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# ALEEM DHALLA

## COMMERCIAL BREAKS SUPPORTED HIS FORMER LIFE.

Commercial litigation powers it now.

"I was a producer for a TV show in L.A.," says Dhalla, referring to his time as a showrunner for the travel show *Lux Lifestyle*, which under his watch was beamed into 12 million homes via the former Wealth TV (now AWE) network.

But that was then. This—post-Boyd graduation—is now.

"I got a full scholarship at Boyd, and it was really hard to turn down," says the 33-year-old Dhalla, who is now an associate at the Las Vegas office of Phoenix-based law firm Snell & Wilmer.

A native of Great Britain who moved to Dallas when he was 4 years old,

Dhalla had long nurtured the ambition of attending law school, but he took a different career path following his 2008 graduation from Southern Methodist University with a degree in finance. "I thought that after I finished undergrad, I had a much wider array of things I could do, so I decided to work for five years before attending law school," Dhalla says. "But then I thought, 'No, law school is for me.' I thought I was a pretty good writer and that I had the analytical skills needed to be a lawyer."

Turns out he was right. And although he applied to—and was accepted by—a number of other law schools, it was Boyd's scholarship offer that tipped the scales. "I didn't want to have to work while going to school, and I also didn't want to accrue living expenses or debt," Dhalla says. "Thanks to the scholarship, I didn't have to worry about getting a side job or making sure the positions I got in the summer paid really well."

"I didn't do anything but focus on school and my studies, and having that scholarship really allowed me to do that. I think the terms were I had to maintain being in the top half [of my class ranking], so it really incentivized me to do really well in school—not that I needed even more incentive, but it really helped."

With his financial burdens eased, Dhalla in 2015 took advantage of a summer associate program at Snell & Wilmer between his second and third years at Boyd, putting him on the employment runway for a law career that would take flight immediately upon graduating. "They have a very strong summer associate program [that showed me] what it would be like to work here full time, but on a lightened summer basis. It made me realize I really wanted to work here and stay in Las Vegas," he says. "It was a great summer job, [and afterward] they made a full-time offer, so going into my third year I already had a job after I graduated. That really [solidified my] decision to stay here, plus I really like the city and how easy it is to live in. It's the reason why anyone comes to Las Vegas and becomes a local."

Today, Dhalla reflects on his decision to travel the Boyd path away from his travel-TV life with satisfaction—and a continuing relationship with the school. In addition to his membership in the school's Alumni Leadership Circle, Dhalla has also judged moot court competitions, counseled students in the school's Immigration Clinic, and has taken cases (pro bono) referred by the clinic, as well as through the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada. "I really appreciate that my firm supports my desire to do pro bono work, and those are some of my most rewarding cases," he says.

Contributing to the Southern Nevada community this way, he says, would not have been possible without the scholarship that contributed—in fact, enabled—his training. "I really hadn't thought beyond a few years after law school, how long I would be here," he says. "But the fact remains that Nevada is a great place to live, and [Boyd] really pulled me into staying in Nevada. That's exactly what scholarships are meant to do. They're a great way to make sure that young people and future professionals move to Nevada. They play an important role in growing our community into what we really want it to be in the next 20 years."



J.D., Class of 2016

# CARMEN GILBERT

**SHE NEEDED A REASON TO STAY.** She got it.

“When I got into Boyd and got the full-tuition scholarship, I knew right then that I was going to go,” says Gilbert, 32. “If it wasn’t for that, I would have started looking for work outside of Las Vegas and probably would have left. But because I’m now building my legal career here, I’m staying home.”

In September, Gilbert joined fellow Boyd graduate Dhalla by landing employment with the law firm of Snell & Wilmer. How easily it could have been different for the native Las Vegan.

Gilbert left her hometown for eight years, first to attend UNR (where she got an undergraduate degree in political science and international affairs), then the University of Washington (where she earned a master’s degree in public administration), followed by a stint in the Peace Corps (where she was a municipal development adviser in Guatemala). Originally, her plan was to return home for a couple of years, then leave again. But as the clock ticked down toward what she thought would be her departure, she took note of a friend’s involvement in Boyd’s part-time program.

“I loved the idea of going back to school, but because I had already gotten a master’s degree and had significant student-loan debt, I couldn’t justify taking any more student loans to do so,” Gilbert says. “I applied [to Boyd] and took the LSAT [Law School Admissions Test], just to see what would happen.”

What happened was acceptance, a scholarship that turned that acceptance into a new life/career, and a chance to accomplish something different than in her previous job as a regional representative for then-U.S. Senator Harry Reid from 2013-15.

“When I was working for [Reid], one of my duties was to do constituent casework, mainly immigration,” Gilbert says. “But our role was educational—we couldn’t represent the constituent in any way or give legal advice. That was really frustrating, because you see people who really need the help, but you can’t give it to them. I was tired of that frustration of not being able to help people the way I really wanted to, so I went to law school.”

At Snell & Wilmer, Gilbert will work in the corporate and securities practice group. Beyond the office, she also plans to join the Boyd Alumni Leadership Circle and give back to the law school that gave so much to her. But that giving back won’t stop there, as Gilbert intends to further support the Las Vegas community through pro bono work.

“I’m 32 and have had other jobs, but I’m just starting my legal career and it’s definitely a shift for me,” she says. “My career up to this point has always been in public service, so this is my first private-sector job. But there is such a wonderful legal community here, it’s so tight-knit. And the Boyd alumni network is incredible.”

Having recently taken the Nevada Bar Exam, Gilbert—who not long ago was on the verge of fleeing the Silver State, perhaps for good—has no intention of packing her bags anytime soon. “I’ve loved being back home in Las Vegas, and it’s reminded me of what makes this such a great place to live and build a life. It would be really hard to leave again.”

Thanks to a Boyd scholarship, she won’t have to—and her hope is that fellow natives who also have law school aspirations will follow in her footsteps.

“A scholarship can completely change the trajectory of somebody’s life,” Gilbert says. “It’s not just an investment in Boyd or a single student. It’s really an investment in our entire community.”

J.D., Class of 2019

