



Power of Attorney  
A Rutgers Law School Podcast  
Host: Kim Mutcherson, Co-Dean, Rutgers Law School

Interview with Tara Pellicori, RLAW'08  
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**Kim Mutcherson:** Hi! My name is Kim Mutcherson. I am one of the two Deans of Rutgers Law School located at the Camden location. And I am super excited to be here with one of our amazing alum, Tara Pellicori. And we're going to have a conversation about her career; about her time at Rutgers Law School; and anything else we feel like talking about.

**Tara Pellicori:** Well I'm very excited to be here. Thanks for having me!

**KM:** Of course! So I wanted to sort of start at the beginning if I could, which is, when did you decide you wanted to be a lawyer?

**TP:** Yeah, you know, I'm sure the answer to that question is different for everyone. But for me, it was when I was really little, long before I ever knew what it meant. I was one of those kindergarteners who filled it out on my form.

**KM:** *(chuckles)*

**TP:** I think that, in my early years, it meant that anyone who fought for underdogs. I had a very strong sense of, of that, of fighting for the people who couldn't fight for themselves. Um, that really interested me. That motivated me. Um, and I love that; giving a voice to people who didn't have a voice to speak. I just thought it was very noble, and it was consistent with the core values with how I was raised. Um, and ironically, I never wavered from the desire to become a lawyer.

**KM:** Ok.

**TP:** And while I ended up in the field of transactional law, like we'll talk about, I mean the commitment to pro bono work and to helping those has still been a huge part of my practice and my motivation. And yeah, I love it. I'm glad I did it.

**KM:** Excellent! So there are obviously a ton of law schools to choose from in the U.S., and you ended up at Rutgers Law. But at the time we were still separate law schools so you graduated from Rutgers Law – Camden at the time. How did you end up at Rutgers?

**TP:** I am born and raised in Camden County. I married my high school boyfriend. Uh, we live a few miles from each of our parents and our grandparents and our siblings.

**KM:** That's great.

**TP:** So I am a local through and through. *(chuckles)*

**KM:** Got it. *(chuckles)*

**TP:** That said, I actually did my first year of law school down in Miami.

**KM:** Interesting.

**TP:** I did and um, my grandmother got sick in my 2L year. I transferred. I came home.

**KM:** Ok.

**TP:** And you know, Rutgers has just always been a staple and an institution. And, you know, once I knew I was going to move back home, I didn't even apply to anywhere else in the area. I applied to Rutgers. That's where I wanted to go and continue my education.

**KM:** Great! So then you got to have that sort of experience of 1L year at one institution and moving to a second institution. And I'm not going to ask you where you were in law school before, but I am sort of curious to talk about what that transition was like coming in as a transfer student. It's a very different experience than it is coming in as a 1L.

**TP:** Yeah well I was very fortunate from a transfer perspective, socially. So, socially I was very lucky because I had some childhood friends. Josh Locke was one of my classmates who lived across the street from me my whole life. We grew up together and he was already here. He had done his 1L year here too.

**KM:** Oh. Ok.

**TP:** It was great because he was very generous with his friends (*chuckles*) and allowed them to become mine.

**KM:** (*chuckles*) Great!

**TP:** And these are people that I am still exceedingly close with and have, I mean, these are people who have been to my children's baptisms and at my wedding. And, uh, I was on the phone with one of them before I came here. So I was very lucky from a social transfer perspective. Because that can be hard, right?

**KM:** Absolutely.

**TP:** When your school years have already started and you've formed your bonds. So in that way, I was very lucky.

Academically, it was a little trickier because while I transferred from my previous university with full credits, my GPA didn't transfer. So I actually had full credits but a 0.0 GPA the first semester of my 2L year.

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** That makes O.C.I. really difficult.

**KM:** Oh right!

**TP:** Right?

**KM:** So for folks who are listing to this who are not law school folks, tell them what O.C.I is.

**TP:** Yeah, so it's basically the process pursuant to which the school tries to assist student with finding employment. And a lot of these firms, that are looking to recruit through this process, have minimum GPA requirements.

**KM:** Of course.

**TP:** So now I have this career I've spent my whole life building, because as I said since I knew I wanted to be a lawyer for ever. I think I was in like middle school when I started doing things like interning for, at the time, Congressman Andrews, Senator Adler, you know, Mary Previte, the Green Law. I was doing those internships since I was in middle school. So I had done all these – the right - tried to do the right things to build the right resume.

