

Issue. 15

# The InHouse

March 2020



IWD  
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## International Women's Day 2020

campaign theme is

**#EachforEqual.**

An equal world is an enabled world. Individually, we're all responsible for our own thoughts and actions - all day, every day.

We can actively choose to challenge stereotypes, fight bias, broaden perceptions, improve situations and celebrate women's achievements.

Collectively, each one of us can help create a gender equal world.

Let's all be **#EachforEqual.**

This month's *The InHouse* issue celebrates IWD 2020 and discovers the stories of all the women who are breaking barriers with their courage and hard work.

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# MEL

## Nirmala

*Executive Director SCCA Limited*

Drama, as I like to describe challenges on a lighter note, if taken as bite size canapes, sauced and spiced, can be quite delectable. These are life lessons and I love every bit of them. We know of those who brood over their days and then you have Mel (me), who tries to find solace in simply living a good day each day. I get through my days by keeping myself busy with work and social projects, by laughing at most situations and sometimes “gossiping” with my girlfriends – my energy source!

In my younger days, I'd have known to be feisty or fierce. In school, I was an above average student but not elite. I do pride in being a top marathon athlete, all school champ debater and being part of all sorts of social clubs. Here is where I grew, found my likes, dislikes and strength. I couldn't quite tolerate unkindness and situations that were unacceptable, so sometimes, I got (and still do) into trouble for being too earnest. I was made to face the wall when I was 7 for having to stand up to a bully. I soon learnt, you can be a warrior of many degrees if you try to calm your weaknesses and strengths.

I have also learnt some battles aren't worth it and some are worth every bit. My family, my job and my happiness, all of which I love, takes precedence over most things. This I'm guessing is the likes of most women today. To make decisions over one or the other can be tough, and women especially fall into guilt over judgments made by themselves.

“  
Be the change you want  
to see in the world.  
-Mahatma Gandhi  
”

I've done quite a bit of advocacy on change and truly believe in this. I can get my head wrapped around certain topics for days and vanish into research and fact findings which makes my head space incredibly busy - but I do suffer from "short term excitement" so most projects gets my attention for nothing more than 3 weeks.

As I got older, it became apparent to me, you just got to have a great attitude with just about everything. Besides, why fuss over first world needs? So here are my daily inspirations, they mean a lot to me and they have given me the “mmmt” that Horlicks promised in the 80s!

- Be kind to even those who least deserve them. This is truly hard, but practice is all you can do to perfect kindness.
- Worries are unnecessary. They bring nothing but a new set of wrinkles. So instead, learn to problem solve. Most of us have a natural innate for this.
- Friends - Do have a variety of them. Don't be influenced or try to influence, simply allow everyone to be who they are.
- My default attitude is to be HAPPY. Get your default today.
- Disengage. Pick your battles for another day. I learnt a great deal by hanging out with lawyers. *#positiveprocrastination*

# TRICIA Feng



Head of Legal S.E.A, Schrodgers

### **What is the one mistake you witness women leaders making more frequently than others?**

I think that women leaders tend to treat vulnerability like a weakness and equate success to perfection. If we have the courage to be vulnerable, authentic and "bring our whole selves to work", I truly believe that we will be able to build real and strong bonds with our teams.

### **What is the biggest challenge faced by women leaders today?**

Pay Equality and having to prove themselves first (often many times) before being considered for a leadership role, whereby men are often trusted on the onset (maybe because men tend to promote themselves more aggressively)

# TINA Frese



Associate Legal Counsel, IHS Markit

# DEMETRA Polycarpou



Vice President, Head of Legal APAC  
JUUL Labs

### **What's your core value and how do you communicate your core values to others?**

My core values have been consistent throughout my career which has made my decision making a lot easier because I can always refer back and be guided down a consistent path. I am guided by the principles of honesty, fairness, integrity and also nurturing. I want people who work with me to feel like they have grown and progressed through the experience. I share this openly with my team so they can hold me to account!

### **What natural capabilities do you think as a woman gave you a certain competitive advantage over men at work?**

Too many to list as women are such intelligent creatures! :) The natural ability to empathize with people, handle situations with emotional intelligence, which allows women to be both soft and assertive in different situations, where required. The ability to be efficient and multi-task as we have so little time and so many things to accomplish, whether at home or at work.

# JOCELINE Ng



Head of Legal, Mizuho Securities SG

## DESSI Silassie



APAC General Counsel &  
Global Head of IP legal, IHS Markit

### **What is the one advice you can give millennial females trying to break glass ceilings?**

Know yourself deeply and pursue your purpose with sustained conviction unbent by others judging or projecting fears onto you. But know when to seek real wisdom and grace from those around you and grow from that place.

### **Women tend to shy from power to lead and facing conflicts in the workplace. How were you able to manage this for yourself?**

It's all in the mind. Women shy from power to lead and conflicts in the workplace due to negative thoughts that proliferate their minds. To overcome this challenge, it is fundamental to master the art of converting negative thoughts to more positive thoughts.

