is still a long way to go in order to bring about significant change to what is a systemic problem of competition culture within the legal system, and which is all too often dismissed as a natural consequence of the profession. Whether or not businesses are willing to compromise on hours for the sake of health considerations which stem from this problem is yet to be fully seen; but it is clear that the current situation is unsustainable as employees feel the need to sacrifice themselves in the name of satisfying insatiable expectations.

“You are
always trying
your absolute
best to
impress.”

Clients and the Clinic: An Insider's Perspective

Written by – Lenia Konstantinoudou

As a practising solicitor, Omar Madhloom has long-experienced working with clients on a personal level. Now, as one of the supervisors of Bristol's Law Clinic, his current focus centres around sharing first-hand knowledge and empowering students to grasp the impact of the law on clients and within general society.

Omar is sitting in his office. He is meeting with me through Teams where we are both relying on the strength of Wi-Fi which, thankfully, supports our video call. This is some of the only spare time in his pleasantly busy and fervent life; he rarely has the luxury of lengthier breaks in his work but, just for this moment, the hustle of his academic, legal, and supervisory obligations is put on pause whilst we begin our discussion.

Omar joined Bristol's Law Clinic in September 2017, becoming supervisor in 2018. When asked to elaborate on his role he explains that, in practice, "each supervisor has their own teaching approach." For him, there are certain responsibilities central to his role: for example, ensuring the correct procedure is well-taught, reflecting on cases, and collectively discussing each client's contingency with students. "The Clinic is not about work experience. It's about developing empathy, sympathy, and compassion." In fact, the organisation is a form of experiential learning to develop soft and hard skills, ultimately bridging the gap between theory and practice. "I would go as far as to say that you can't teach legal aid without examining John Rawls' theory of justice", he tells me. "In clinic work you often apply natural law theories, and, in this way, one might argue th-

at it is essentially applied jurisprudence."

An important focus of this benevolent initiative is the educational benefits to students. "Clinical legal education is a methodology, and we take on cases that will benefit the students and really enhance their employability and competitiveness." For example, cases may concern individual clients and commercial matters, which endorse the study of contract and company law. Critiquing the aspect of law and questioning issues of power are clinical skills that have edified the critical thinking of students whilst facilitating their understanding of representing marginalised clients. For example, in medical law and ethics concepts of self-worth, autonomy and paternalism are deeply rooted in legal practice. "Considering the way law impacts on human dignity, when advising a client it is important that you respect each other's autonomy" Understanding the value of human independence and dignity can only be achieved through experiential learning and reified by different forms of clinical training.

The Clinic equips students with a sense of law which they cannot develop or experience solely through university legal studies. "Students often engage with marginalised clients, helping them access justice." This appears to be the ethos at the heart of the Clinic, where training is provided by the supervisors along with the solicitors at Osborne Clark. "We currently have 273 students and 154 open cases. Much like a Law degree, training at the Clinic is an ongoing process and teaching everything is, unfortunately, unattainable." When asked ho-



w students manage to connect with their clients, Omar explained that they establish a rapport with clients through active engagement in different aspects of the legal process. “There is a public legal education strand, a research aspect, and a face-to-face consultation which only second years”. In addition to advising clients, students also work with charities and the Student Union. “The response is very positive. The Clinic is indeed an incredibly important part of the Law school.”

When working with clients, it appears that a holistic approach must be taken. Every individual is different, and students should therefore set aside any inherent bias, addressing it first, and then dealing with the client equitably. “It’s about looking at that particular person, considering what they want to achieve, and how we can construct a legal approach to tackle it.” This comes back to the idea of respecting individual autonomy, regardless of personal beliefs. “Every human being is susceptible to bias,” he says, “whether that is positive or negative bias.” Dealing with clients who have been previously prejudiced or discriminated against calls for the most sedulous care. “They are rational beings; they are worthy of dignity and respect. And you have to treat clients accordingly.”

“Pro-bono has the potential to evolve into lobbying for policy reform and petitioning the government.” Omar illustrates this capacity by affirming that “pro-bono lawyers’ part in advising the Law Commission and taking part in debates.” Nevertheless, the lack of funding presents a fundamental barrier to this enterprise, possibly hindering the representation of low-income clients. “What we are developing now is transnational collaboration, where we connect with other universities and clinics to facilitate the development of global clinical practice and education.” This communication between interjurisdictional clinics could allow for a wide response to human rights issues that may often be overlooked and disregarded.

This emancipation of the mind from social constructs and biases has in some ways facili-

tated the shift towards a more globalised legal sphere. It thus comes as no surprise that legal education is promoting the study of multi-jurisdictional matters. The Law Clinic, by advising people from different cultures, jurisdictions, and backgrounds, connotes an empirical correlation of cosmopolitanism. However, this globalised movement is subject to certain challenges, such as pluralism and legal, social, and moral relativity. “These challenges naturally arise when different legal systems, languages and cultures are involved. This is where comparative law can help.” When dealing with international clients, forcibly imposing Western ethics or legal values will not work. Cosmopolitanism, Omar suggests, can provide an answer to this problem, especially when considering legal ethics. “Focusing on understanding the differences between cultures and jurisdictions is crucial in transnational legal work. Something might present a moral or legal issue in England or Wales but not in another jurisdiction.” It’s not about eliminating these barriers, but rather manoeuvring around them by employing critical and comparative legal thought whilst also embracing the extraordinary and multifaceted global potential of pro-bono work.

