



EXCERPTS FROM

THE LEADERSHIP TRAINING MANUAL

The IAWL Leadership Training Manual is a cross-sectorial document that captures the experiences of different women leaders in various sectors of the law.

The theory and reflections presented in this manual are relevant for early career legal professionals who need a roadmap in starting their leadership journeys. It is also appropriate for medium to senior-level professionals who need reminders and reinforcement along their leadership journeys.

This collection of excerpts aims to highlight the key lessons from the leadership training manual.



ABOUT **US**

The Institute for African Women in Law (IAWL) is a Pan-African non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to supporting the formidable works of women in law across the continent of Africa and the Diaspora. Our goal is to be a focal point for addressing issues across the legal and judicial professions.



WOMEN IN LAW & LEADERSHIP TRAINING MANUAL

I came to academia through quite a circuitous route. In many respects, I'm an accidental academic. In some ways, I was even an accidental graduate. I didn't come in with a view of where I was going to end up and the kinds of leadership positions that I might end up filling, of which there have actually been many, in retrospect, but I've always thought of them as service positions.

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I think my leadership started with having parents who were not only supportive but told you that you could do anything you wanted. I have three brothers, and [I was] the only girl, but there was never any differentiation as to who would do what. And I think that the confidence of growing up in a family where both my parents encouraged us to do what we wanted gave me that confidence to move forward. So that's one big part of it. The second part was a challenge that I had my dad was a scientist by training and all my brothers were doing science. And so at school I was going to do biochemistry . . . [but I switched] to do history, geography and english.



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My career highlights started with being given responsibility beyond just following someone to court because I focus on litigation. It started with being given a schedule I ran on my own, handling a trial in the High Court. That was a big thing for me. I found myself doing trials back-to-back unsupervised and then getting to have my team. I thought then that... I had hit my ultimate. I must say that I didn't have big dreams. At the time, I was satisfied with being a team leader in a leading firm. But beyond that, I became a leader of leaders, leading more than one team in the litigation space. Eventually, the opportunity came for me to take over managing not just the lawyers in the firm but the admin and support team. So, the highlights for me have been coming into my own, standing out, not being under anyone's shadow, and leading not just a team of people, but an entire firm. And in that process, as well, it has opened other doors for leadership roles. And along with all these were other aspects of my life that were also evolving. And that has to do with family life. So the journey was sweeter because even though sacrifices were made, there was a work-life balance, and other areas of my life also developed.

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Knowledge is indispensable in any trajectory you are going to take. Even though you don't have the vision right now, the more you read, the more insights you will get along the way. The more benefits you receive from other people's experience, whether it's written or said in any interview or any event, the knowledge is important, and it becomes rare.

From my point of view, especially in the era of technology and takeaway culture, it's like people are doing shorter videos or shorter interviews because people don't have the patience to listen to long speeches or long talks, although it's beneficial. But this takeaway culture is very harmful.

Knowledge and persistence are very important So the more you read, the more knowledgeable you are; the more you're using the different tools you have around you. It is going to help and it is going to shock the people that did not believe in you.



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The first strategy is that women should believe in themselves and be confident in their ability to be leaders. And that confidence is not arrogance or boastfulness, it's confidence in knowing yourself, your skills, what you are capable of, what you're passionate about, what you're interested in, and so on. I believe that women still lack a sense of their capacity and strengths, impacting their confidence. So the first is confidence and believing in yourself.

The second strategy, is to be curious. You have to be curious because your curiosity will lead you to the investigation, knowledge, and information you need to acquire. Because life and leadership are about learning all the time. So being curious means knowing how much you know, and also being aware of what you don't know.

The third strategy is to be open to a diverse range of opinions and a diverse range of personalities. Leadership means that you will be leading people – and thereby working with them collaboratively – who don't necessarily share your worldview, your ideas, your goals, and your aims. And you will also be working with people with various personalities and skills, and so on. So being open to divergent viewpoints, capabilities, emotional needs, and so on is very, very important.

