

## Dear Class of 2019: an address to this year's law graduates



### **Halebury Co-founder Janvi Patel:**

*Last week, I received an Honorary Doctorate from my old college, the University of Law. As part of the ceremony, I had the opportunity to address this year's law graduates and talk about my career journey and lessons learned. It seems like only yesterday I was in their shoes. I could never at that time envisaged what a different career path in law lay ahead for me as the co-founder of a NewLaw firm. Below is the speech I gave to the graduating students. Whilst much of it is for those just starting out on their career paths, there are some lessons that even as experienced professionals we should never forget. Nothing worth having or fighting is easy, always think outside the box, remember you cannot achieve anything alone and work hard remain my guiding principles to this day in business life.*

**Class of 2019 - congratulations.** Take a moment to cherish this incredible achievement, but also to thank those who have supported you. It is a celebration for all of you and I feel privileged to be able to share this moment with you.

If there is one thing I could tell you about my journey - it is that nothing worth having or fighting for is easy. I did not have the best grades or come from generations of lawyers or have a network to tap into. I was not the right ethnicity or gender but I found and created my own path, and I never gave up.

When Denise Nurse and I started Halebury 12 years ago, we were faced with a lot of barriers. We could not get any publicity as the legal publications would not write about us. Our solution was to write our own content and publish on social media. We did not have a client base – we were just 8 years PQE. So we worked hard to build relationships and thought not about selling, but about how to solve the resourcing issues general counsels were facing. We struggled to recruit. So we developed a unique lawyer offering and a rigorous approach in talent selection to ensure we cemented a reputation for quality. We had limited funding. So we became smarter with our cash flow and operating model.

During the first 5 years of Halebury, we had limited funds, few clients and few lawyers. Plus it was the time I had my 3 children and relocated to LA. It was tough and insane. But during year 7, life started to change. By year 10, we had gained recognition as a leading provider of flexible legal resourcing with the in-house legal community. Last year, 11 years' into our journey, we were acquired by Elevate, a US Law Company who wanted to take our unique model global.

Looking back, each barrier was the jet fuel that pushed us further forward, even if that meant 3 steps forward 2 back.

I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved with Halebury as a legal business. But to me the profession is more than the day to day job we do. The reason I can work is because of the struggles endured and won by generations before me.

When my mother was pregnant in the 70s, there was no maternity leave - she had to resign from her job and reapply. We have maternity and paternity rights now. Through the law we can address the inequalities in our society and in doing so, we have the ability to drive positive change. We still have far to go on many issues such as equal pay, equal opportunities much more, but as you start your journey, know that you have the power to make this world a better place and I would urge you not standby and be a spectator to the inequalities you see but to use the law the challenge and address them.

I also want to take a moment to say that none of us achieve anything alone. I am standing with you to day because of the unconditional love and support of my family and friends.

It is hard to explain the immense pressure my co-founder Denise and I have been under over the years. But through it all, she has remained true to herself and to our friendship – humble, generous, kind, hard-working and incredibly smart. She is truly inspirational.

My husband Omar keeps me sane, makes sure that I take care of myself and is also the person who picks me up when I am down. Marrying Omar was the best decision I ever made. Omar and our three beautiful children rock my world every day and give me the energy to keep moving forward.

Finally, on the subject of family, I have been blessed to have been born into the best. I have a brother who taught me how to be strong and to stand my ground. To this day he is my sounding board. But I especially want to thank my parents– my father from whom I inherited my entrepreneurial and fighting spirit from, and my mother who has always supported, guided and protected me no matter how crazy my ideas have been. What an incredible example of a working mother. How she raised us, working full time in the city, whilst being the primary carer for my grandmother AND cooking fresh Indian food every night - I will never know. I am forever grateful to my parents for all the sacrifices they have made and continue to make to ensure that we fulfil our dreams.

Class of 2019, I encourage you to look to find your own path even if that means carving it out. And in doing so, remember 'hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard'. Continue to work hard, to strive for better and to be better.

e: [janvi.patel@halebury.com](mailto:janvi.patel@halebury.com)

t: 020 7127 2500

Follow Janvi on Twitter on @janvi25