Before he dials off, I ask Omar whether there are certain difficulties or problems within the sphere of clinic work. “The issue with pro-bono is ‘how much’. Do you have an hour, or do you have a day or a month? There are two ways to look at it; is it charity or is it a duty? Because if it’s a duty, it means lawyers have to do it all the time. If it’s philanthropy, it means just do it when you can.” The true purpose of this line work is thus contested leaving much discretion to the legal world as to how to best approach it.

Perhaps the description of Law clinic work as a pedagogic tool rings true: it exists to serve not only the disadvantaged, but also the student.

“The
Clinic
is ...

about

developing

empathy,

sympathy,

and

compassion.”

Imposter Syndrome: where our potential is hiding

Written by – Nafisa El-Turke

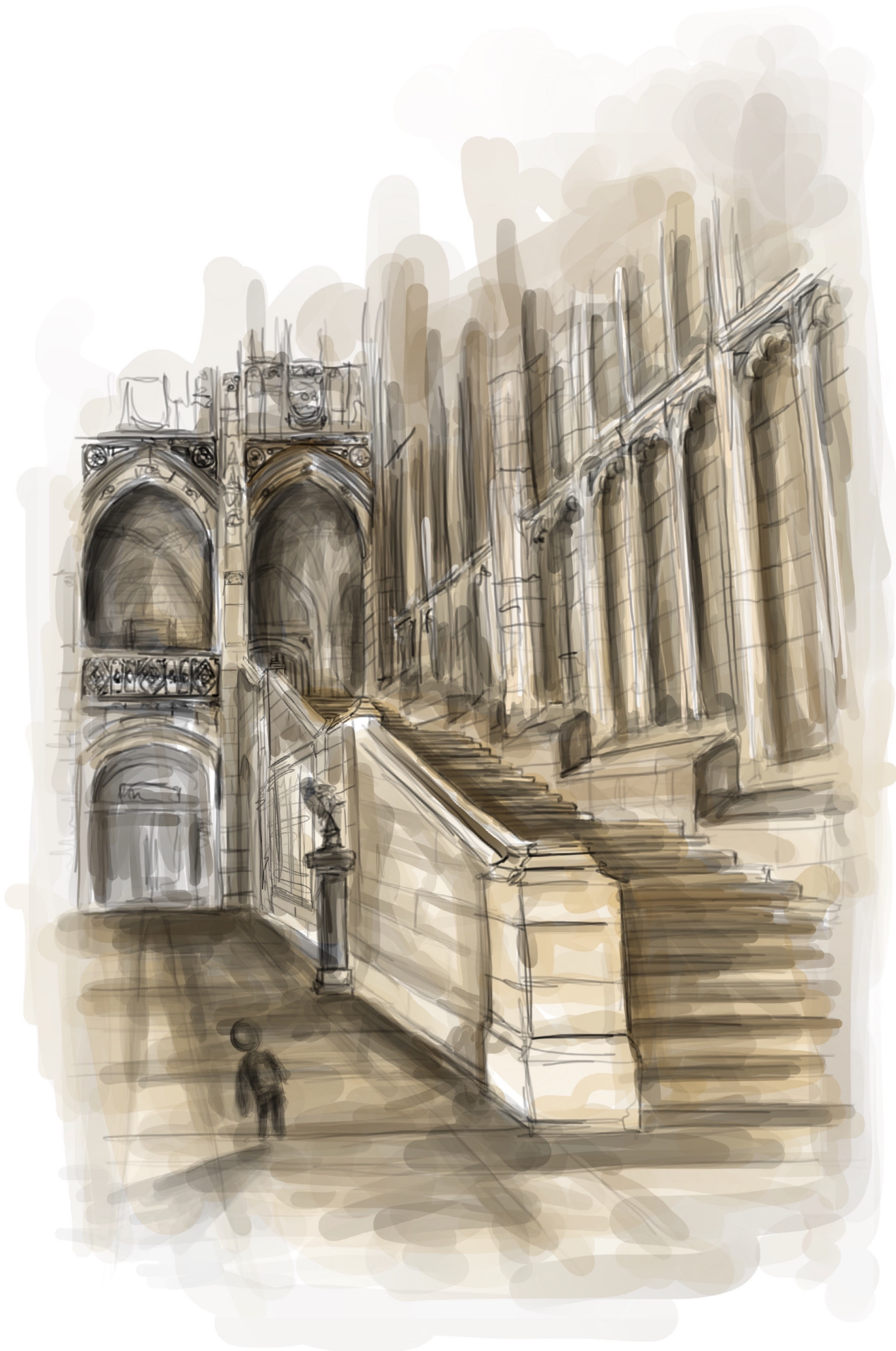
It was only a year ago when I sat in my school's sixth form common room, continuously hitting the refresh button in anticipation of whether the University of Bristol had accepted my application. The sounds of the button echoed in the room. "Click", "click", "click", and then I heard it: "Nafisa, stop stressing, you're going to get in. Not only do you come from a state school, but you're a female, an ethnic minority, and a Muslim; you check all the boxes". And in that moment, all my hard work suddenly meant nothing. Although I was ecstatic when UCAS eventually updated, deep down I felt that my peers believed I had not earned my position, which in hindsight is untrue. However, I thought to myself: if the people closest to me doubted this, what would other people think? This was a feeling which only grew at university.