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** And now I'm applying for jobs and everyone's like, "You don't meet the minimum GPA." (*chuckles*) And I'm saying to them, 'I don't actually have a zero.'

**KM:** Right. Right.

**TP:** And I couldn't find a job. So they said to me, "Get your first semester's grades and apply second semester." So I did that and I did well. And they said second semester when I came back with my grades, "Thank you so much but we're done the process."

**KM:** Oh wow.

**TP:** So I was actually really fortunate because one of my Adjunct Professors at the time, Matt Adler who was teaching an international business class, had no idea I was going through any of this. And he called me up after class some way into the semester and said, "You have an instinct for this. Where are you working this summer?" And I kind of told him about my situation and he went to bat for me. He was an incredible advocate. He, at the time, was a partner at the firm Pepper Hamilton and he set up an interview for me and I went through the interview process and got a summer internship with them, which at the end of my 2L year led to a job offer.

**KM:** That's fantastic.

**TP:** Yep.

**KM:** That's a really good story.

**TP:** Yes, I'm very grateful to him!

*(Both laugh)*

**KM:** So that was a good launch. Because it could have been sort of disastrous and ended up sort of ... it's one of those things where you kind of feel like, 'and then things went the way that they were supposed to'.

**TP:** Yeah because you feel a little helpless through a portion of it right?

**KM:** Yeah

**TP:** So um it was a little bit of luck there.

**KM:** Absolutely. So talk a little bit about, if you would, how would you describe Rutgers Law School as an institution?

**TP:** Yeah. It's something that I've always been very proud to be a part of nationally, but especially in our area I've always has just so much pride when I've said it. I think that they are truly a community, truly a family. I think the world of our professors. I mean, I received a top-of-the line education here that I can vouch for because I went out into the real world and put it to use.

**KM:** Very good.

**TP:** Right? Um, and I was able to compare what I knew going in and the experiences I had going in to my colleagues, and I always felt like I had been very well prepared. I will also say, something I never expected and I probably don't know that I even appreciated as much as I should have until a few years after I was gone, was the advocacy of our professors and administration. I had professors that I knew I had good relationships with when I was here; who I adored. Who I kept in touch with you know, on Christmas or you know a holiday or over the summer. Who reached out years after I graduated at times just to check in on me; to email me.

Professor Jill Friedman is one of those professors for me who I adored when I was here but time and time again she would come out of nowhere and say, "I want you to consider this position in some way", you know "There's an award I think that you could win". And I am so grateful for her because I don't know, especial when you're a young graduate, I don't know that you see yourself in that way ...

**KM:** Right. Mmm Hmm. Absolutely.

**TP:** ... you're capable of those things. And, I mean, you know it's interesting. You and I have talked about this before. When you originally asked me to teach, because I also teach as an Adjunct Professor now at Rutgers. I started in 2016 with Corporate Lawyering and uh over the past year ...

**KM:** It's hugely popular.

**TP:** Aww. Thank you! I actually had a call with one of my students today, one of my old students today. So I'm still living that spirit of people who shared their time with me. But now I run the Entrepreneurship Clinic. And when you originally came to me and we talked about the possibility of me teaching, we were outside on the quad sitting at a table, and I remember saying to you, "I don't think I'm ready yet."

**KM:** Yeah.

**TP:** "I can't do this yet. I don't have enough experience yet!" You, at the time, had shared some pretty powerful words and had motivated me and gave me a confidence in myself that I really didn't have to teach at the time so I'm very grateful for you for that talk as well.

**KM:** Oh that's awesome! Good! I'm glad to hear that.

**TP:** Yeah.

**KM:** And that's actually another example of, you know, folks sort of reaching out to you. Because the reason why I came to you was because Jill came to me and said, "Here's this fantastic person. She's one of our alums and we would love to have her in the building."

So that - I want to segue a little bit. I want to go back to eventually talk about the Entrepreneurship Clinic, which is really exciting for us. But I also want to talk a little bit about what you said about sort of not having the confidence and not sort of feeling like you know "I can do this". And I think that that's - a lot of people have that sort of sense of 'I'm not quite good enough yet' or 'I might get there. Maybe I won't get there but I'm certainly not quite good enough yet'. And I think it's particularly a problem often for women.

**TP:** Yes. I agree.

**KM:** And that women really discount their experience; they discount their knowledge; they discount their power all the time. And it's obviously a huge issue in our profession and we see that. And part of how we see that is there's been a while where we've had about 50 percent of law students are women. But when you go to the kind of law firms where you worked, there aren't a ton of women. There are women who are Associates, but once you get up to the Partner level those women disappear. So I'd love to talk a little bit about one, your experience as a woman in law school, but then I think even more critically, how did you transition from being a woman in law school to being a woman at a really big law firm where all the power, most of the power, really sat with men.

