

23 August 2022

**MASS CALL SPEECH BY PRESIDENT OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF SINGAPORE,
ADRIAN TAN, AT MASS CALL 2022**

1. May it please the Court, I speak on behalf of the Law Society of Singapore. I seek leave to address and welcome the nation's newest members of the Singapore Bar.
2. Thank you, Your Honour.
3. Congratulations on being called as advocates and solicitors. Today, each of you has been given something precious: a voice.
4. Should you choose to speak in any court in the land, you will be heard. What you say will be taken seriously. Speak, and you may rescue a great enterprise, or collapse it. Your words may build a lifelong relationship, or sever it. They may imprison a dangerous criminal, or free an innocent human being. Your voice may mean the difference between life and death. At all times, your voice, as an advocate and solicitor, your voice will have consequence and import.
5. You will need to know three important things about this voice you have been given.
6. The first is that your voice today is weak. To strengthen it, use it. As with any skill, your voice improves with practice. Seize every opportunity to stand up and speak up, not just in court, but in life. The more you express yourself, the better others will understand you, and indeed the better you will know yourself.
7. Master the language. Words are your friends. Meet a new one every day.
8. Read widely. Write often. The modern lawyer makes a strong case with pen and paper, or keyboard and screen. Often, written advocacy wins the battle long before oral advocacy even begins. Dedicate yourself to the art of communication, and as a reward you will become a warrior, a poet, and a storyteller. With a law degree.

9. And please bear in mind: less is more. Choose your best points and discard the rest. With words, as with money, frugality is a virtue. When you speak and write concisely, you are being precise with your ideas, considerate to the Court and tough on your opponent.

10. Another thing about your voice: it is built to speak the truth. That's the only reason you are allowed to use it in Court. That is the source of your voice's power: it is founded on integrity.

11. The judge, fellow lawyers, and our clients rely on what we say. If we take a position, it is because we have studied the issue, and understood it thoroughly. Conversely, if we do not know something, we are the first to admit it. At all times, we are candid with the Court, with the rest of the world, and with ourselves. That is the only way our voice will be trusted.

12. Honesty is the quality that has built our reputation over the centuries. That is what the public expects from us. We must be sincere, ethical, and honourable in all respects. We tell the truth, we play fair, we never cheat. That is our brand, and we live it every day.

13. Honesty requires courage. The fearless lawyer speaks truth to the client, to the Court, and to the world. Be brave, and you will be trusted.

14. The final thing I want to tell you about this voice you have been given today: it doesn't belong to you. It belongs to those who cannot speak for themselves. Use it for the good of fellow human beings, for the community, and for justice.

15. To advocate for anyone, please bear this in mind: a good speaker is a good listener. The best lawyer is the one who sits and listens to the client for hours, while wading through countless documents, to uncover the soul of each case, so as to present it to the Court. Good lawyering takes time. It may take your whole life.

16. I am reaching my conclusion. My dear learned friends, addressing the Court with your voice is both your privilege and your duty, entrusted to each of you today as an advocate and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Singapore. Today, you wear this advocate's court robe. It is black, to remind you of the gravity of this Court. Its design is old, in honour of the centuries of tradition it represents. And it is recognizable. It is one of the oldest uniforms in the world still

in daily use. The community knows it as the uniform of those who fight for humanity's highest ideals: truth, fairness, and the law.

17. This uniform marks you out as a member of a noble profession, as an officer of the Court and a servant of justice. You are the latest in the line of wise and true men and women who have worn it. Their hard work over the ages has earned the respect of society. You now stand on their robed shoulders.

18. Like them, you have earned the right to wear this advocate's robe, and for your voice to be heard in Court. From this moment, I ask you to be the best model for your generation and for Singapore. When you put on this robe, be the best version of yourself. By your words and deeds, inspire the lawyers around you, and those who come after you. They are all your colleagues and friends.

19. Each time you put on this robe, lift your voice. Speak louder and clearer and, by doing so, raise our world closer to justice.

20. And when you end your submissions, always say this:

21. "May it please the Court."

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