Now, you may be asking, why is this at all relevant? In fact, these very feelings of self-doubt are incredibly prevalent amongst state-school students, especially BAME students at Russell group universities. A large majority of these students **tend to believe that they have only achieved their aspirations not as a result of their own intellect, but instead out of sheer luck.** These feelings too often stem from the stigma that state-educated students are less intelligent and capable of succeeding. According to a survey carried out by the University of Exeter, state-school students compose 46% of national Russell group intakes. Although this figure may seem substantial, in the UK there are over 32,000 state-schools whilst private schools equate to

nearly 2,500. Despite the fact that only 7% of students are privately educated, this demographic dominates at Russell group universities. This illustrates the **lack of equal opportunity** given to state-school students, perhaps perpetuating the unjust social stigma. Moreover, out of almost 200 Universities, here at the University of Bristol our institution has the 19th lowest intake of state-school students. The university recognises this issue and is attempting to solve it through organising widening participation schemes such as Access to Bristol, however will this solve the problem of anxiety and imposter syndrome experienced by state school students? I highly doubt it: if anything, I believe it will only increase.

A large majority of these students tend to believe that they have only achieved their aspirations ... out of sheer luck

For our readers who are unfamiliar with this term, imposter syndrome is when one consistently questions their capabilities, fearing the day when someone might discover the "truth": that they are not as talented, intelligent, or capable as people think. Originally, this concept was called the "imposter phenomenon" and was developed by psychologists Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes in their 1978 founding study. With a focus on high-achieving women, they discovered that those "who experience the imposter phenomenon persist in believing that they are really not bright and have fooled anyone who thinks otherwise." This feeling is experienced by nearly 70% of people worldwide and when this is applied to the student population of Bristol University, imposter syndrome would affect approximately 15,600 students. As a BAME student who was the only woman who wore a hijab in my sixth form, this feeling was famil-



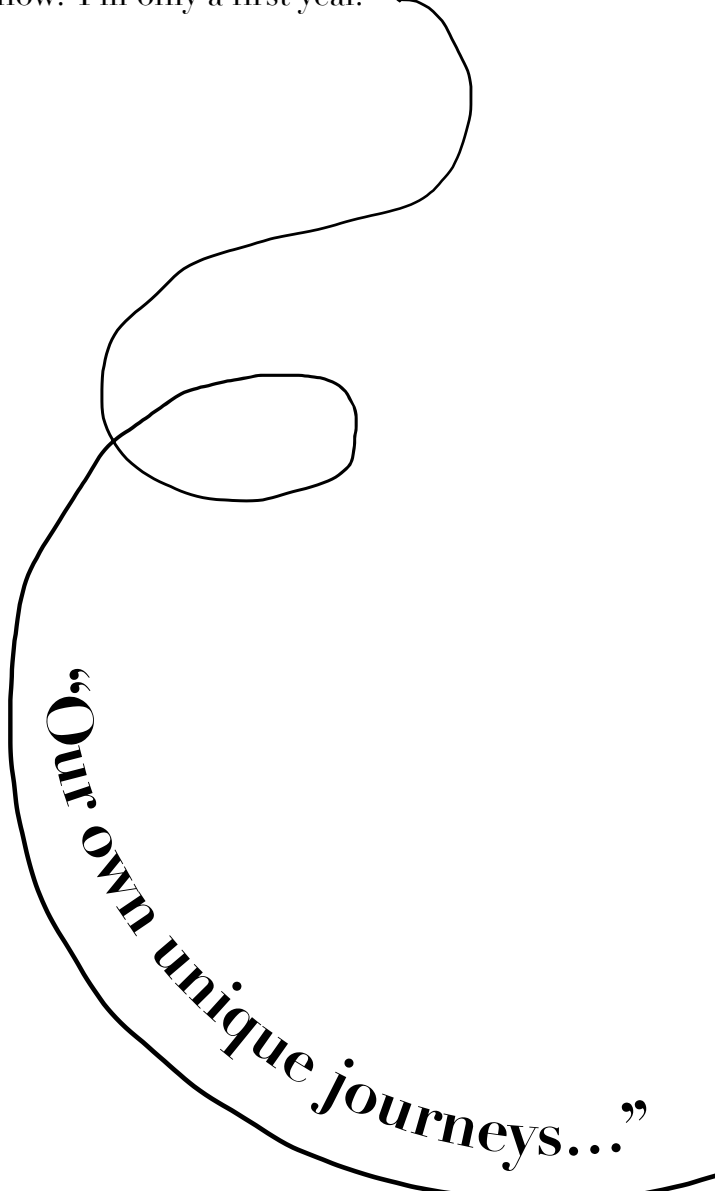
liar to me. However, upon starting my Law degree this year, I found that this sentiment developed in size and strength, ultimately permeating my self-image and **tainting the way I viewed my achievements**. When I would walk the historic halls of the Wills Memorial building on my way to a seminar, I used to question why I deserved to be there, if I was intellectually capable of staying there, and whether I had any prospects of succeeding. Being a minority at university made me believe that it was the boxes I ticked under “personal details” on my UCAS application form that gained me my offer. When these thoughts clouded my judgement, the tiny voice in my head that should have cried out “**you’re just as capable as everyone else!**” was silent. In that moment, I had lost faith in myself and began to distrust my strengths and abilities because I had a ‘unique’ background, a feeling that some of you may have also shared. It is normal to compare ourselves to others, but we often forget that the one fact that remains constant: we are all equals, not less than, or more than, **but equal**. After all, at a fundamental level, is this not what the law teaches us? Although embodying this maxim would not entirely eradicate the “imposter phenomenon”, we would be one step closer.

