

Jalal Jaffer: "So here we were off in Vancouver starting afresh, looking for a job, pounding pavement again, and inevitably your typical answer was, "You're too overqualified, we can't give you a job because we know you won't stay here long enough." So you had to underpay sometimes but it didn't work. It took me a while before I got into consultancy and then in the meantime, started a real estate course. Both Shamshad and I became realtors and the choice of realty was just a childhood feeling of wanting to go into the legal profession. I didn't think I could afford to go to law school because by this time, my parents, I was responsible for them. So Shamshad said, "Apply, if it doesn't work, don't go."

I put in an application to UBC [University of British Columbia] Law School. Initially the response was, "We'll put you on a waiting list and if anything changes, we'll let you know." Now this was in '74. Already I had gotten involved in institutions here. I became the honorary secretary of the National Council right away. It was fairly high demanding volunteer work, and Sir Eboo, you've heard of him? He was visiting—this is August of '74. September second is when law school starts, the new term. Around the twenty-eighth or so, and he was still around, I get a phone call from UBC, "We've got a space for you but we need to know by tomorrow. If you want to come to law school, we need to know tomorrow. Bring in a cheque for two hundred and thirty dollars, that's your first term's fees, and away you go." Now, I had twenty-four hours. If I had a longer time, I would have talked myself out of it because you always find reasons why you can't do certain things. Again, you know, Shamshad was very encouraging, she said, "You are risking two hundred and thirty bucks. See what happens and if it doesn't work, so be it."

You know, on that basis I accepted. I was still a realtor and I said to myself, "I'll continue being a realtor," and went to law school. I was in law school and I took only those courses which all happened to be on one single day so I went one day a week to law school. Some courses I never attended a single class. I wasn't afraid from an academic point of view because I had gone through a bachelor of arts and you had that maturity behind you, and everything that is remotely important, it's written out in textbooks anyways. So here I was, National Council, law school, realtor. That's my story."