And then the fourth strategy I would say is to know your institution. If you're going to lead an institution, you have to know the history of that institution, how it works, the important aspects of that institution and so on.

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You have to approach your career as a strategist. Nobody is going to build your career for you. You are going to be the primary person who pushes your career forward; you will have supporters, you will have advocates, you have mentors, you have sponsors, but you are the person that needs to be the CHIEF STRATEGIST of your career. I think clearly identifying where you want to go, and what that route looks like and who is on that way that can help you to get there. So be very strategic and be very clear as much as you can be. I think also you have to be open to try new things.

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An important factor that a person who is a leader must consider is setting realistic timelines for assignments as a way of managing public expectations. I know that leaders will always want to have targets, but the targets must correspond with what is realistic and practical. If the targets are not properly managed, that will frustrate the expectations that the public have and even those you are working with will have in the management.

Once the people are frustrated and have lost the trust and confidence of the management, it has serious repercussions on how they will discharge their duties. That would also be an area where any woman who wants to be in a leadership position should be ready and willing to lead so that they are able to discharge their leadership skills without challenges.

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From my personal experience, women aspiring to senior academic leadership as deans or chairholders, for example, should have a broad knowledge of how the core business of the academic institution – teaching and research – are regulated and managed, as well as an idea of the internal and external environment that potentially affects this business.

This calls for a willingness to get involved in the “dirty” work of academic administration, such as deputy deanships and headship of academic departments. Secondly, research outputs are essential qualifiers for both top academic leadership positions and chair positions. Thirdly, fundraising skills are critical in today’s higher education funding environment.



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The first step is to step up and ask for responsibility. On the one hand, women are getting tapped all the time to fulfill so-called leadership roles, which are actually administrative roles. However, the point here is about being deliberate. Don't be an accidental leader. Think very deliberately about what kinds of responsibilities you want to take on, and then go and ask, don't wait to be tapped. And then, when you've got that job, pull your weight. Because people see what you do. And those people will walk the road with you for many years to come. So you're building a reputation as somebody who gets things done. However, you have to be very strategic, make sure that your name is on it.

Be deliberate about the people that you surround yourself with. Have each other's backs, support each other, I can tell you, really, from my own experience, that men do that. They write reference letters for each other, and they're there for each other in ways that sometimes women actually aren't. And we need to do that much more deliberately. Pay attention to your mentorship needs, and seek out those relationships and build those relationships because I think people are available to support you.



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I talk about owning your space and not giving ground in that space. This is not necessarily in an aggressive way, but in a way that says, "I'm comfortable here, I belong here, and I am going to put a stamp and have an input in this role." That's important because a lot of the time, women sell themselves short. The other thing is that it is unfortunately still true that you sometimes have to go over and above what other colleagues are doing if you want to achieve in that space. ... I would say you also have to be very clear about what is required to progress. ...Also, it's about working smart and about being aware of what is needed to progress ... be aware, get information about what is needed, and make sure that you're positioning yourself to move through whatever pathway there is that is available... I think being ready and prepared to take up that opportunity when it comes, knowing that you will grow in the role.

Nobody gets into a role and fits in 100% and that's why it's called a promotion, you'll grow in the role. But by all means, ensure that you have the skills, you have the experience, you have the networks and the support system to help you succeed in that role when you do get into it. So, for me, that is how I think women may position themselves in higher education especially, but I think it applies to any other legal field that one wants to progress in. I think part of that is when you then progress, not to set a ceiling on yourself to say "Wow, well I got here. This is all that there is." Be open to go even further and knowing that you can go even further.

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When you want to be successful in leadership, the number one prescription is hard work, hard work, and hard work. ... It is also about quality and standard. You need to set your standards, and you need to do a lot of continuous learning. ...And another thing is, it is good to seek out good mentors. Especially when you are younger, a lot of mentoring early on, if you find some good role models, in the legal world, it is good. I also read a lot of biographies. So I say knowledge and competency, good mentors, hard work, study,... about every area..., and always be prepared.