“The only person capable and qualified to quash feelings of doubt is ourselves”

Imposter syndrome is undoubtedly a struggle that may linger beyond university education, yet the important thing to remember is that **the only person capable and qualified to quash feelings of doubt is ourselves**. In an age of growing appreciation and emphasis on diversity, some may consider our progress as a simple case of **positive discrimination** in light of our race, religion, gender or other qualities. Despite this, we must reject such close-mindedness and instead celebrate our dedication and perseverance that has led us to where we are today. Together, instead of s-

eeing our differences as weaknesses or mere tokens, we must proudly regard them as personal strengths.

Yes, I am a state-school student, I am a woman, I am an ethnic minority, and I am a Muslim; although these qualities have created certain barriers, they do not hinder me, **but instead empower me**. I believe the key to quash imposter syndrome is not to think of how others perceive us, but how we want to see ourselves. Not only must we recognise our unmatched potential, but we must reflect and recognise how much we have achieved to get this far. **It is an epiphany that must come from within us, through our own unique journeys**. However, what should I know? I’m only a first year.



“Our own unique journeys...”

“Although these
qualities have
created certain
barriers, they do
not *hinder* me,
but instead
empower me”

Wellbeing Under the Wig

Written by – Lucia Cipolat

I would like to preface this article by highlighting that I am in no way discouraging becoming a barrister. The purpose of this article is simply to bring attention to a particular issue within the profession and how change can be made for aspiring barristers to receive the support that they need.

In 1990, a study was conducted on the mental health of lawyers at Johns Hopkins University. This was one of the first pieces of research in this field and it demonstrated a particular lack of investigation into mental health within the legal sector, despite the fact lawyers are 3.6 times more likely to suffer from depression than the average British adult. More recent statistics from the Junior Lawyers Division's survey show that the number of legal professionals reporting mental health concerns has increased each year from 25% (2017) to 38% (2018) before reaching a staggering 48% in 2019. This year-on-year increase is worrying, however it does show that more professionals are speaking up and expressing their thoughts as mental health is becoming less of a taboo subject. LawCare has now released the following statistics: 69%, out of 1,700 legal professionals have said that they have experienced poor mental health between October 2020 and January 2021, yet only 57% of those who had experienced mental ill-health during this time period have actually voiced these problems at work. This was mainly due to a fear of the implications speaking out could have for their careers, such as financial and reputational consequences, but it is likely that these issues have always been present among barristers, solicitors and paralegals, and only now are we developing a greater awareness of them. Arguably, we are in a bet-

-ter position to assess and improve mental health within the legal sphere than ever before; a national problem that the majority are oblivious to or refrain from speaking about is rather difficult to fix.

To combat this "crisis", as described by Nick Bloy, founder of Wellbeing Republic, there have been growing institutional movements. In 2015, the Bar Council set up the Wellbeing at the Bar Programme in partnership with the Inns of Court, the Circuits, the Specialist Bar Association, and the Institute of Barristers' Clerks. The programme intends to provide barristers and chambers staff with the information and skills they need to maintain their mental wellbeing and also aims to assist friends, family and colleagues who are supporting barristers in difficulty or crisis. Many of the experiences shared by LawCare stem from the fear of letting others down and not wanting to show any signs of error or fault. In April 2015, the Bar Council released the findings of the Wellbeing at the Bar survey which revealed that 2 in 3 barristers feel that showing signs of stress is equivalent to weakness. However, speaking openly is often the best way to find a better working balance; James Pereira QC explains that barristers need to realise that "their reputation is built on the excellence of their work, not whether they are working all hours because those kind of work habits can be destructive." A proper work life balance should be promoted as it can enhance performance in addition to possibly improving mental wellbeing. By its nature, working as a self-employed barrister can be a lonely place, especially in light of the pandemic where remote working has not only vastly increased but has even become regular practice at the Bar despite the fact th-



at COVID restrictions have now been lifted. This lack of face-to-face contact has been difficult for many legal practitioners, particularly pupils, who do not feel as comfortable asking for help or guidance when not in chambers. In the legal field there is also a strong sense of perfectionism and many barristers and Law students have a compelling inner critic which can be damaging if left to spiral.

2 in 3 barristers feel that showing signs of stress is equivalent to weakness.

Law tends to be considered as a vocational subject to study as it is strongly associated with the aim of becoming a barrister or solicitor, and as a result many students feel pressured into going down one of these routes. For me, there is a slight fear that after all my effort, hard work, time, and money, I will find that being a barrister isn't for me. After all, the only time you're going to experience taking on a barrister's work in its entirety is after law school, completing Bar School and securing a pupillage.

