

Where are they now?

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Without Prejudice

I am pretty sure at some point during your life you sit back and think about a few people you once knew and ask yourself "where are they now?" or "what did they end up doing?"

No-one tells you that after school, while the choices you make usually determine where you will be heading in life, sometimes circumstances do all the deciding. In my case, a combination of the choices I made and circumstance is exactly what led me to law.

Let me tell you a little about my background before I move on to discussing what it takes to be a lawyer, let alone a female one. The majority of my life was spent in Lenasia, a small town in the south of Johannesburg, where I grew up and attended school within the community. I was never exposed much to the "outside world". My parents decided that I needed to expand my horizons to reach my true potential, which is why we relocated to Sandton where I finished my last few years of high school.

I matriculated in 2010 and, if you can remember as far back as that, getting into any university in 2011, even with provisional acceptance, was next to impossible because of the influx of students and the limited spots available for students to study. A few of my school friends waited to be placed in courses at university that were not even remotely close to what they actually wanted to study, just so that they could get in. Long story short, I had a very small window to decide what I wanted to do and decided to study my LLB through UNISA. I missed the first semester registration, which meant that I started my LLB in July – six months late. For the first few semesters of my studies I went to an institution that offered tutoring classes for certain modules, however, for the most part I studied on my own.

If anyone has had any experience studying via correspondence, you understand how difficult it is to stay motivated and continue working towards a goal, which seems light years away, without anyone besides a computer with you on this journey. I finished my degree within the period set by other universities – UNISA affords you 10 years to complete a degree. I was not going to let my study mechanism deter me from reaching the goals I set for myself. Graduating for me was the most gratifying feeling in the world, because I knew I now had the opportunity to do what I love and that was to practise law.

I signed articles with Hogan Lovells. It should be understood that when studying through UNISA nobody tells you that you need to apply for articles nor are you able to attend career fairs, so obviously trying to sign articles at a reputable firm, let alone a global one, was a battle on its own; you are up against hundreds and thousands of the most eligible candidates from across South Africa.

I applied to over 100 firms (this is a true story) in different places, whether they were big or small, as I knew if I signed articles with any of them this would facilitate my dream. Speaking from experience, many firms, including large firms, are apprehensive about considering candidates other than those who have studied through the traditional mainstream universities. By not giving up and focusing on my studies I finally got the call to participate in Hogan Lovells' vacation programme – an opportunity I grabbed with both hands which ended in me signing with the firm that I believed was the perfect fit for me.

The life of a candidate attorney (CA) is one of learning and, most importantly, responsibility. A CA's role can only be compared with the pillars of a building; they support the institution from the bottom all the way up. The integral role you play, and the responsibility on your shoulders are important and extremely rewarding. As a CA, everyone depends on you to get the work done and you are expected to deliver because someone's life or business depends on you.

Some days are harder than others because you are faced with multiple tasks and deadlines. The nature of the job means hello late nights, goodbye weekends and a social life. Besides your work as a CA, you have to take into account completing your Practical Legal Training and writing your admission exams, which are requirements for both completing your period of articles, and to be admitted to the Law Society. It is definitely not for the faint-hearted but it is rewarding to see how you grow. Rest assured, while no-one can prepare you for what lies ahead as a CA, by the end of the two years you will either be even more passionate about law than you were when studying it, or you may decide that it just isn't for you and take a different path.

This is exactly what I found during my period of articles at Hogan Lovells. Support and guidance from within the firm equipped me with the skills and tools required to thrive in such an environment and before I knew it I was standing in front of the high court, having just taken the oath to honour the law profession and being admitted as an attorney. Being retained at Hogan Lovells as an associate in the commercial department is the cherry on top.

Looking back at how I got to where I am today makes me extremely proud, and I am able to say that all the hard work has not been in vain. In such a high-paced, competitive profession my only advice to those wanting to follow this path is to put your head down, work smart and never stop asking questions. Always ensure that you are running your own race and that the only person you ever compare yourself with is the person staring back at you in the mirror. Never underestimate the power of hard work and patience. With the right mind set and motivation you ultimately have the ability to live your dream because anything is possible. Even if you are a

slight anomaly, like me, someone along the line is going to hand you an opportunity and the only thing that matters thereafter is how you show up.

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