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It's important to invest in yourself, not just in the academic sphere, but also in other areas that help you know how to deal with people, how to manage systems if you're asked to handle systems, and of course, especially with finances, keeping books, being able to give speeches, being able to carry your team along. The second thing is networks... MY NETWORK is really MY NET WORTH because that is the group that I can call on when I face challenges and structural issues that I'm not able to deal with and the network doesn't even have to be one, people talk about being networked to high net individuals.

And I think the final one is listening to your heart. Many times, we think that leading is from the head but I've found that listening to my heart, sometimes can lead to outcomes that would benefit my institution more than using my head because using my head, may trump on issues that many people don't think are important.

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HARD WORK! there's no replacement for hard work, you have to work hard. You also must aim high. To get there, you must aim high. You have to take advantage of whatever training opportunities there are. Keep learning. Learning is something that there's no substitute for because there's so much competition and there's so much to learn so do not limit yourself. You must continue learning.

You must be independent, strive to know more, and be on top of things. Independence, impartiality, these are not just words, we must practice them. If you're a woman, judicial officer, judge, magistrate, be independent and not be influenced, that's really what I had in mind, not being influenced in any way.



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Don't be afraid to take on challenges and take on difficult assignments. I think sometimes we like to play it safe. But in playing it safe, you would close off opportunities that you could have made a difference. You should try different things. Legal training is something that actually gives you the ability to do more than be a lawyer. And I think sometimes our leadership will take us down roads that we may not have considered. As lawyers, we either think of academia, we think of House Counsel, we think of litigation, etc.

What else can you do? Where can you bring the skills? Because the skills we have as lawyers in terms of analysis, how we view facts, etc, are useful in so many spheres. And I think we don't do enough of that. Don't be afraid to be yourself, and think of what impact you will have. Take on the assignments that will enhance your skills. Reach out to people when you need help, but figure out what you want to do and what you want to achieve. And move on that.



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The FIRST strategy is to recognize specialization and rely on the expertise of one's colleagues while sharing knowledge, insights and experiences. Being a successful leader does not mean knowing everything but knowing when to rely on other team members and colleagues to perfect one's output and the output of the team one leads. This may seem simple and common sense, but it is quite tricky in any competitive environment: it is thus important to build trust among the members of one's team and convince them that there is intrinsic value in sharing knowledge and certainly a common interest.

The SECOND strategy is to focus on developing one's team and investing time and effort into building their professional character while paying special attention to their educational and emotional needs. Every generation has its peculiarities, be very mindful of that.

The THIRD strategy is to lead by example, to practice what one preaches, and to be flexible and pragmatic: Not every situation requires the same level of intervention. Empowering one's team members and managing their level of involvement and responsibility depends on your assessment of the situation, and this could be crucial.



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I think building relationships is very, very key. And someone may call it "networking". But at the end of the day, whatever support base you build, whatever your fan club is going to be, it starts with connecting with people. And it's not just an overnight thing. So you have to be present, show up, deliver, make your mark, and build relationships because those are the very people who are going to vie for you when you need their votes. The other thing is character. You have to have a value system and be an ethical leader. Because you can only get so far by demonstrating competence and good human relations. But you must stand for something which will inspire people to look up to you as a leader. And, of course, there's the lobbying as well, which is one thing we typically don't like to do as women, but all these things can be learned. And that's another thing that has also helped me, notwithstanding that I hold a leadership position, I'm not shy to consult. I have people that I can constantly get in touch with, people in high positions, some at my level, some not even in the legal industry. You need to build your capacity, you need to keep growing, and you need to show that you're somebody that other people can look up to for direction.



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I think the first thing is knowing what you want. You have to be intentional; leadership is intentional. What do you want to achieve? You need to set goals and targets that are achievable and realistic and work towards achieving them.