However, it does not always have to be such a traditional route. There are many other alternatives; for example, a lot of students do not begin with an undergraduate Law degree. Conversely, with a Law degree you do not have to go straight to the Bar. Numerous people start their journey to the Bar as a teenager (generally at 18 or 19 years old) with their undergraduate degree. It takes a minimum of 5 years before one can advocate in court as a pupil and many aspects of your life can change in those 5 years, particularly as you progress into your twenties. Investing such a large amount of time, hard work and effort is considered to be more important as many people feel it would be a waste if you were then to change professions. This way of thinking is known as the 'sunk cost fallacy' a-

nd affects us daily without us even realising. For example, if someone has been watching a film or TV programme for 45 minutes and then realise that they are not enjoying it, they may feel obliged to continue watching it in fear of wasting those 45 minutes for nothing, when they could instead accept the loss of time and simply turn it off.

Ultimately, you have time and there is no need to rush. There have been considerable efforts from professional institutions to increase mental health support at the Bar which is important to remember as an aspiring barrister. Law school is not always about becoming a lawyer and you should never test your resilience to the absolute breaking point; you are not in competition with anybody else, and this mentality you will only create further hurdles and difficulties as you continue on your journey. Success is not a one stop route.

A person with dark hair and a black leather jacket is shown from the chest up. Their head is replaced by a circular wood-grain pattern. Overlaid on this pattern are several lines of text in white and orange. A large quote in white serif font curves around the top and right side of the head. Inside the wood-grain circle, there are two smaller quotes: one in orange serif font and one in white sans-serif font. At the bottom, another large quote in white serif font curves across the chest area.

"You are not in competition with anybody else,"
critic.
"inner success is not a one stop route".
"Law students have a compelling

"A proper work-life balance enhances performance"
63%, out of 1,700 legal professionals, said that they have experienced poor mental health between October 2020 and January 2021.

Robert Spicer

About Robert ...

From 1964 to 1967 I read law at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. I was called to the Bar by the Inner Temple in 1970. In the early part of my practice, I appeared in many tribunals and courts. In 1979 I read for a Diploma in Legal Studies at Cambridge and converted my thesis into a book – Conspiracy Law, Class and Society, which was favourably reviewed. I then worked as a welfare rights officer at the St Pauls Advice Centre in Bristol.

I am currently practising in the area of employment law and health and safety. I also take on some personal injury and general civil work.

Fun Fact!

I play the harmonica with a blues band on Bristol Harbourside. I spend a lot of my spare time at my allotment.

A Letter to His Younger Self

The context of Robert's Letter:

At age 24, my younger self was called to the Bar.







Dear Bob,

Congratulations on being called to the Bar. Very well done! To make your career at the Bar more pleasant, I want to give you some advice.

Firstly, preparation is everything. There is no magic “Art of Advocacy”. You must have a grasp of all the details of every case which comes your way. This means hard work in analysing the facts, researching the relevant law and procedure and familiarising yourself, as far as possible, with the courts and tribunals where you will be appearing. If you get the case papers late, be prepared for a late night! You will have to learn to be tough. Your clients will have confidence in you and will, in general, trust you. Keep your professional duty, to act in your clients’ best interests, in the forefront of your mind. But don’t forget, that most cases have a winner and a loser. If you lose, don’t feel too bad and learn from the experience. Enjoy the high when you win!

Secondly, the Bar is a highly competitive profession and you should aim to be at least as knowledgeable as your colleagues and opponents. Keep developing your expertise in your area of specialisation. Regular library visits are important. Be an expert and learn from your mistakes. You also need to be aware that you will no doubt come across extremely arrogant and pompous members of your profession: try not to be overawed by this behaviour. Develop an awareness of your professional expertise and realise that pomposity and arrogance are, in fact, an unnecessary part of being a barrister. Equally, do not forget to comply with professional conduct rules, even if you don’t agree with the more restrictive ones, as breaches of these rules may well result in the stress of disciplinary proceedings and can damage your career prospects.

Finally, take care of yourself. Keep fit and try to exercise regularly. Power walking is an excellent exercise and needs no equipment or special facilities. You should try to avoid excessive alcohol consumption: this can be a risk in a highly stressful profession. And don’t forget to maintain stable emotional relationships with family and friends - the breakup of relationships can have a devastating effect on professional development.

Enjoy yourself, Bob! I am very proud of you.

Best wishes,

Robert

Sophie Smith-Holland

About Sophie ...

I have worked in Family Law since finishing the Bar Course, first as a paralegal in a Local Authority office and then in a national solicitors' firm. I completed pupillage at St John's in 2018. I am a contributor to the Transparency Project and also the Family Law Bar Association's magazine "Family Affairs".

Fun Fact!

An interesting fact is perhaps that I got engaged in February in Las Vegas.

When we got home, my fiancée bought me a puppy for my 30th birthday and we called him Caesar (my boyfriend proposed in Caesar's Palace).

A Letter to Her Younger Self

The context of Sophie's Letter:

The context of my letter is I was 23 and had just finished the bar course in London. I had no money left, large debts, no pupillage and no job! At the time I was also struggling considerably with anxiety. I was about to head back home to Wiltshire.







