



Education (degrees & institutions): JD, New York Law School; BA, Boston University

Company Name: Robins Kaplan LLP

Industry: Law

Company CEO: Anthony A. Froio, Managing Partner

Company Headquarters Location: Minneapolis, MN

Number of Employees: 440, including all offices and full-time staff

Your Location (if different from above): Boston, MA

Words you live by: Don't let the world change your smile, let your smile change the world

Personal Philosophy: Be your authentic self; kindness above all, to yourself and others

What book are you reading? *The Lioness of Boston* by Emily Franklin

What was your first job? Kindergarten teacher assistant

Favorite charity: The Sikh Coalition, a civil rights organization dedicated to protecting one's right to practice their faith without fear

Interests: Running, hiking, skiing, traveling, reading

Family: Married with two kids

Are you uncomfortable at work? Then speak up.

I love being a lawyer. It always seemed to be a natural fit with the values I was raised with and my personality. I grew up in Southern California in a Sikh immigrant household where my mother instilled in me the importance of truthful living, hard work, eternal optimism, community service and helping others, especially those who cannot help themselves. Motivated by those tenets, before and during law school, I volunteered at a public defender's office in California, as well as non-profit organizations that supported survivors of domestic violence in California and New York. After graduating from law school, I pivoted to private practice, but remained committed to building a robust pro bono practice.

I have now been at Robins Kaplan for over a decade, helping clients with corporate and commercial real estate transactions. I stayed true to my commitment to pro bono work, developing a diverse portfolio that includes helping people seal their criminal records and helping a Native American tribe in its quest for federal acknowledgment.

As a South Asian woman, throughout my career, I am usually the only woman or the only person of color, or both, on the team, whether that team includes only the legal team or also the client. On one matter, I helped a client, a white man, close the sale of commercial real

estate. For several months, I worked with him extensively. After closing, the entire client and legal team celebrated at a closing dinner, during which, the client asked me, "Why is your English so good?" This question was quickly followed by, "When did your parents come to this country?," and "Is your father in IT?"

I was shocked by these questions, flustered and confused. In the moment, I answered them and the conversation continued on to other topics. But for the rest of the meal, I was uncomfortable, knowing that I was singled out because of the color of my skin. As my shock subsided, I thought hard about how to move forward. Rather than focusing on my experience, I decided to use this as a teaching moment. I shared my reaction to the client's questions with the relationship partner, another white man. He immediately apologized and was determined to resolve it. He made up a reason to visit with the client in-person and explain what happened, the impact of his questions. The client then called me directly and apologized unequivocally. While I regret my own experience of that closing dinner, I hope that the client will think twice about how to get to know someone who does not look like him.

I continue to love being a lawyer, especially because I bring my authentic self to my work.