

A Tribute to Suzanne Ffolkes Goldson and her Lifelong Legacy at The University of the West Indies

At the 2021 book launch of Suzanne Ffolkes Goldson's new book *Corporate Business Principles: A Guide to the Jamaica Companies Act*, Professor Poonam Puri, the York Research Chair in Corporate Governance, Investor Protection and Financial Markets, and one of Canada's leading scholars in corporate law, corporate governance and securities regulation, summed up Suzanne Ffolkes Goldson in the way so many of us did—by who she was, what she did so well, and the strong feelings we had about her.

She said, 'Suzanne is, from my perspective, a force of nature', adding 'she does amazing work in corporate law and corporate governance and has a terrific critical lens and an excellent sense of how things work in practice. She is one of my favorite people.'

Suzanne Ffolkes Goldson (or SFG as several at work referred to her) was a 'favorite' to many, and a beloved teacher, colleague and friend to what felt like the world. Superlatives consistently accompany descriptions of her, especially as a law teacher. Her vibrancy, generosity and commitment to others—her *goodness*—were her essence. Still, it should not obscure what she was *good at*, and her important contribution to The UWI and Caribbean as a law teacher, scholar and corporate law and corporate governance professional.

A MONALAW LEADER WHO HELD OTHERS IN HER ATTENTION

Folkes Goldson '87 taught at The UWI for over three decades, beginning at the Cave Hill Campus in 1989. She joined the Faculty of Law at Mona Campus in 1996, and she was an oft-administrator, leading at critical moments in the development of MonaLaw. From 1999 to 2010, she led the work of Level I of the LLB programme at Mona, which for many years included Belizeans, Bahamians and Jamaicans. Between 2010 and 2011, she oversaw a critical period of expansion at MonaLaw, which moved to new premises on West Road in 2011 and became a full-fledged faculty in 2012.

SFG *held people in her attention*, as a conscientious and disciplined practice of everyday living. Each day for Suzanne at The UWI—walking through the corridors, in the car park, in meetings, in the classroom, in her office, or in the office of others—was punctuated by her expressions of attention and care towards others, including, telephone calls or a note reaching out to a colleague or student with care and support, gifts to colleagues and their children, and sharing new cases with fellow lecturers based on our specialization, to say, she was thinking of us and the scholarly work we were doing.

As an administrator, Suzanne committed herself to institution building and people-centred development at the expanded MonaLaw. As its first Deputy Dean with responsibility for Graduate Studies and External Affairs between 2012 and 2014, Goldson established the Mona Law Series as a faculty workshop series aimed at promoting rigorous academic research and improving collegiality in the small faculty. Most of the workshopped papers were published in good peer reviewed law journals. She readied the Faculty to begin graduate teaching in the UWI LLM.

As Deputy Dean, she facilitated MOUs and new relationships with Latin American, Canadian and US law schools. She established an inter-institutional relationship with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), which led to the creation of a new LLM in Intellectual Property in the Cultural and Creative Industries at Mona. She also inaugurated the *Mona Law Report* as an annual newsletter that documented and publicised the work of the new faculty at Mona.

AMONG THE BEST, AS A LAW TEACHER

SFG came to law after completing an undergraduate degree in Economics at York University. She excelled in the LLB programme at The UWI, and she graduated as the best final year student in the LLB, receiving several subject prizes. In 1989, she was awarded the Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL), Oxford's distinctive and prestigious graduate law degree. She was the top BCL student at Wadham College. Her husband, Peter Goldson, preceded her at the Faculty of Law and in Oxford by a few years, but they caught up, and married a few years later.

The Hon. Justice Andrew Burgess, Judge of the Caribbean Court of Justice and former Dean of the Faculty of Law, The UWI, said that in tutoring her in Company Law at The UWI in 1986-7, he 'was exposed to her uncommon gift of rigorous legal analysis and argumentation in Company Law.' SFG built her pedagogy around that 'uncommon gift', and much else, particularly her conscientious attention to others, an admixture that made her 'a light' and 'absolutely loved' as a teacher.

After the BCL, SFG returned to The UWI to teach law, and immediately became a much-loved teacher. Graduates from the class of 1991, whom she taught as second years on her arrival, describe SFG as 'not just a lecturer; she was a mentor, a source of inspiration... whose unwavering support shaped our careers and ultimately our lives in profound ways.'

Over three decades, SFG became a legendary law teacher, no matter *what* she taught, which included criminal law in her earlier years of the Faculty of Law at Mona, *where* she taught—at Cave Hill or Mona—or *who* she taught.

She taught some of the largest *optional* classes in the Faculty of Law. Her undergraduate Company Law course was typically the biggest optional class in the LLB programme at Mona. She also taught for twenty years Corporate Governance to graduate students at Mona, Cave Hill and St. Augustine in the UWI LLM; and this course was one of the best subscribed courses in that graduate programme. Years before MonaLaw began its graduate research programme, she was one of the few UWI law academics to regularly supervise long research graduate papers in the UWI LLM.

She could relate to people no matter their rank, age and stage of life. It is not rare to hear lawyers say that they decided to study law because of the impact she had on them when she came to talk about MonaLaw to their sixth form class. At the other end, her legacy includes the introduction of very successful public-facing LLM Master Classes at MonaLaw. The Master Classes in corporate and insolvency law that she co-led with Dr. Celia Blake during the pandemic gained a devoted following across the Caribbean, as thousands watched their classes with distinguished guests live or asynchronously on YouTube.