The second is human interactions ... No matter how introverted you are, you will learn how to navigate your natural comfort zone and endure a bit of discomfort to attain a connection with another person over time. Human connection is critical in your leadership journey, there are people there meant to help you, and there are people placed in your pathway for you to also help. And leadership is the recognition that we need one another, and you learn communication, how to resolve conflicts, and you also build very strong interpersonal skills through those friendships and acquaintances that you meet. And in those friendships are also mentors, coaches, sparring partners. ... you cannot do this leadership journey alone because it's extremely lonely. So having people that you connect with is critical. And knowing the role they play in your life is also critical.

And finally, you have to have belief. For me, it's my belief in God, I'm a woman of faith. And I believe this has also been instrumental in navigating the most difficult decisions of my life, that God did not put me here to fail. ...So spending time to actually pray, to actually reconnect spiritually, and to look after yourself would also go a long way in strengthening you..., it's the glue that holds everything else together, achieving your greatest ambitions and your greatest dreams. So I think those three strategies for me are important, and I will recommend them.

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Again, one of the things that is also important is the issue of inclusivity. And what I mean here is, if you have a position like this, ensure you bring people from diverse backgrounds. As lawyers, we like to champion other lawyers, but coming in a space like other human rights bodies, I've realized that we need to work with economists; we need to work with people from the health sector.

When you're in a leadership position, you must deliberately create a situation where you have people from different backgrounds; it is very important. It's a constant journey of learning, and, at the same time, when you cannot understand issues, you can go and learn from others who may have a different perspective on things that you do not know.



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At the start of your career, even in law school, think about your FIVE-YEAR goal, your 10-year goal, and your 15-year goal. Have a sense of your goals, even though much in life means that your plans don't always come to fruition, it's good to have plans, it's good to have a strategy. Then even as you think about your goals, develop the ability to be flexible and resilient. When those plans are thwarted, be willing to change but have a sense of where you want to be. There are certain choices in your life that you must consider purposely -- the first is your choice of friends.

All the research shows, and anecdotal evidence shows that your friends ultimately determine where you will end up. So, if you have friends who are committed to your goals, your visions and in the legal profession, committed to the goals of social justice or whatever goals you have, those friends will inspire and collaborate with you in a way in which you have shared values, and they will support you.

Choosing your friends is very important. Second, is choosing your life partner; your life partner must be somebody who will support and inspire you, not thwart you, and so on, so think about that carefully. And then, the third thing is that from the most menial person that you will meet in your life – somebody who sweeps the street, somebody who is the cleaner in your building, to the leader, the top person in your institution, be gracious, be courteous, be kind. Kindness is a value that people in our profession don't necessarily appreciate that much.



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I would always say that resilience is very important in leadership. When you want to reach a leadership position, you must keep moving, you have to go straight up. You must widen your horizon, but you cannot keep going horizontally; you must go up. This is something very important. My advice to everybody is you'll have to get support from within. Don't look for it anywhere else. Yes, learn from all the seniors, and try to grasp as much as you can from the knowledge, but the power lies within you. And this is how you can advance.

It's very important to be humane when you are in a leadership position. And to realize always no one is indispensable. No one. Any job can be done with or without you. The only difference when we have different human beings in the workplace is to focus on the style and deliverables. Whether it's of high quality, low quality, good delivery, or poor delivery. That's it; nobody is here forever but leave your mark wherever you go.



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There was a man [name redacted], a pioneer advocate of female education in [country redacted]. And that was when there was a huge debate on the need to educate females – it was very early in our history, but it was very important. He played a major role in ensuring girls have the right to education. If I think of the legal profession, at least for us, I know we have very early university professors and lawyers, female lawyers, back home since the 1950s and so on when women were allowed to enter the universities in the 1920s and to advance. Internationally I would say all the initiatives like this one of having IAWL showcase women in law in different parts of life, in different countries and showing them to the world. Showing them to our girls gives them the inspiration to think that this is a good path for them. The important factor here is to learn and encourage our governments to bring females as candidates for such positions. We have to think about how we can encourage governments and how we can encourage philanthropists, and NGOs to prepare women, especially in the developing world, to reach these levels. This is what we really need. Maybe we have a lot of females in the international sphere nowadays, be it international lawyers, academics, or international organizations, but we are not there yet. And that is why I'm saying, if we think of strategy, I'd rather bring these brains together to come up with a map, with ideas on how to encourage young women to join the law profession locally and in the international sphere, which is very difficult for many of us.