## EVYONNE Kan



Assistant General Counsel, AIG

## MEKHLA Basu



Director and Corporate Counsel APAC,  
Splunk

### **What kind of strategy was successful when navigating different power structure e.g: Organizational, Male dominated, Subconscious Biases, Start-ups or any others?**

Patience, acceptance, empathy and working on my expertise and that of my team. Although establishing credibility early on goes a long way, but it is still sometimes incapable of conquering sub-conscious biases or even passive aggressiveness. More or less, every woman in a leadership position would have faced some form of it, especially in our part of the world with traditional, patriarchy culture. My strategy is simple- to be a good listener and enabler. Once the intent is established, in my experience, biases can be over-come.

### **What will be the biggest challenge for the generation of women behind you?**

The biggest challenge for women is learning how to communicate upwards and communicate their goals, career path, expectations and facilitate that conversation with their managers.

## CHRISTINA McNamara



Director IHS Markit

ROSE Kong



Head of Legal RGE Pte Ltd

**What advice would you give your younger self?**

Find your passion and your calling. If your passion becomes your career – that is a big bonus but remember that you are more than what you do for a living! Whatever your age or season in life, life has always something to offer you! So follow your passion! Because as the great Yves Saint Laurent said....“ The most beautiful cosmetic that you can have is Passion.”

**What natural capabilities do you think as a woman gave you a certain competitive advantage over men at work?**

Ironically, its being detailed that allows my team to feel that they have a leader who is hands-on and this creates a positive work environment and values that motivates the team.

LILIAN Goh



Regional Director, Epiq

VERONICA Lai



Chief Corporate Officer, StarHub Ltd

**What's your core value and how do you communicate your core values to others?**

Integrity - doing the right thing, even if nobody is going to know whether you did it or not. This guiding principle will lead one to do things with the heart in the right place. This is especially important for us in the Legal profession.

**What is the biggest challenge faced by women leaders today?**

I think there's still "double standards" which are generally unspoken, when women are in higher roles than their male counterparts. Most women leaders have to work a lot harder just to be regarded as "equal". Especially now that the world is heading into digital age, where human contribution can be more easily be replaced by technology, women may have to strive harder to sustain in a highly competitive corporate environment with men.

REBECCA Andersen



Head of Legal  
HENGYI Industries International PTE LTD

## SCCA Book Review

# BECOMING

by Michelle Obama

Source: [vox.com/culture](http://vox.com/culture)

A successful memoir from a former first lady must walk a fine line.

It must create a sense of intimacy with readers, by letting them into the presidential marriage and revealing a few secrets, but it must also preserve a certain distance, to keep the presidential family private and inspirational. It must spend enough time on politics to help build a narrative around the president's legacy, but not so much time that people feel threatened — antiquated though that feeling might be — by the idea that the first lady might have political aspirations of her own.

### **Michelle Obama describes her decision to prioritize her own ambition as an act of self-preservation.**

Becoming, the new memoir from Michelle Obama, walks the First Lady Tightrope with Obama's characteristic aplomb. It is not a daring book; it is for the most part a safe and anodyne political memoir that does not aspire to any more ambitious territory.

At its most compelling, the book delves wholeheartedly into Obama's ambivalence about her status as a political wife. Even if *Becoming* is not always interesting, it is much more interesting than it needed to be to qualify as a successful first lady memoir. And as an example of how to walk the tightrope — how to seem charming but not like an intellectual lightweight; how to get things done without seeming threatening; how to do all of the impossible things we demand of women in general, of first ladies in particular, and of the first black first lady as an absolute — *Becoming* is a straight-up master class.

Read your copy [here!](#)

Portrait by: Amy Sherald



# EQUALITY IS TAKING TOO LONG

Source: [lawgazette.co.uk](http://lawgazette.co.uk)

by Dana Denis-Smith (Founder of First 100 Years Project)

**W**omen working in the law remain highly skeptical about the pace of change in the legal profession, with only 2% believing there is true equality for women and 80% predicting it will take at least 20 years to achieve. Dana Denis-Smith Significant numbers are still experiencing harassment in the workplace and are finding their workplaces are failing to accommodate the realities of family life.

Many organisations in the legal world are succeeding in creating an acceptable working environment, in which discrimination and harassment are not tolerated and family friendly working patterns are at least a possibility. Many of the firms achieving positive outcomes for women had more women in management positions.

## **First 100 Years (Tell your Story)**

Dana Denis-Smith talks about the women in legal industry in the [First 100 Years](#) project and aims to work towards seeing all parts of the legal profession coming together to work on this diversity problem.

We need the legal regulators along with the Bar Council, Law Society and Chartered Institute of Legal Executives working together to come up with solutions that tackle it head on. We need to see real action so that achieving equality doesn't take another 100 years. Read more [here](#).

## **How Men Can Become Better Allies to Women?**

Women's conferences and employee resource groups (ERGs) are increasingly inviting men to attend. By creating events aimed at men, they hope to include men in discussions around gender equity in the workplace, and make organizational diversity efforts more successful. Here are some with tangible recommendations best practices for men who want to be better collaborators with women:

- First, just listen!
- Respect the space
- Remember, it's not about you
- Get comfortable being uncomfortable
- Engage in supportive partnerships with women
- Remember the two parts to allyship

Use your experience in women's events and initiatives to learn how you can best become a public ally for social justice around gender. When the time comes, this may require you to upset the status quo. Read more [here](#).



## **BECOMING BETTER ALLIES**

Source: [hbr.org](http://hbr.org)

**#EachforEqual**