Unmatched excellence:

SFG's former students across the region refer consistently to her unmatched excellence and passion as a law teacher:

'one of the best law tutors in the Caribbean, hands down'

'one of the most exciting, giving, fierce and brilliant lecturers I ever met'

'bright, articulate, passionate and literally seemed to know it all'

Empowering:

Her teaching was full of care toward and regard for her students, and marked by a praxis of providing robust and sincere encouragement to them:

'I remember being nervous at faculty ... but her spirit calmed me'

'Mrs. Folkes Goldson was such a light. She made us feel like we mattered.'

Transformational:

More than a few describe her teaching and support as transformational, and as contributing to their success as students and human beings.

'She was larger than life. She made the world a better place and many law students, including myself, better humans.'

'Many are better because of you [SFG]'

Corporate lawyers across the Caribbean, and over many decades, describe SFG as the person who 'fueled my passion for company law and corporate governance' and 'made me love the courses she taught'.

She provided a crucial foundation in corporate law and 'paved a path' for many of the Caribbean's successful general counsel, company secretaries and corporate litigators. She followed their careers and continued to hold them in her attention and regard, and several returned to her classroom as guests.

...and the coffee:

And everyone remembers the coffee. She often walked into the office with coffee in her hand, and her office was full of coffee-making and related implements.

'You can't say you were taught company law if you weren't taught by Mrs. Ffolkes-Goldson. Always come in and start with a cup of coffee.'

'One of my favorite lecturers and tutors... I'll never forget the smell of her coffee in the mornings or her very infectious laughter.'

A PREEMINENT CARIBBEAN CORPORATE LAW EXPERT

Ffolkes Goldson was not just an extraordinary teacher, she became one of the Caribbean's preeminent experts in corporate law and corporate governance. Her stature in the field is reflected in the invitation by Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, Canada in 2022, to visit and teach as a Falconbridge Visiting Professor in Commercial Law.

SFG viewed corporate governance, and the development of fit-for-purpose hard law and soft law standards, as important dimensions of economic development in the Caribbean. Among other things, her research examined the challenges faced in attempting to fit corporate law and corporate governance models from the developed markets into emerging markets, in the context of the latter's dependency on direct foreign investment and multilateral aid. Her academic and professional work often focused on developing corporate governance models that were appropriate for the Caribbean context while also being responsive to international standards.

SFG edited the 2015 Routledge book, *Commonwealth Caribbean Corporate Governance*, which explored the development of corporate governance laws and codes in Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Anglo-Caribbean. In 2020, she published the book, *Corporate Business Principles: A Guide to the Jamaica Companies Act*, which is an accessible guide to reformed corporate legislation in Jamaica. The Hon Justice Dennis Morrison, former President of the Jamaica Court of Appeal, described the book as 'an outstanding achievement by any measure' and work 'which will survive for a very long time.'

SFG's scholarship on corporate law is found in a wide range of regional and international law journals including, the West Indian Law Journal, Oxford University Commonwealth Law Journal, International Financial Law Review, The Company Lawyer, International Corporate Law Bulletin, and Journal of Financial Crime, and is cited by other scholars examining corporate law in emerging markets and the Global South, including Bangladesh, Guyana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Trinidad and Tobago.

She has presented her research on corporate governance, corporate insolvency and corporate social responsibility at many seminars, workshops and conferences. In 2014, she received the Principal's Research Award for Most Outstanding Researcher and Best Research Publication in the Faculty of Law, Mona for her work in the field of corporate law. Again in 2016, she also received the Most Outstanding Researcher Award for the Faculty of Law, Mona.

In 2009, SFG was certified under the Global Corporate Governance Forum/World Bank, International Finance Corporation, Caribbean Training of Trainers Programme in Corporate Governance Board Leadership, and subsequently became a well-esteemed corporate governance trainer for a wide range of public sector and private sector companies, which included local and regional conglomerates, financial institutions, and stock exchanges.

SFG was 'in her ackee', as we say in Jamaica, in the field of corporate governance. She contributed as much to the *development* of corporate governance standards as she did in orienting corporate actors to what the standards were through training. She was a member of the Corporate Governance Committee of the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica for over 15 years, and she chaired the committee responsible for the revised PSOJ Corporate Governance Code 2016. She was also a member of the Implementation Oversight Committee for the Corporate Governance Framework for Public Bodies, at the Ministry of Finance in Jamaica. She was an advisor to the CARICOM Committee on the Reform of Company Law in the Commonwealth Caribbean and to the Joint Select Committee reviewing reform to the Companies Act of Jamaica. Many years ago, she also drafted the Insurance Regulations 2000 (Jamaica).

She trained corporate directors in corporate governance, and she applied corporate governance standards as a director. She was an Independent Director of the Jamaica Stock Exchange, a Director of the Caribbean Corporate Governance Institute, and a former Commissioner of the Fair-Trading Commission and the Consumer Affairs Commission. She also served as a Director of the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica between 2012 and 2015.

Faith and family anchored all SFG's work. And corporate law was family business, with her husband Peter Goldson of Myers, Fletcher and Gordon, an exemplary practitioner in the field, being her most important advisor. For him, she held her deepest regard and admiration.

Suzanne died in her prime, with her family first, always, and doing the teaching, scholarly and professional work she cared most about, collaborating with those for whom she had the highest regard, and knowing we are not promised forever, here, and must live good and humbly. Hers was a life full of purpose, joy and good impressions on us—a life that, without fail, showed her *goodness*—right until the end.

We can still smell her coffee, hear her irresistible laughter and feel the warmth of her attention toward us....

'We never leave,
we always have to go.'

Mervyn Morris, 'Checking Out'

Tracy Robinson
MonaLaw
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