

He's a legal powerhouse in two hemispheres

Frank Walwyn, Law'93, has found a niche in Canada and his native Caribbean

BY GEORGIE BINKS

When St. Clair and Violet Walwyn moved their family to Toronto from St. Kitts in 1974, they set young son Frank on a fascinating path. Unable to give their seven children a post-secondary education on a small island with no university, they gave up an upper middle-class lifestyle and experienced the challenges of a tremendous drop in their standard of living. With the tenacity his parents inspired, Frank went on to achieve two degrees and nine calls to the bar – in Canada, his homeland and seven other Caribbean countries.

Early in his career, Walwyn discovered that Canadian legal experience could be a great asset when taking on laws in developing countries. "To be able to apply Canadian case experiences to legal problems not already resolved in emerging countries is rewarding."

Walwyn, a partner at WeirFoulds LLP in Toronto, has repeatedly been named a top Corporate and Commercial Litigation lawyer in Best Lawyers in Canada lists. One of his most fulfilling cases here was as co-counsel for several Roman Catholic hospitals in

Ontario in the late 1990s when Premier Mike Harris ordered them closed and their services taken over by community hospitals. Litigating those cases, Walwyn says, "was not only thought-provoking, but also had an impact that continues on day-to-day services for Ontarians in general."

His most satisfying Caribbean case to date involved acting for two Canadians who invested in a joint venture with a local developer for a substantial condominium project. The developer refused to transfer the completed property. After 14 trial days and numerous appeals, including a leave application to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, his clients were successful. "What really drove the feeling of satisfaction was getting justice for fellow Canadians relying on me after being wronged in a distant jurisdiction."

That's just one of many complicated cases Walwyn has handled in the Caribbean – cases that wind up there because of the parties' corporate structures. He says they offer him the opportunity to plead and argue cases with complex legal issues arising out of disputes in many different jurisdictions.

"I often must resort to legal first principles to resolve issues because particular Caribbean countries may not have comprehensive legislation to address many eventualities arising in corporate and commercial relationships. Consequently, I often argue novel issues that can, and do, create law. That's great fun."

Coincidentally, it was a Queen's Law professor he calls a "career influencer" who laid the groundwork for international finance in these jurisdictions. "My tax law professor, Alex Easson, would have advised the governments of many of these smaller countries I'm active in on crafting tax policy and drafting legislation."

The culture at Queen's Law, which he says celebrated racial, regional and geographic diversity, also influenced his career choice. "The school really did seek to bring in professors to teach us about emerging countries and economies and how they had applied their Canadian know-how to international problems."


Through all his career achievements as partner at WeirFoulds, advisor on the Queen's Law Dean's Council, and past director of The Advocates' Society, Frank Walwyn has never forgotten his roots. A past-president of the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers, his outstanding contributions to community service have earned him the Law Society of Upper Canada's Lincoln Alexander Award, a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, and most recently the Planet Africa Professional Excellence Award for the profound difference he's made in the lives of people of African heritage. That commitment to giving back originated with his parents.

Overall, it's opening himself to the best of both worlds that has made Frank Walwyn the successful and influential person he is today.

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Frank Walwyn is licensed to practise in 8 Caribbean countries: ■



A man with a shaved head and glasses, wearing a dark suit, a light blue striped shirt, and a purple tie, stands on a rooftop. He is looking directly at the camera. The background shows a city skyline with various skyscrapers under a clear sky. The lighting suggests it might be late afternoon or early morning.

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