Dear Sophie,

Congratulations on making it through your degree. You have now been studying law for the last 5 years! You should be proud of the way you applied yourself during university. It was not easy for you to juggle two jobs, volunteering and mooting alongside your studies, and you were also struggling with your mental health. I know you aren't 100% happy with a 2:1 (you're a perfectionist) but let me reassure you that this won't close any doors to you, so please try to take at least a moment to be pleased with what you have achieved.

And now, I know you are now stressing about what to do next...

You have been certain for some time now that you want to be a barrister, but you are worried that people like you don't make it at the Bar. You're from a single-parent, working-class family. You are from Blackpool. After spending hours looking through barristers' profiles online, so far you have only been able to find one barrister who went to Sussex University like you. Try not to compare yourself to others – this is something you will waste so much time on in the years to come. Instead, remember what you have to offer: empathy, compassion, dedication and life experience beyond your years.

However, you're right to be realistic about your options. It is not going to be an easy journey. There is no way you can afford to do the BPTC right now and taking a break to travel is off the table too. You will need to move back home and get a job. Not what you want to hear after three years of independence in Brighton, I know. Some of your peers are fortunate enough to be able to jump straight into the BPTC and you are worried that this gives them a head start over you. Maybe, but you will work as a legal secretary and then a paralegal which will provide you with the practical, hands-on experience that many of them will not have.

Please make that scholarship application to Middle Temple. This will be a defining moment for you. You will go to the interview and despite the imposing buildings and intimidating traditions, you will feel an immediate sense of belonging. And then, when you get that scholarship offer, you will feel believed in in a way you haven't experienced before. Aged 30, you now write this letter to yourself to say:

I believe in you.

Love, Sophie

An Interview With

Matthias Clayburn

*Directed by – India
Rajchel Claybourn &
Ana Tolmacheva*

Q To start with, can you give us some insight into a couple of the interesting cases you have worked on?

It is always difficult to find your favourite case when you cover so many each year; they are all interesting and exciting in different ways. The first example that comes to mind is a Hong Kong public inquiry back in 2018-2019 that concerned the structural safety of a subway station in the city centre because, if there were defects, the whole platform would have been at risk of collapse. The interesting element here was that you could immediately see the overlap between the public and private sides of the law - this was not a simple case of private litigation between two parties regarding their financial entitlements, but one which concerned significant public safety interests.

Another example was the trial that I did on my own in the High Court in February/March 2020. The case involved some rather cutting-edge technology in a type of renewable energy facility known as an 'anaerobic digestion plant', but something went wrong in the design of one of its pressurised components which led to the three-day trial I was in. At that point in time I was four years call, and for me to do a three-day trial in the Technology and Construction Court of the High Court on my own was an exceptional but invaluable experience. I had to do all the cross-examinations and submissions, and in all honesty, it was a great experience.

Q You have spoken about very technically complex cases in your career - how do you approach these types of cases in your work?

I am not a scientist in any way, and I am not expected to be an expert in any of the technical issues, and so with all of these cases, you will have the assistance of expert witnesses who are specialists in their fields. A considerable part of your work is truly knowing what you understand, but then also recognising when you need someone's help. I remember an assignment from my time as a pupil where I was asked to prepare some advice for my pupil supervisor, which involved the various technical issues of a project delay relating to a site in Iraq where minefields were hidden. I started googling about mine-clearing techniques and what people can and cannot do there and then decided to include it in my advice as I had gone and read about it. It took me a long time to complete that piece of work, but it turned out that the only thing I needed to do was to state that a consultation with an expert would be required at a later stage. In practice, you do not need to work through all technical information alone, and you can always get the specialist help that you need.

Q As a practising barrister, how do you achieve the balance between work and personal time in your life, and what advice can you give to those considering a future career at the Bar?

To start with, I would say that having that work-life balance is essential and is in fact emphasised at every stage of our training, particularly during pupillage. Most chambers have a well-being officer, and the reasons for this are pretty simple: people who have an excellent work-life balance perform better at their jobs. It is very easy to

burn out in the line of work that we do, especially given the high levels of stress that we have to face, and it is essential that you maintain a balance and recharge regularly so that when the work and stress arrives, your body and mind are prepared. What's more, you need to make sure you are organised with everything you do. It is quite rare to find a barrister who only works on one case at a time and, as barristers, it is imperative to have that discipline of marking important deadlines in your diary and maintaining an organised approach to your work; in turn, this helps you make adequate time for yourself. The balance between work and personal time is not easy, but with these skills, you can certainly manage.

Q It can sometimes be difficult to turn down work even when we know it is needed for the sake of our already-busy schedules and mental health. What do you think is the best way to set boundaries for the protection of your well-being while also making sure you don't damage your professional reputation?

It is all about managing expectations in the end. Before you say 'yes' to a set of instructions and commit yourself to do anything, you have to look at your calendar and see if you realistically have enough time during that period, and you must then be open and transparent with your clients and clerks about your current capacity. When making such judgment calls, money is not the main motivation; rather, you just need to keep your clients' informed upfront and not let people down, and you must have the courage to say no when you need to.

Q You touched upon working with cli-

ents in our previous question. As a barrister, you must have to work with very different people each day; how do you establish and maintain a strong connection with all of your clients?

