

My parents were from Dublin. They left school early and came to this country in search of a better life. As a result of some bad luck, from the age of eleven until I went to University, I was brought up in abject poverty. For a week or so we had to effectively squat in the council flat that we used to occupy. Furniture was provided by the Church. In the last two days before my father received his state pension there would be no money to pay for electricity and heating. I clearly remember studying in candlelight. At one stage I became anorexic, feeling my life was out of control. However, I obtained good results in my O levels and went on to study A levels. I will never forget the day of my A level results, which resulted in an offer to study Law at Kingston. I could not believe it. University meant hope and a real sense of independence for me.

Unfortunately my father, whose ill health deteriorated considerably while I was doing my A levels, died during my first year at University. It was a difficult time as I was an only child and had to support my mother. However, we survived and I graduated. Getting into the Inns of Court School of Law, which was the only Bar course provider at the time, was not easy with a 2:2. However, I managed it and thoroughly enjoyed the eight months I spent at Bar School. My time there opened my eyes to a new world.

On 14 October 1993 I was called to the Bar. There then followed the long hard road to obtaining pupillage and tenancy. I have been very fortunate in that I have enjoyed a very successful career at the Criminal Bar.

I have always tried to fight for the poor, the weak and the vulnerable. I hope I have given some sort of voice to the voiceless

I have dedicated my life to helping young people, especially those who have been brought up in poverty. I have done the following:

- Appointed a social mobility advocate by the Bar Council.
- Written articles on my journey from poverty to becoming a barrister and promoting social mobility in The Times (Legal Section), Counsel Magazine and The Middle Temple Yearbook.
- Served on scholarship committees at Middle Temple
- Ran the London Marathon three times to raise money for such scholarships.
- Mentored my old school, George Dixon, in the Birmingham Mock Trial Competition. We won!
- Worked with the Citizenship Foundation: giving lectures, formulating policy and as acting as Judge in mock trial competitions.
- Give mock interviews to people trying to get pupillage.
- Am an advocacy trainer and give a lot of my time to lecturing aspiring barristers.
- Give work placements to young people.
- Been on a number of career day panels, for example the Bar Council and Kingston University.
- An elected member of the Bar Council

- Serve on the Bar Council's Equality, Diversity and Social Mobility Committee.
- Serve on Middle Temple's Equality, Diversity and Social Middle Committee.
- Give speeches at Graduation ceremonies and schools.
- Am the Vice President of a charity for young people called Endeavour.
- Am a governor for two schools.