

Loving the Law – A Tale of Two Lawyers

By Aris Messios, ESL18, Head Boy 2017 - 2018

Anyone who thinks it's a challenge growing up with over-achieving doctors or scientist parents, try having a household of lawyers.

Working hard, setting goals, these were the staples of my daily life while at school, as were the often-failed attempts to conceal whatever it is I may have done that day to people who "lie for a living". Suffice it to say, I never got away with anything.

The greatest impression on me, however, were the values instilled in me from a young age. Every opportunity was taken to explain the difference between the easy thing to do, and the right thing to do. This sense of duty led to my proudest moments - following in my father's footsteps both as a student at The English School and in studying law at Queen Mary University.

Ultimately, no matter the background story, it is the 'love for what you do' that makes or breaks successful careers both within and outside the law, and that love, or deep appreciation, can come from anywhere.

At school, I was fortunate enough to be given the resources and freedom to develop this kind of love - for me this meant dedicating my time to music and to student leadership, a foundation which allowed me to approach my time at university with a similar passion. Having served as President of Queen Mary's Law Society as well as spending a year on placement at an international law firm, I am merely continuing in the same work and personal ethics with which I was raised. The journey has been thrilling so far, and I anticipate more of the same as I transition into the profession.

As Beethoven put it, "to play a wrong note is insignificant, to play without passion is inexcusable". If you don't love what you do in this way, don't do it. And if this type of love sounds absurd, then find what it is for you.

Do you really want to be lawyer, and a good one at that? Start by beginning a love affair with the law.

Constantinos Messios, ESL85

It is quite extraordinary to say that I have been doing this job for over 30 years. What is even more extraordinary though is that even after all this time I am still learning, and I am still bound by inseparable bonds to volumes and volumes of musty old books these days often replaced by bytes of data which are necessary to allow me to at least try and do my job properly. Why? I do it because I love it.

Those legal commentators who have bothered to attempt to find a connection between love and the law have bravely sought to codify love in personal relationships quite often in relation to when these relationships fall apart in divorce, separation, maintenance, separation of assets and looking after the offspring.

Others of a more romantic ilk have sought to create an understanding of what the French in their infinite wisdom call "crime passionnel" - crimes of passion which are often quite horrific crimes on victims the perpetrator professes undying love for, but still manages to dismember, rip apart or throw out of a window in a red mist which the Court is invariably asked to look upon kindly because they were blinded by love, jealousy and the stuff of romantic novels and soap operas. Although there have been glaring injustices in sentences being substantially lenient in these cases all over the world, such pleas in mitigation where those of us that are skilful advocates try to get our clients off with minimal punishment because of the love element, such pleas often fail.

There is, however, another kind of love which most people will not see because it is not an in-your-face type of love. No great novels (with the possible exception of Harper Lee's 'To Kill A Mocking Bird') will be written about and it is a love which does not really smack of a great deal of romanticism.



Aris graduates from Queen Mary University London this summer and will be preparing for the Solicitors' Qualifying Exam next year, before starting his training contract at Reed Smith LLP.



Constantinos Messios, ESL85
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It is the actual love of being a lawyer. It is the love of getting up in the morning, going to court or to the boardroom, giving people solutions to their problems. It is the love of pitting your wits against very often worthy adversaries with equal if not better capabilities, legal talent and intelligence and getting a result. Any field of law challenges your intelligence. It demands total dedication if you really want to do it properly. It is not by any means easy and often you lose as much as you gain.

Not all lawyers are multimillionaires, high flying, jet setting, dressed top to toe in bespoke suits and designer dresses but they still do their job incredibly well. Those of us who stick to it do it because we love what we are doing.

Yes, you can make a decent living and more than that if you get lucky and you are good enough. This does not justify the stress, the time, the sacrifices and the often times overwhelming demands this has on your life. This is the cost of the pleasure of loving what you do that allows people to put their soul into the law.

So people, if you actually want to do this job and you want to be good at it, do it by beginning a love affair with the law. Like all matters of the heart, it does not always work out but it is well worth a try.

Human Rights, Justice, and Equality

George Z. Georgiou, ESL94

Law was for me an arranged marriage, that turned into love at first sight and finally blossomed to an enduring, deep-rooted love that has been a constant through most of my adult life!

Coming through the School I was an all-round student with, more or less, equal propensity for practical and theoretical subjects. Law was not on my radar. It was my father - who himself had wanted to study law, but as life would have it did not manage to (that is a story for another time, however) - who pushed me into choosing law for my degree at Bristol University. I did not know what to expect: none of my family were, or had been, lawyers, I never interned in a law firm, or knew anything about law, other than what I had seen on TV.

And so I found myself at University, where suddenly I was immersed in the study of a subject that combines the historical and the theoretical with the practical and the current. By studying law you learn not only how the legal, or the justice system works, but in many ways how the world works. You certainly learn how to think critically, how to analyse situations, how to assimilate large volumes of data and extract a conclusion. However, as much as I enjoyed studying law the real epiphany for me came whilst studying at the Bar in England and then practising as a lawyer back in Cyprus.

The practical application of law, how to find solutions, appealed to my practical as well as my theoretical side. Lawyers at this day and age, are a far cry from the staid image of bespectacled book worms in half moon glasses, stuck in poorly lit libraries, poring through dusty volumes (although sometimes we do that too!). Lawyers, these days are essential partners of business, assisting persons and companies to maximise their potential. They are also the bulwarks of human rights and justice in society, ensuring that every person has a voice and that equality before the law remains as the most essential defence against autocracy and oppression in a modern society.

Practicing law is multi-faceted and in most cases quite varied. I cannot remember having two identical days in my over twenty years of practice. At the same time, practicing law can also take the form of internal legal counsel in a big company, or the government, or indeed joining the judiciary. However, it is not for everyone: it is demanding, does not stop when you leave the office and places a big burden on your personal and family time. Moreover, it has a heavy burden of responsibility, as you are acting for somebody other than yourself and it is others that may be affected by your mistakes, or lack of preparation.

As I said at the outset - law for me has been a lifelong journey and a love affair. I wish that you all find a profession that offers you the same.



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