You should think of relationships with clients as if they were friendships. The starting point is to think about the things you do not like to experience in your own social interactions and make sure that these are the exact things you do not do with clients. For example, we do not like people who 'ghost' us when we text them - we want them to respond (as a matter of basic courtesy). The same applies to the clients: you have to be prompt all the time and respond as soon as possible. When you are particularly busy, people do appreciate it when you give them a heads up as to when you will be able to give them a more meaningful reply at a later date. You should also ensure to maintain a friendly tone when writing emails or having meetings, as it is crucial that you have the ability to communicate complex ideas and points of law in a way that is accessible, ensuring that your clients do not feel intimidated by you or the matter at hand. Going beyond that, you must have the willingness to sometimes go the extra mile when clients ask for it. Of course, you need to set certain boundaries, but these should not be too rigid. You should not make a habit of working every single weekend, but if you are asked on occasion to work over certain weekend or holiday to get something urgent done for the client, you should consider doing so. Showing that gesture from time to time is important.

Q Something that some law students may find slightly intimidating is the self-employed nature of the Bar and t-

he various difficulties or risks that such as dry periods of available casework. In your personal experience, how have you managed those elements of self-employment?

This is an excellent question. Generally, I would say that managing your finances and cash flow is crucial for any area of law. Many might get a bit deterred from becoming a self-employed professional, particularly if they are weighed down by debt after graduating from university and don't have the assistance of scholarships. This is a perfectly legitimate concern, especially because barristers do not get onto a payroll in chambers (unlike associates in a firm). You need to make sure that you manage your pupillage award properly and do not spend all of it, whichever sector you find yourself in, and once you get past the early days of your tenancy it should not be so much of a problem. I cannot speak for other areas of law, but for commercial law, if you do all the marketing properly and work hard, clients will likely keep coming back to you. There is no shortage of work going around the commercial bar, particularly with juniors. As long as you build that trust with clients and solicitors, they will keep coming back to you, and your practice will build itself.

Q How do you market yourself as a barrister, and what does successful self-marketing look like to you?

As a junior barrister, I think you need to be prepared to grab hold of every opportunity that comes your way and really put yourself out there, even if it involves stepping outside your comfort zone sometimes. You should try your best to speak to people and take part in

panel discussions, webinars, lectures and talks, and then in your own time, you should start getting more involved in writing blog posts which can be posted on your chambers' website, or perhaps even write journal articles if you have the time. I must also say that my set of chambers has an excellent marketing team who arrange a lot of events for us to attend in order to expand our client base. When it comes to measuring success, it is difficult to pinpoint as you never know which talk you give or article you write would strike a chord with someone or prompt them to instruct you. However, I have certainly seen that the more you do, the more likely it is that people will recognise your name; if you invest enough time, you will always receive some returns in one way or another.

“As long as
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10 ways that the barristers of the North Eastern Circuit are trying to make a difference

Written by Glenn Parsons, Barrister at Park Square Chambers and Chair of the North Eastern Circuit Diversity Outreach Programme

In 2017, The Lammy Review highlighted that the lack of trust in the criminal justice system by ethnic minorities stemmed from the fact that people of colour were so under-represented within its ranks.

5 years on and with diversity figures at the Bar still depressingly low, many people from across the profession are determined that the time has now come for action rather than words.

With this in mind, a group of barristers and judges on the North Eastern Circuit (NEC), have banded together and created the NEC Diversity Outreach Programme, which I chair. The programme is dedicated to increasing diversity on circuit and has instigated a number of initiatives with a view to achieving lasting change.

I have therefore put together a 10-point plan (in no particular order) that has been implemented in the NEC and which I hope will be adopted by other circuits, as these steps are already showing signs of changing the way that the profession is perceived and broadening the range of people who feel that they too could have a career at the Bar.

1. All chambers on the NEC have agreed to implement the ‘Bar Council Framework Document for Positive Action’ (<https://www.barcouncilethics.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Positive-Action-Guide-Bar-Council-2020-1.pdf>). This document provides practical examples of how chambers can increase the number of candidates with protected characteristics (such as race, gender, disabilities) while adhering to equality legislation. The documents are a ‘must read’ for any chambers who are serious about redressing the lack of diversity.

2. Outreach work at schools and colleges.

The NEC have put together a media resource, consisting of a 35-minute film compilation of barristers from all backgrounds, telling their individual stories about their journey to the bar and the obstacles that they have had to overcome [the link to the trailer is <https://vimeo.com/674434887>]. A full media package will be sent out, free of charge, across the circuit in the hope that it will inspire the next generation of applicants to believe that the Bar is a place that encourages diversity.

3. The NEC Scholarship Fund.

It is well known that one great inhibitor to a career at the Bar is the financial cost. The NEC have sought to address this by asking every barrister to pay an average of £10 a year into the scholarship fund. Judges on circuit have also made contributions and this has amounted to a fund of £10,000 per annum that the NEC Scholarship Committee are able to give to successful applicants to help them with their course fees.

4. The NEC Robes Re-gifting service.

The purchase of wigs and gowns represents an added financial burden to students who will have already run up massive debts funding the bar course. However, to those who go on to practice in Civil, Family and Employment, this expensive work attire is seldom worn and may sit untouched at the bottom of a wardrobe for most of their careers. We have therefore asked practitioners to re-gift their wigs and robes to newly qualified pupils.

