Alumna profile: Justice Michelle Arana

Programme: **LLM in Commercial Law (2004)**

At the degree congregations in July 2006 the University presented the award of Alumna of the year to Justice Michelle Arana, graduate of the School's prestigious LLM in Commercial Law programme.

Justice Arana was appointed the first female Justice of the Supreme Court of Belize in January 2006. Previously she was Registrar General and Registrar of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal of Belize. She has degrees from Ball State University, Indiana, University of the West Indies, and a Masters from the University of Birmingham. In 1998 she was appointed to serve on the National Women's Commission in Belize.

Why did you choose Birmingham?

I chose to attend the University of Birmingham because of its sterling reputation as an outstanding institution of tertiary learning. In addition, my late father, Gregorio Arana Sr. was also an alumnus of this University, having received his Masters degree in English in 1976. He had many positive experiences here at Birmingham, some of which he shared with me and as a child this imbued me with a love for this university long before I entered its hallowed grounds as an adult.

How did you find your time at Birmingham and what are your favourite memories?

I truly enjoyed my time at Birmingham. I found my lecturers to be well prepared, encouraging and helpful. I had a great time interacting with people from all over the world: China,St. Kitts, Nigeria, Germany, to name a few. My fondest memories include going to the Bullring for shopping, cinema, restaurants, and to The Works nightclub on Broad Street for dancing. I also loved going to the Barber Institute on campus on Sundays to look at their Turner, Raphael and Boticelli paintings.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of a career in Law?

I would advise anyone thinking of pursuing a career in law to spend some time asking themselves asking whether they are truly prepared to spend tedious hours researching cases, textbooks, journals and statutes. Most of the work of a good lawyer is done before one enters the courtroom because preparation is the key to competent performance.

Has studying at Birmingham helped your career?

Yes. It has definitely helped my career as it has broadened significantly my outlook on life, while deepening my understanding of the law in the specific field of commercial law in which I chose to do my post graduate work. My postgraduate degree from Birmingham University was also instrumental in preparing me for my elevation from Registrar to the first female Supreme Court Justice of Belize in that it elevated my academic credentials when my name was considered for the post.

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