

# Your unique experiences can help you stand out

The Bar Council's award-winning 'I am the Bar' campaign was launched in the summer of 2018 and endeavours to highlight the experiences and challenges of those who have succeeded at the Bar from non-traditional backgrounds. The project is used as a way to highlight the talent present in the legal field.

Our strategy commits the Government Legal Department (GLD) and Government Legal Profession (GLP) to employing and supporting a diverse workforce by attracting, growing and retaining diverse talent. We have been speaking with a few of our new lawyers, part of the annual September intake of legal trainees.

Mass Ndow-Njie has been vocal about the challenges he has faced on his journey to the Bar and in doing so has gained a significant online following. Mass is among the first generation in his family to go to university and recently wrote a guest blog for the [Bar Council](#), documenting his journey to becoming a barrister and his legal experience so far.

Having recently embarked on pupillage with GLD, Mass is enjoying the opportunity to learn from lawyers from diverse and non-traditional backgrounds. The opportunity to work with barristers from diverse backgrounds is important, as Mass has previously struggled with the lack of representation at the Bar. Mass was worried he would "need to change myself in order to 'fit in' so that I would stand a chance of making it." In 2018 13% of barristers identified as BAME – a vast improvement on recent years, but there is still a considerable way to go to achieve proper representation. He is a member of The Law Collective and a committee member of Urban Lawyers, organisations that endeavour to make law more accessible to marginalised groups in society.

Mass' journey to the Bar is a story of breaking boundaries and harnessing the 'unique' experiences that distinguished him from other students: students whom he notes may have "gone to Oxbridge... or completed multiple mini-pupillages." The misconception that these traditional routes are the defining experiences that chambers look for when awarding pupillage and tenancy prevents some very capable young people from embarking on a legal career. Indeed, Mass notes that he believed that "not getting into Oxbridge would be fatal to my aspirations." However, his experiences from working as a football coach at a Premier League club and starting his own company distinguished him and provided him with what he believes was his "biggest strength in obtaining pupillage."

GLD has made massive strides towards becoming an inclusive and diverse working environment. Mass' journey highlights that legal aptitude is present in all corners of society and that chambers are not always looking for the 'traditional' candidate, just the candidate that can stand out from the crowd. The increasing outreach of organisations such as Urban Lawyers

highlights that the traditional image of a lawyer is actively being challenged and this can only lead to positive change.