5. NEC IT loans.

IT plays a huge part in how we work today with paper being replaced by digital files in most jurisdictions and many hearings being conducted remotely. However,

barristers are self-employed and buying a new laptop is yet another financial obstacle. We have therefore asked every chambers to offer an interest free IT loan of at least £500 to all pupils, allowing them to buy new equipment.

6. Education, Education, Education!

Currently, a white applicant for pupillage is over twice as likely to succeed than a candidate from an ethnic minority. The reality is that the lack of diversity hitherto has been perpetuated in part by the temptation to recruit in ‘one’s own image’, and it is therefore essential that there is proper training of those who will be interviewing candidates in the future. This is because no matter how well-meaning practitioners are, many are simply not aware of the unconscious bias that affects us all to some degree. The NEC has therefore arranged a series of diversity training seminars, with speakers from all ages and walks of life, sharing their specific struggles to succeed as ethnic minorities in their chosen fields. Other seminars that have been held on circuit have addressed neuro-diversity issues and LGBTQ+ rights.

7. Re-assessing our value systems.

We are seeking to encourage pupillage interviewers to move away from awarding points for achievements that are comparable to the recruiter’s own life experiences, and to instead award points on the basis of achievements in the context of the candidate’s own life. After all, someone who graduates after being brought up in care, or who is from a poor financial background, or a single parent working part-time, has arguably achieved as much, if not more, than a wealthy candidate who went to very good state school or was educated privately. We on the NEC believe that proper credit should be given for this by interview panels.

8. Mentoring.

The NEC now has a programme where students who had no prior connection to the Bar can be appointed a barrister who will act as their personal mentor and who can be on hand to help them with things such as preparing a CV, applying to an Inn or for pupillage.

9. Reverse mentoring.

We have also found that members of circuit sometimes have difficulties in navigating modern issues and terminology, for example ‘white privilege’ or the debate over gender identity and trans rights. We have therefore instituted a programme where barristers with differing experiences mentor each other in order to achieve a greater overall understanding.

10. Harnessing social media to reach a wider audience – we would greatly appreciate it if you were to follow the work we are doing on Instagram at #necdiversityequality.

If anyone reading this article wants more information about the initiatives being deployed by the NEC then please contact Glenn Parsons at: diversity@northeasterncircuit.co.uk, or visit our website at www.northeasterncircuit.co.uk

“The
programme is
dedicated to
increasing
diversity on
circuit and has
instigated a
number of
initiatives with
a view to
achieving
lasting
change”







Wills Memorial Building

Law School Static

There is still softness
twisted into law.

When community folds itself into another,
and thick words are shaped
into actions.

Law school is coaxed in salt, with brittle skin
worn like a thick coat. But
there are softer spaces,
where hard work spills into
small cracks, and
actions shift into one.

There are conversations
to be had,
which will be thick and
icy but
law is not always
static. Failure has full lips,
but it is a visiting friend,
and its time always
finishes. Law school has
etched the start, pinched
and pressed it,
but it is us
who will mould it further.

– *Samiyah Saif Ullah*



Do you have what it takes?

This year, Bristol Bar Society successfully launched its first members' magazine - 'The Wig'. As the academic year comes to an end and we prepare for another year of Bar Society endeavours, our team is looking to recruit more editors and illustrators to join the Editorial Board. If you are interested in joining the team, please send your CV to bristolbarsociety@gmail.com.



You do not need to be a Law student to join The Wig, but you must be a paying member of the Bristol Bar Society. You also do not need to have a history of writing in papers or magazines to apply, however if you have previous writing experience please make sure to include this in your application.

This is a fantastic opportunity that will not only enrich your personal statement and strengthen your ties with practicing lawyers and the university, but is also a chance to work on a worthwhile and rewarding project with your peers. We look forward to your applications.

Best of luck,

The Wig Team

Ara Colmacheva

Meet The Team...



Ana Tolmacheva
Co-Editor -in-Chief

Fourth-year student of Law with French
Fun Fact!
'I am obsessed with Formula 1'



India Claybourn
Co-Editor-in-Chief

Second-year student of Law with French
Fun Fact!
'I am a classical Bharatanatyam dancer'



Nafisa El-Turke
Creative Director & Illustrator

First-year student of Law
Fun Fact!
'I run my own business selling art on Etsy'



James Wood
Promotions Manager

Third-year student of Law
Fun Fact!
'I am a season ticket holder for Liverpool FC'

Our Writers ...



Lucia Cipolat

Second-year student of Law with a year abroad in Hong Kong

Fun Fact!

'I am a Third Dan Black Belt in Shotokan Karate'



William Sargent

First-year student of Law with French

Fun Fact!

'I'm a Timothee Chalamet super fan!'



Lenia Konstantinudou

Second-year student of Law

Fun Fact!

'I subconsciously won't allow myself to watch popular shows'



Enterprise

CHAMBERS



St John's
CHAMBERS



NEW COURT CHAMBERS



NEW SQUARE



Thank you!

To all our generous
sponsors & everyone
who has contributed &
established The Play
this year!

See you next year!



No Bar to The Bar