

Hannah: Hello everyone, my name is Hannah Guy. I'm part of the Kent Law Review Publicity Team and today I will be interviewing Lydia Hayes, the new head of Kent Law School and head of release for the Kent Law Journal.

Hannah: Good afternoon Lydia. Congratulations on your recent appointment as head of law school, I'd love to ask how you feel about this change and is there any reflections on your first year you'd like us to know about.

Lydia: It's certainly been busy. I became head of law school on the first of August last year [2020]. It has been exhausting and exciting leading the law school through a critical time during the pandemic, and it's also been a privilege working with the staff and students.

Hannah: I'm glad you think so, considering how difficult the pandemic was for students. I understand you moved from Cardiff, and your accomplishments were widely known. I was curious to know what prompted this move.

Lydia: Kent is a very special place for me as a feminist researcher because there are so many other feminist researchers here. Two really incredible labour lawyers here stood out to me, professor Emily Grabber and Diamond Ashiabor [sic]. I really wanted to work with them and work with other colleagues. I really did love Cardiff, but the idea of coming to Kent appealed to me so as to work with other colleagues in my field of research.

Hannah: I'm familiar with your work and understand you focus on gender based violence. I want to know what pushed you towards this topic in particular.

Lydia: I suppose it would be unusual to think of me as a labour lawyer and I have an interest in gender based violence. The route to that would be the work I have done in the care sector. My interest came from listening to the care workers who worked in this sector, and understanding the various forms that gender based violence that exist, such as physical, emotional, and even economical.

A great example is the 'me-too' movement. One of the things that came out of this movement globally is pressure on international labour organisations, the special part of the UN which deals with employment around the world. There was pressure to produce a convention to address the violence in work, and to reduce this gender-based violence. To look at it from a labour law perspective was important for me.

Hannah: Thank you for addressing issues men face as well. I notice you have a lot of research in Australia – what drove you to pick Australia?

Lydia: That's because of a wonderful woman named professor Sarah Charlesworth, who works at RMIT in Australia. She's a lawyer at a business school whose research journey was so similar to mine, starting with equal pay and the legal framework surrounding it. We unfortunately have not made as much progress as we should have around this topic. Me and Sarah had a great connection in terms of benefiting and learning from each other and working with one another in a comparative way.

One thing that really interests me about Australia is the federal system. Working as an academic in Wales had given me a

really exciting insight in the devolution of the UK and Wales is really one of the youngest legislatures in Europe.

There were really relevant comparisons between the powers that existed in Wales and the powers that existed in Australia. For example, if we are looking for issues that concern care workers, which is where my research has focused on for the past 10 years, we have a situation where the industry where care workers work is regulated by law in a devolved way. As the industry has become marketized, there is serious tension between people with disabilities and their rights. Choices are limited because there is so little money in the system, so care workers are often engaged in unpaid labour. There needs to be some kind of creative thinking about different ways that different law affects different places.

Hannah: I'm really happy you guys reached out to each other and inspired each other. There is clearly an incredible connection. I'd like to talk about the journal now. Kent Law Review is launching soon and I want to know why you support this development.

Lydia: It's an absolutely fantastic thing. One of the things I've learnt this year is how resilient and innovative our students are and this journal provides a space where students can learn how to put the journal together and all the action behind it. It also means that you as a student are part of a wonderful thing we do as academics which is producing and sharing knowledge. No matter how different we are, it puts us in a place of privilege where we can share this knowledge.

Hannah: It's been an honour with me to work with this incredible team. Everyone is so motivated and it's so

interesting to work with people who all have different points of views. How do you feel now that we're ready to publish the first issue?

Lydia: I want the students who created this journal to feel proud of what they have achieved and have a sense of ownership over it. We have academics working with you and their role is very much to educate you and give you insight. Kent Law School educates its students so its alumna go out in the world and take this critical approach to law everywhere they go.

The pandemic has changed the world. You are launching this issue in circumstances that we never expected 18 months ago.

Hannah: I appreciate Kent Law School's critical approach as a student here and feel privileged to be part of the experience. I want to know what incites you to write after so many years of researching. It must have been an incredible journey and daunting.

Lydia: What helps me is that I know that it is a position of enormous privilege for me to be able to write my thoughts and make them accessible to other people. I am the first in my family to go to university. I am particularly interested in the impact of law on low wage and marginalised workers. That has been part of my approach that I have taken for my research in labour law. I also quite enjoy the creative parts of it – so I think perhaps for people outside of the law discipline, they may have a distorted view of what it means to be a legal researcher, and I hope this changes that notion.

Hannah: I love your passion. You fight so hard for something other people turn a blind eye to, and as a woman I do admire you. If you had any advice for aspiring writers, what would it be?

Lydia: I think that it's very important to pick things you are passionate about and commemorate it from an evidence-based perspective. Get started with it – but manage your expectations of perfectionism. Writing should be a liberating experience. Find work where you not only engage with the message, but where you love everything about the way it's written.

Who are you writing for? Ask yourself that. Find your audience and work off of that.

Hannah: I totally agree. I find it's very empowering when you take pen to paper but sometimes there are limitations. Everyone will have to deal with rejection, especially in a competitive market like law. I wanted to know if you ever dealt with rejection and how you dealt with it.

Lydia: It happens to everybody. Rejection is a part of life. Part of academic life to be specific. It's important to know it's not personal, although it feels like it. I'm passionate about my work. When it comes back with criticism, it hurts, but learn to pick yourself up and dust yourself off. The most important thing to know is that it's never personal.

We operate in the social sciences in law and it's fundamental to the production of scientific that work is rejected and peer reviewed. People are wrong. If it can't be wrong, then it's not part of scientific knowledge. If we believe in social scientific

matters, we need to accept rejection so we can improve what we produce.

Hannah: I feel like law students especially are so hard on themselves. But you can't grow unless you receive some constructive criticism.

Lydia: It's not just for students. It's part of being human. We're all students – it happens to everybody.

I think this is the biggest distinction between higher education and school. In school there's a right or wrong answer, but in university there is different arguments, particularly in a critical law school like Kent. There is no position where one can say I am objectively correct. There is no right answer.

Amber: Thank you Lydia for your time. I'm grateful to have someone like you leading our critical law school.