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Women bring a value that is not masculine to leadership because men are men and women are women. And there are certain things that women come to leadership with. I would, for instance, say that many women wouldn't be in the "winner take all,".

They're more inclusive and would want the good of others, probably because of women's nurturing roles. So this whole thing of "it doesn't matter who gets hurt, I must get to the top" – I see fewer women following that than men.



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Honestly, sometimes women tend to lead differently, because sometimes, women struggle to maintain a balance to not seem weak. Because of that, sometimes some women can be unduly and unnecessarily heavy-handed . because they're trying to show “I can do it.” The way women are socialized is different.



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The differences between individual leadership styles across genders can often be subtle, not radical or fundamental. Therefore, the leadership style of women is not in any way the root cause of their underrepresentation. Whatever their leadership style is, whether it fits a stereotypical perception or not, most women leaders have generally excelled once given a leadership opportunity in any organization. Underrepresentation is fundamentally linked to social bias than to anything technical, stylistic or objective.



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I will go back to the first point; it's because we are in male chauvinist environments. If you think of even the United States today, you have different salaries for males and females. If we're talking about the leadership of organizations, if they are governmental organizations now, it's been encouraged everywhere to have real equality numbers, and it's like 50/50 between males and females. We [have not reached the goal] yet, but there is a real encouragement to do it. But if we go to the private sector, this is another problem because it's just like, until now, I would say the main owners of capital are males; they are not females, so this is one of the problems. In the work environment, of course, there is another problem: females have to take some breaks from work because they have babies, care for children, or other family reasons. 90% of workplaces do not consider that.

Even if you are brilliant, they'll say, "Oh, you took a break for a year; this means you have been doing nothing for a year." This is something it's not perceived. If a male colleague takes off for a year to have fun, it's acceptable, they took a break, but for you, it was because of a child, then they see it as if you put your family first, so you don't care about your career. So all these factors play a role in not having more women in leadership. And I think also I would say that women themselves are a problem because they don't trust in their abilities as much as their male colleagues; it's either we bring each other down, or it's like, "Oh no, I may not be able to do that" because you know, it's too much. I'm a woman; I cannot face all of this. But you face it every day; you'll face it in your personal life, you'll face it in your public life, in your work, everything.

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Do women lead differently? I would say yes, because our experiences are different. Well, the baggage we carry by the time we arrive to a leadership position is other than the males. First, there is some personal touch you usually will not be able to have with male colleagues. The borderline between being professionals, and being brothers and sisters in the workplace, is a fine line and very difficult for some male leaders. Some worry so much about being nice because they might be perceived as weak.

Women don't have this problem because we are perceived as weak all through our lives, and we try to show that we are not helpless. We have no problem with that; we're not intimidated by this. I think the other thing is that, again, with the male chauvinism we face, males do not meet that.

Women learn early in their careers how to balance when to make a fuss out of something and when to let it go smoothly and act differently or with indifference towards some people who will cause issues unnecessarily just because of their gender. This doesn't happen to men. On the contrary, some females in different workplaces need to look tougher than men because otherwise, they might be taken as doormats. As simple as that, because she's a woman, and this is one of the things we will keep facing, I don't think it will disappear soon.