**TP:** That's such a great question. You know what's interesting about the answer to that question? I think I did it ignorantly in the beginning because I felt no disparity between myself and my male colleagues during law school.

**KM:** Great.

**TP:** Zero. I mean, when I was here we were all equal. We were all a class. We all supported each other. My

professors treated us all equally. And, I don't mean to sound naïve but I think being transparent is the best way to have these conversations so, you know, at the risk of sounding vulnerable when I say this, I kind of thought like, 'my grandma did this already.' You know? Things are better. You know, it's great. There's so much more equality now.

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** We've fought these battles previously and look how much progress we made. So – and I really went into my first year or two, despite some obstacles from time to time, with the same mentality and it wasn't until the first glass ceiling hit that you kind of took a step back and said, "Oh I didn't see that there."

**KM:** Right.

*(Both chuckle)*

**TP:** Right. So, I mean, the first time I hit it and, you know, I broke through it. But the first time I hit it, I was like "What is that?" I didn't expect it to be there. I didn't see it coming.

The first half of your question, I think, can be answered as it relates to the Law School by saying that I didn't notice it at all. Big Law which is where I was, I was at one of the largest law firms in the world. Big Law is different. I think everyone's experience within Big Law is different because no matter how big your firm is, at the end of the day your culture are the few people that you're immediately surrounded by every day. I've yet to meet a firm or a company that doesn't have the right message at the top.

**KM:** Right. Absolutely.

**TP:** Right?

**KM:** Yep.

**TP:** It's just about how it trickles down to you; to your direct supervisor; to your direct colleagues.

**KM:** Right. Everybody has the same story about "This is important to us. We're working towards it." All that. Absolutely.

**TP:** Exactly. Again, those first couple years while there were gender-based challenges or differences between my colleagues and I, I certainly didn't feel like I couldn't accomplish what the men could accomplish in those first few years ever really.

**KM:** Yep.

**TP:** Doesn't mean I didn't notice I had to work harder or differently sometimes. But I never thought it couldn't be mine. Now that said, have I been in meetings with all men, especially when I was dealing with certain other cultures and countries -

**KM:** Yes.

**TP:** - and they would ask you to be the one to go get coffee or do things that you know like...

**KM:** I have heard that story so many times. It's amazing.

**TP:** Yeah. I mean, so I definitely have been that person.

**KM:** Or "Why don't you take notes?"

**TP:** Yeah. Exactly. Right, or, I mean people who I think I have great relationships with. I mean, some of them

would say, “Hey, we would invite you out for a beer but you know, we’re just going to go with the guys. We’ll catch up with you in the morning.”

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** And these are people who like me, I think, and I had good relationships with but they assumed I wouldn’t be interested.

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** Right? Now if they’d asked they would have realized I’m just a vodka drinker. I mean, I don’t like beer but I would have gone.

I saw some statistics in, I think the ABA had published their women in the profession statistics from, I think they were 2018 numbers. But, what I thought was really interesting about them was the percentage of females summer associated in Big Law firms was almost 50 percent. But, to your point, you had said this earlier about the trickle effect, our equity partners, only represented at the time something like 19 percent. And what I thought was even more interesting than that was when you go back into the ABA’s data about some of this published information, if you go back to 2000, almost 20 years ago, that percentage of equity partners is statistically calculated at somewhere around 15 percent.

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** There hasn’t really been a tremendous amount of growth.

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** And you raised a good point in your question, which is “why?” Right? Why do we see us starting out here and not ending up there? And I don’t know the answer.

**KM:** Yep.

**TP:** I will tell you, at least as it relates to corporate, I have a lot of different friends at different firms. I’ve often heard that women leave for a better work-life balance. Right?

