

EIP



Why I'm proud to be a black woman new to IP

As I reflect on my journey a few weeks into my training contract at EIP, I can say that I am extremely proud to be a black woman new to Intellectual Property (IP).

One of the things I am most proud of is my education. Looking back at my academic journey, I would say I was very disciplined, which is what led me to obtain a Bachelors of Science, Bachelors of Law, and a Masters of Law. The latter two degrees were completed in the UK nearly five thousand miles from my home in Vancouver, Canada.

Moving to another continent and leaving all my friends and family to follow my dreams has been one of my greatest challenges to date. Just five years ago, most of my good friends lived a few miles away from me. Now they're about a nine-hour flight away. As difficult as this transition has been, I knew of the opportunities available in London to work in the IP sector, and I am so happy I made the decision to move here.

There were a few barriers that I encountered on my journey into the IP sector. The institutions I attended had limited opportunities to further my knowledge in IP law. My specific route into law only allowed for me to complete a couple IP modules. Even further, it was difficult to find work experience in the IP field and at the time I felt my inexperience would be my greatest disadvantage.

Another barrier was that I did not see many people who looked like me in the IP sector. For a moment, this reality caused a bit of doubt in my mind. I wondered if the IP sector was where I belonged and if I would fit in. This was right around the time I created a LinkedIn profile, to see if I could network with other women of colour currently in or aspiring to work in IP. LinkedIn served to be a great resource for me. I was able to relate to women who were in similar positions to me.

Seeing other women of colour in the IP sector was important for me, helped me regain

my confidence and got me excited about working in the IP sector. As a black woman new to IP, I only hope that I can give the same encouragement and support to other women who are hesitant to joining this field. As LinkedIn was such a great tool for me, I hope to use it in the future to host meetings and events to encourage and discuss diversity in the IP sector.

What sparked my interest in EIP is that the firm has a modern and progressive culture. Unlike the nature of the legal field, the firm is not wedded to upholding any ancient customs or traditions. Rather, EIP is at the forefront of making IP a more diverse industry. Even early on in my career with EIP, I have witnessed the diversity at the firm, and I am confident that the firm will continue to value diversity and inclusion.

Having completed both a science and law degree, I can appreciate that IP is a niche and dynamic field. As a much more technical area of law, IP is far different from the other legal courses I completed. This is precisely what drew me in, as I enjoyed learning about innovations and understanding certain facets or methods of its expression. What further excites me is that IP intersects across a range of sectors, including digital, energy, life sciences and telecommunications.

I hope that over the next few years, the IP industry becomes more diverse and inclusive than it ever has been. One day I aspire to see an industry featuring more women and ethnic minorities in executive positions, myself included.

Written by Hebah Berhan, Trainee Solicitor at EIP.

At EIP, we are committed to diversity and inclusion. We believe in equal opportunity in all areas and we are proud that diversity is a core part of our culture.