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In this role, I've found that everything I've ever known has been stretched to the maximum because I have to deal with people with very strongly-held opinions, but also have to be a bit firmer politically in asserting myself. Before you had the whole team, the entire group, all of us come to a common understanding, here at (organization), it is about taking charge and also about pushing an agenda forward even if other people would not be willing to walk the walk with you, which for me was a bit of a shock, because

I'm used to having everyone work on the same table. But because this is not a natural way of leadership for me, I have to adapt in a way that takes a lot of my mental activity and requires a lot of presence for me to function optimally. I'm learning now within my team and the international leadership that some leadership styles that appear aggressive might work in certain situations or tend to lean more in specific cultural spaces... So it's about balance, but it's also about understanding the context in which we work.

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In my leadership style, I like to engage whoever I'm talking to. I like to make sure that they feel safe with me; they feel satisfied. As a mediator, you can engage that very easily. When somebody is talking to you, you can tell whether you can reach and engage them. So I recalled that even when I was Head of the Family Division, I would tell lawyers to give me about 10 or 15 minutes, step back and leave me with the parties so I could converse with them.

That's very much mediation. I have an engaging leadership style. I also tend to give people time to talk without interruption; sometimes, I keep quiet. And then they look at me and say, "Are you still listening?" I say, "Yes, I'm listening, and you can ask me just what you've said. I was giving you time to talk, to let it out."

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Some leaders adopt one of the following leadership styles: democratic (the will of the majority), authoritative (the will of the leader), delegative (permitting employees to take reins with guidance), and transformational (focus on unity with change as the goal). In my experience, no one leadership style works in every situation.

You have to carefully study the organization you are a part of and decide what would work best under the circumstances. I have found a mix of various leadership styles creates a balance in an organization, enhances performance, and minimizes conflicts.



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There's no question that the context of the organization determines your leadership. If you have a particular goal and the institutional context suggests that this is how you achieve that goal, then that's what you do. That's not being inconsistent, that's being strategic, and that's ensuring that you meet your goals. I think it's when you change the values that there's a problem. Changing your leadership style to accommodate the institution's needs is good leadership.



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I am extremely fortunate to have started my career as an associate in a team led by a woman who is one of the most prominent lawyers in my country and a public figure credited for advocating and advancing women's rights in [my country]. Her presence and the role she played and continues to play to date as my mentor and role model have had a tremendous effect on my personal development and showed me what it meant to be a real inspirational leader at work and in life in general.



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Well, in the career I was in, you see everything, not only nationally but internationally too. You are faced with many challenges, and you try to overcome them. So when you try to shape the way you want to lead later, you try to learn from your experience, be it the good part or the bad part, so when you have a bad experience, you have a lot of negativity that comes out of it. And one thing, for example, that took place when I was mistreated because of any triviality or because of someone who didn't like me, I decided that I would never do the same to another person when I am in leadership. I learned, through the negative rather than by the positive, not because someone taught me to do the right thing but because I had a bad experience.

I decided not to allow myself to do that to my colleagues when I was in a leadership position. When we speak about leadership, there is a difference between leadership and management because being in management is much easier than being a leader. Managing the daily work, I have had to do since my early years in different positions. And it's easier than when you try to lead first by example. Second, by inspiring those working with you to work as a team to develop and ensure that the workplace is like the home. I would describe my personal style in leadership as focused on human beings. It's more about encouraging my team working with me to feel we're a family and that we belong to the institution we are working for. We have to carry the burdens coming out of this job to deliver properly. This is what I have done in all my positions.

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One of the things that I needed to do was to make sure that, as the leader, I embraced the existing culture. At the same time, I explained to my colleagues my intention to motivate a new team and strengthen relationships because there needed to be more trust between the senior and junior staff. One of the things that I did was to create WhatsApp platforms for every section of the organization. I ensured I actively initiated conversations on the platforms and united the staff. More importantly, I communicated my vision - to have a collaborative approach toward work and to build relationships within the institution.

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[There is] this idea of flat structures in universities. Those can convince you that you're leading because we're already there, and perhaps you have influence. But very often, the power lies elsewhere. Consequently, what happens is, you're on one of these committees, you're consulted regularly, you're part of those cycles of legitimation, and they are making sure all the women are consulted, or the black woman are consulted, and getting input which can be can be quite exhausting.