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** I can tell you that I am extremely close with my family, I sit on boards, I teach as an adjunct, I have two young boys, I am pregnant with our third –

**KM:** Another boy?

**TP:** A girl.

**KM:** (*happily sighs*)

**TP:** Yep! My first girl. (*chuckles*) I’ve done all the things, and that was something I never understood. I think I’ve had a great work-life balance. I’ve, you know, I work hard. I’ve made sacrifices. But I’ve done the things in my life that I want to do. That said, I also think I lack perspective about what work-life balance is because I went from high school to college, college to law school, law school to big law. As you and I have chatted about, I’ve recently made a change to go in-house. It was a difficult change because I was never unhappy where I was, but even after a few weeks in my new position, there is an indisputably different energy and culture -

**KM:** Interesting. Yeah.

**TP:** - in at least Corporate America, where I am, in the law firm environment.

**KM:** Right. Yeah. I actually – I want to talk about that a little bit actually. So one of the things that’s really interesting that you said, and that you know if often sort of part of the claim about why women kind of disappear from partnerships and all that good stuff, is that they just want a better work-life balance. Which, the response could be, well maybe we need to figure out how to create that in our institutions as opposed to just watching all the women go away. Right? So I wonder a little bit, if you could talk a little bit – in big law before you came to in-house – we should probably also describe to people what in-house means. It’s just means that you are actually working for a company as their sort of internal legal department.

**TP:** Yep.

**KM:** What was sort of available to you as what would have been a relatively young Mom, working this really difficult job in terms of support for what you were trying to do?

**TP:** I am very blessed that way because support, to me, starts not with what benefits you have at your company but through your personal life. So, on the personal side, I can’t even explain how blessed I am to have my Mom. My Mom and my Grandparents, my children’s Great-Grandparents, help with them.

**KM:** Ok.

**TP:** So that has afforded me an ability to work hard in a way that I know some women don’t have.

**KM:** Yeah. That’s huge.

**TP:** It’s huge because I never, ever, ever worry about my children.

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** Right? I joke that they just cut out the middle man.

*(KM chuckles)*

**TP:** So no matter what they ask, they would have just called my Mom and done whatever she told me to do. So I joke that you just cut out the middle man. So that I’ve been very fortunate that when difficult schedules with work arise, I’ve had support through that. I also have the world’s best husband whose schedule is more flexible than mine. This is a very important part in, I think, the sustainability in all of this: not only are they supportive, they’ve never made me feel bad.

**KM:** Ahhh.

**TP:** And I say “feel bad” because especially early in your career, before you understand the concept of professional assertiveness and drawing boundaries, I missed things.

**KM:** Yeah.

**TP:** Right? I cancelled anniversary dinners to stay late.

**KM:** Oh yeah.

**TP:** And I’ve done those things. And I hesitate to say it because it’s not my proudest thing, right? But I was never made to feel like I did something wrong. They were never angry. You know, it was I would get home at one in the morning and they’d say, “You must be exhausted. We have dinner for you” and like, “We’re gonna rub your feet.” They made me – they understood that the sacrifices were for them so that is a huge part of it.

**KM:** Absolutely.

**TP:** I think that the women who don’t have that, you have to create it whether it’s through Day Cares that you

trust, friends, you know extended family that you have. But I don't know that the big law job is sustainable for anyone who doesn't have adequate support.

**KM:** Yeah. Absolutely.

**TP:** I will also say this is where the difference between – I really saw the difference between my male and female colleagues. I have a distinct memory actually. I have one of my good friends, who I love so I say this with complete objectiveness, but he came in one morning and it was like a bright sunny day and he said, "Oh my gosh. Good morning! How are you doing? How's your morning?" And I said, "Good. How are you?" And he said, "It was great! I woke up and I went to the gym and I came home and we had Mickey Mouse shaped pancakes that were on the table."

*(Both begin to chuckle)*

**TP:** And I like – he's walking it off and as I'm listening to him I'm like pulling to oatmeal out of my hair. You know? And I'm like, "My morning was very different than that." You know? *(Laughs)*

**KM:** *(Laughing)* Right. Yeah.

**TP:** So I do think that there are some typical gender roles that people fall into that, you know, can impact perspective.

**KM:** Yeah.

**TP:** That is an area where I also felt an obstacle I would say, interestingly. Because my family was my support network I think the Partners and people I worked with at the time, especially when I was a younger associate, would tell you that I never said I have to leave early to get my kids at 5 o'clock.

**KM:** Mmm. Right.

**TP:** Or, if my kids were sick, the expectation was that my Mom would take them to the doctor. And what was interesting is if – now that said – they're my kids. Right? I mean, I'm going to be there when they need me. But what's fascinating about this is I can remember probably 15 occasions over eleven years where I would say to someone, "I'm leaving today to do X" or "My son has a doctor's appointment" and the perception was "Oh of course you know. You do that all the time. You always have to get out of here because of them."

**KM:** Wow.

**TP:** And I'm like, "Really?!" So there is a way that people see women, some people see women that I don't think will ever change the perception because sometimes it's not real and you can't do anything.

