

Saleem Sheikh: Representing community success

Senior Partner of GSC Solicitors

Reshma Trilochun

When one thinks or hears about the arrivals of the ethnic minorities in Britain in the 20th century, hardship, hard work and mostly success come to mind. This is exactly what comes to mind when we speak of **Saleem Sheikh**, a successful solicitor, specialising in international and offshore tax, arbitration and dispute resolution, who went on to be appointed as the Senior Partner at the firm where he had originally trained.

The firm was originally named Green David Conway & Co. when Saleem joined the practice in 1981, and became a Partner in 1985. After the retirement of one of the firm's founders, the practice became known as Green Sheikh & Co., which subsequently became GSC Solicitors LLP.

Saleem was born in Nairobi, Kenya and moved to the UK in 1967, at the age of 8. He describes hating living in London initially and found it hard to adjust with the lifestyle amidst the name calling and blatant racism he had experienced while growing up. He recalls, "Those were the day of **Enoch Powell**... There was a significant amount of discrimination. I remember my father couldn't get what was called a white-collar job. He could only get blue-collar jobs and he was a senior civil servant in East Africa in the Ministry of Economic Affairs. When we came here, I saw my father being discriminated against. It was the days of skinheads and 'Paki-bashing'. Lots of discrimination at school; I felt it, although I spoke English and I had grown up with Europeans in Africa. Nevertheless, it was a difficult time."

Adjusting and migrating to another country was difficult for Saleem. However, his parents were accustomed to this, as they had previously had to leave India for Pakistan during the partition period and then from Pakistan to East Africa.

Saleem graduated from the London School of Economics in 1980, undertook his professional degree from the College of Law, and qualified as a solicitor in 1983.

His first love was to become a pilot. However, due to the bereavement of his uncle, who was a pilot and had died in a plane crash, Saleem's father advised him against choosing this as a profession. He eventually chose his second love, which was law.

Saleem had influences within the family; there were family members who were in the law profession which ultimately drew to him as well. He said, "I had some lawyers in the family; historically, uncles. So, I had seen lawyers in the family. One of my uncles was an eminent businessman who would always say how important it was to have a lawyer as part of your team..."

He continued, "Second thing is that I liked the concept of a courtroom. I used to watch a programme called, Perry Mason. I was quite good at public speaking, quite argumentative, some of my siblings would say. And I also liked people, I like dealing with people and I thought I was always the sort of guy who would like helping people out and I was reasonably good at it."

Along with being a people's person, Saleem is fluent in several languages, including Urdu, Punjabi, Kiswahili, Kachhi, Hindi



Saleem Sheikh

and Gujarati. His language skills have helped him immensely in communicating with people from ethnic backgrounds.

A self-professed family man, he loves travelling, exploring art, music and cars, as well as spending time with his family in his spare time, among many things. Saleem's most cherished achievement is his three children, and also considers it to be a great achievement to be someone who is reliable and trusted.

Saleem has also been recognised in the City-Wealth Leaders List as being a prominent figure advising on wealth management. He has also been associated with many charities, such as Children in Need and Teenage Cancer Trust. He is also involved in Cancer Research for personal and sentimental reasons; his mother, brother and sister have passed away after battling cancer.

He is also very encouraging to the youth who intend to study law and join the profession in the future. However, he does warn them that they will need to be focussed to achieve great heights. "It's a tough profession, so don't go into it unless you are prepared. So be ready for hard work, otherwise there's a lot of competition and you'll find it hard to succeed."