There's been quite a lot of talk recently about decision fatigue and the cost of being involved in these and being the one consulted. That is something that one has to think about, but those flat structures also legitimize why you're not being credited for the input you're giving into those spaces. I think at a very basic and kind of banal level, there are also other ways in which you're put in your place.

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I always say that I'm one of the people with positive stories regarding stereotypes. I know about the kind of stereotypes that women typically face in different fields, especially in the legal profession. But one of the best decisions I made was the firm that I chose to work with, which had male leaders, but male leaders who were allies for pushing and empowering women. I probably didn't realize it at the time. But once I entered the firm, I realized that this was a firm that was interested in pushing women as far as they were willing to go. And so, in terms of stereotypes, the people who were in the driving seats in the firm made it such that I didn't face any stereotypes. And they opened doors; they carried me along.

Their credibility was such that when I appeared in court and said I was from this place, people were not likely to look at me as just a woman. But to believe this was a competent person because of where I was coming from and what we were noted for as a firm. So, I've had very positive experiences. Now, that said, I've encountered typical male chauvinism. I've met people who see me and are underwhelmed. But I like that because I always like to surprise people. I'd rather you thought less of me, and I exceeded your expectations than you put me on a pedestal, and I disappoint. So for stereotypes, I've had a very good experience. And even now, I don't encounter the usual barriers that one would face in rising in their career trajectory.



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One of the challenges I faced was that this is a predominantly male profession in terms of those respected. Generally, the challenge as a judicial officer is that this job requires a lot of studying, research and analysis. It is work that is diverse. And in its diversity, it demands a lot of workload and ethics. And for me being a young person and a female, there are several instances where I have seen people doubting my capabilities. I have taken that as a stepping stone because then I have taught myself to work hard, such that when they compare me with a male counterpart, they shouldn't find shortfalls or anything lagging on my part.

I have developed a systemic approach in terms of work. When it is time for work, I need to focus on the work. When it's time for family, I also need to make sure that I give my family the attention they need and deserve, specifically because I have young ones who need constant attention from me to help them with their homework and daily life. In terms of their leadership, the challenges have helped me to sharpen my leadership skills because it has helped me always to make sure that I identify where my services are needed most. And once I determine that I find a realistic immediate solution for the situation.

WOMEN IN LAW & LEADERSHIP TRAINING MANUAL

But for me, I just felt, if I'm here, I'm here to represent my organization, I'm here to push my agenda and objects I want to see, and whether these other leaders, mostly male leaders, accept my leadership or not, is not the question, but that respect would be earned. I need to speak up in spaces and not feel intimidated.

Eventually, they will get used to me; the reason why they are saying things that make me feel uncomfortable is so that I will leave the space for them as it is, but if I can face being awkward and a bit uncomfortable in some of those conversations, then it will only get better, and that's what has happened.

And, in the process, many more have even become friends, or allies as we call it, because they then realize that you are there to do the work. It has nothing to do with any egoistic ambition but that you are concerned about issues, know what to do, and are knowledgeable.

WOMEN IN LAW & LEADERSHIP TRAINING MANUAL

More broadly, working in this field of human rights, humanitarian action, advocacy, and a lot of the work I've been doing tends to be dominated by men. So seeing a woman, and a young woman at that, engaging in these issues with such authority, for some, it's a surprise, so they see you as a sort of special product that should be watched from afar. But once you come to the decision-making table, they want you to stay where you are and not interfere or rock the [boat] or share your opinion contrary to what most of them hold.

Then some feel threatened by the fact that you are working in this space they have been in for years and that the attention will shift from them to you. Then there are those who, due to their own beliefs and biases about women's roles in these spaces, can be condescending and arrogant and try to put you on the spot on issues they know might make you feel a bit uncomfortable. So, questioning whether you belong there with them. In the beginning, it was awkward.