**KM:** Yeah. That's fascinating. Yeah.

**TP:** But that was always interesting when people would say things like that.

**KM:** I remember you telling me a story once about, I think it was a partner at one of the places you were working. It was a male partner. And he was introducing you and a male Associate to a client. And, do you remember this story?

**TP:** I do. I remember the story and the experience. *(Laughs)*

**KM:** Can you tell the story?

**TP:** Sure! So the story is based on this concept of micro versus macro inequities. And I can honestly tell you, I didn't face any macro inequities at Big Law. Right? I was never sexually propositioned for a raise. I mean, those things didn't happen. But the concept of micro inequities was a lot more confusing. And I don't think I



even understood what it was until it started happening. Basically, what I would experience at times, and again overall my experience was wonderful.

**KM:** Sure.

**TP:** Sometimes I think what women can experience is people around you creating a perception of you that isn't true. Right? Or not putting your best foot forward. So the story that Dean Mutcherson is talking about, I had gone into a meeting with several of my colleagues and the Partner who was responsible for originating the matter to meet a new client. And when the Partner introduced, and I should mention I was the only female on the team. I was the most Senior member of the team. I was also the youngest person on the team. Because a couple of my male colleagues who were Junior to me from a seniority standpoint had had careers prior to going to law school. So they were older.

**KM:** Ok.

**TP:** So it was an interesting kind of combination. And when he introduced my male colleagues, he introduced them based on their credentials. You know, "Please let me introduce Bob. He'll be a great member of our team because he's worked on 17 types of similar transactions in this industry." You know, "Please meet Mike, who prior to joining the firm worked in the industry that your acquisition is considering." And he said, "Please let me introduce Tara. She's our Senior Associate on the deal. And if you get a chance, you have to stop by her office because she has two of the cutest kids you've ever seen." And I also had substantial experience in the billions of dollars meeting deals in this particular space.

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** And that's a micro inequity, right?

**KM:** Absolutely.

**TP:** I used to go home and say to my husband, "I think he insulted me but I'm not actually sure because he's really nice!"

**KM:** (*Laughing*) Right. Right. Your kids are super cute.

**TP:** And they are cute! And you should come see them! But it doesn't define me.

**KM:** Right. And even if it's not meant to, it's a way of diminishing you in that space.

**TP:** Exactly. And I think it was subconscious.

**KM:** Yep. Absolutely.

**TP:** And I don't think – I don't believe that any of the adversity that I at least faced – not - maybe not any of it but the large percentage of adversity that I faced from time to time, none of it was malicious.

**KM:** Yeah.

**TP:** I really believe that.

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** Which is almost scarier.

**KM:** Right. Right.

**TP:** Because I think it's very hard to change the perspective of people who don't understand what they're

doing.

**KM:** That's exactly right. And you were talking about how the new job that you have, the in-house job that you have, there General Counsel there is a woman. And I think a lot about the ways in which women in leadership change the culture of an institution. I would like to think that women in leadership often change the culture of an institution in sort of a variety of different ways. So can you talk a little bit about why was it a draw for you to be in a place where the person who you're working for is another woman.

**TP:** Yeah.

**KM:** What do you think that sort of brings to the workplace?

**TP:** The impressive nature of this particular General Counsel, and you know the rest of the team including her Director Assistant General Counsel, um, they were a huge reason that I took the risk. I was happy where I was and my career was going well, but I stumbled across the opportunity. I started to get to know this team and the women who led the team. And I realized that their mentorship was something I was craving. When I looked at the opportunity and I looked at the in house experience I also realized, and I tell my students this, you know being well rounded is very important. And at the end of the day being a lawyer is all about being a *consiliare*, right? A counselor. And the more experience you have and the more perspective you have, and the more relational you can be based on your experiences, the easier it is to connect with your clients. Whether they're clients of your own company, right? People you're serving in a business to business sense, or clients outside the firm from a law firm perspective. These particular women have been with the same team for decades.

**KM:** Wow.

**TP:** They've managed - under their leadership, their team has worked together for 30 - 40 years.

**KM:** Wow!

**TP:** Yeah. And I mean if that type of retention doesn't say anything -

**KM:** That's impressive. Absolutely!

**TP:** - about you as a leader. Yeah. They've had virtually no turn over in decades from their legal group.

**KM:** That's incredible.

**TP:** Yep. So I thought, "You must be doing something right as a leader if you're keeping members of the team for decades at a time."

**KM:** Right. Yeah.

**TP:** It's also a very - I, I went to a company that's very male dominated industry: the automotive industry. And it's really nice to see a woman, you know, in a male-dominated industry at the top and doing so well. To me, it's great to have them as mentors and role models and all I can say is the company's doing very well and have - knock on wood - few legal problems.

**KM:** Right. (*chuckles*)

**TP:** So they've done something right for a long time.

**KM:** One of the things I often like to ask people who are at a law school, who've had successful careers is what piece of advice would you offer to yourself as a baby lawyer and you wish someone had given to you?

**TP:** I think that there are three pieces of advice that I have found most intellectual throughout my career. The first piece of advice was, 'You don't need to be so transparent'.

**KM:** Oh. Interesting!

**TP:** So, to me life is all about being transparent and authenticity and who people are. But professionally I didn't need to disclose to you, and this goes back to the example I gave earlier, I didn't need to disclose to you that I was leaving at 5 o'clock to take my child to the doctor.

**KM:** Ahhh. Right.

**TP:** I could have responded to your call simply by saying, "I have a conflict. I'm available tomorrow."

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** I realized the more I shared, which I was doing in the spirit of camaraderie, the more judged the outside commitments were. The less I shared, the more what I had to do within or without – outside of work, were just perceived as professional commitments. So I started to get better, and I would encourage all new lawyers to think about that. What do you really need to disclose? You can really own your schedule and you don't owe anyone those types of answers.

**KM:** Yeah. Right.

**TP:** The second piece of advice I would give, we talked about work-life balance. I did not do great at it until I was about a seventh year. By the time I was about a seventh year, I started to do much better, and it was actually something my Dad said to me. He said to me, you know I love what a hard worker you are, but he said can I give you some advice? Sometimes I think you confuse responsibility with availability. And I said ok what do you mean? And he said, you should always be responsible, and sometimes when you are responsible for something you have to make sacrifices. That's not the same thing as always being available to anyone who needs you.

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** And that was advice that really resonated with me. And I started to ask myself that simple question. So when I would get a call at 11 o'clock on a Friday night and someone asked me to help with something, before I said 'yes' or 'no' I would ask the question: "If I say 'no'. am I being irresponsible or am I just being unavailable?" And if the answer was I was being irresponsible, I did it. But as I got more senior if the answer was I was just being unavailable, I tried to find more boundaries. So that was a great piece of advice and it was a small question I ask myself often that really helped guide me.

The third piece of advice I would give, which is going to sound a little flippant and I don't mean it that way, is I don't think I knew I was a grown-up when I started working. I really don't think I realized I was an adult.

**KM:** Yeah.

**TP:** Here you are -

**KM:** I mean you're someone who's gone straight through, as well, right?

**TP:** Right. I didn't have any other careers.

**KM:** High School. College. Law School.

**TP:** Yeah. Exactly. So especially when you have a trajectory like that where you're in school and then as an employee. Here I was a 25 – 26-year-old woman. I had my own house. I had my own car. I was engaged to be married. But I don't think I had a perception that I was an adult.

**KM:** Right. And a professional.

**TP:** A professional. Right. That's a better word than adult. Yeah. Exactly. I don't think I had a sense that I was yet a professional. Had I respected myself as a professional sooner, I think I would have even done more great things if I had recognized that. And demanded more respect from myself than I ever commanded. So I would encourage our young attorneys as they start this journey to recognize that you have complete control over your destiny. That none of these choices are permanent. That's why they're choices; you can always make a different one. Learn as much as you can from every opportunity. You know, from a Big Law platform, whether it's right or it's wrong for you, I think at the end of the day it's an amazing platform right? I can – we're going back kind of full circle to the start of the conversation – I wanted to fight for underdogs. Well I end up being a corporate lawyer.

**KM:** Right.

**TP:** I also ended up in an extremely powerful law firm where I was able to do prestigious pro bono work with unlimited resources.

**KM:** Yeah.

**TP:** Right? I worked on sophisticated transactions. The job gave me economic stability. And I had a platform from which I could learn as much as I wanted to in order to enhance the rest of my personal and professional journey. Right? It's what you make of it. The tools are there.

**KM:** Well thank you so much for taking time out to come and chat with me. It was really wonderful to talk to you.

**TP:** Oh you too!

**KM:** It's always nice to talk to you.

**TP:** Aww. Well thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

**KM:** Absolutely.

*Transcription written by Kate Bianco, Advancement Coordinator, Rutgers Law School*