WOMEN IN LAW & LEADERSHIP TRAINING MANUAL

As a visibly black woman, I find myself in many rooms where I am the only Black person and often the only Black woman. I'm always cognizant that first impressions matter and that there will be individuals in the room who may have a particular view of me or a specific stereotype about who I am or what I present. But to be honest with you, I try not to focus on that. I'm aware of it. But I try to focus on what I'm there to do and how to deliver excellently.

However, often, we need to remember that first impressions are crucial. So we have to show up properly, we have to show up professionally, and we have to show up in a way that ensures that we are our best and most confident selves. Now, the challenges that I face relate to underestimating my capacity. And I take that right on the chin, to be honest with you, I'm like, bring it on, let's go. With that in mind, I go in and make sure that I am fully briefed and able to address questions that are asked of me and that I'm prepared for every scenario. . . . And part of that involves a lot of discussion around impostor syndrome and things like that. I understand some of the psyches behind it. However, I don't see any limits to my abilities to do what I've been called to do. It's about using wisdom. It's also about recognizing that people will always think one thing or another about you, and then going into the room and doing what you do and then changing their minds in that process.

WOMEN IN LAW & LEADERSHIP TRAINING MANUAL

Universities, of course, thrive on insecure overachievers, of which there is an oversupply of men. We know this from surveys done in law schools that women consistently underrate their abilities and competencies while men very often overrate their competencies. And so women coming into these spaces, and certainly, that was my experience.... these spaces where things are quite opaque, and you don't know what the job is, so you end up working extremely hard. And that dovetails with people wanting you on every committee. Because you're hardworking, but also because you're a woman.

Therefore, you fill this dual role. For instance, I have a male colleague who is a fellow professor. Although I'm in the faculty leadership, I will be the one who was called on to come and change the paper in the photocopying machine, collect his courier parcels from the courier when they arrive, or even make tea. And these are collegial things.

It's tough to pin it down and say this is gendered and about putting you in your place without seeming uncollegial. But again, it's a type of layering as you start to look around and say, "Well hang on, why didn't you ask the guy next door to do this for you?" Or, you know, the other person who is standing at the tea table?



WOMEN IN LAW & LEADERSHIP TRAINING MANUAL

First, it's important to recognize that professional exclusion operates intersectionally. You may experience challenges as a woman, different kinds of challenges. As a first-generation woman in academia, which is what I was, you certainly experience very different challenges coming into the academic space as a Black woman, and the Black women of my generation, I think, bore the brunt of the transition that had to happen in [country] law schools.

And the layering on what becomes a thick accreted layer of presumptions of incompetence, or assumptions of corruptibility, even presumptions that you're a token, and so you're underqualified to be there. The disrespect that comes with that is experienced differently and to different degrees, depending on how you're more generally positioned within academia and the workplace. And this is a layering of professional disadvantage that doesn't apply to white men in particular and especially doesn't apply to privately educated white men at elite universities like mine.

WOMEN IN LAW & LEADERSHIP TRAINING MANUAL

The first challenge I faced in the institution where I worked was that I was an African woman. When I joined, there were very few women in leadership positions in the institution and no African women in management.... So the question was, who are your role models? And what are the obstacles you must overcome for people to see you as a leader? How I overcame it was doing my job.

Working maybe triple compared to the efforts my other [male] colleagues had to do, and I believe it worked because, at the end of the day, even the boss himself would recognize my work in my annual assessment, so there was nothing to change there. This continued on every level. To an extent, I've never been conscious that I'm a woman in the workplace. I'm just a human being doing my job, but others make you feel it a lot.

WOMEN IN LAW & LEADERSHIP TRAINING MANUAL

My biggest challenge was in relation to politics. It was beyond me. So at a certain point, you may not be appointed to a position, not because you do not qualify, but because of your region or nationality. These challenges are beyond the individual, when I faced them, I just accepted the outcome. I'm a realist; I know this will happen. And I keep moving and try to find my pathway somewhere else.

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