

Rahim Moloo LL.B. '05

By Milton Kiang

From Calgary to Kyrgyzstan

Earlier this year, Rahim Moloo (LL.B. '05) was working as an associate at international law firm White & Case in Washington, DC. Today, the Calgary-born lawyer works as general counsel for the University of Central Asia (UCA) in Kyrgyzstan, a landlocked, entirely mountainous country, in one of the poorest regions of the former Soviet Union.

One of Moloo's key challenges in moving to Kyrgyzstan has been getting used to the country's political instability: the overthrow of the Kyrgyzstan government in April this year resulted in 80 deaths and hundreds more wounded. But this hasn't deterred Moloo from his mission.

The 28-year-old lawyer finds inspiration in his work, allowing him to collaborate with caring and dedicated educators who wish to bring quality, higher education to young people in this remote part of the world. In this interview, Moloo talks about his transition to life in Central Asia, the purpose of his work at UCA, and the value of a Canadian legal education.

After graduating from UBC, you spent some time in the US. How difficult is it for Canadian Lawyers to work there?

There are some barriers to Canadians practicing in the US. For instance, though having a Canadian law degree allows you to write the bar exam in certain states, such as New York, most states require that a Canadian law graduate take some additional courses prior to sitting for the bar exam. For instance, I have been admitted to the New York bar, but am only licensed to practice law in the District of Columbia as a Special Legal Consultant (which permits me to practice law in DC, but not to practice DC law).

Having worked with other Canadian lawyers practicing in DC and New York, I can say, without a doubt, that the legal training in Canada is of the highest quality, and Canadian lawyers are among the most well-respected in the world. Indeed, in international law, some of the top lawyers and arbitrators in the world are Canadian.

After spending three years at White & Case, you decided to go to Central Asia and work as general counsel for the University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan. Why did you make this move?

Much like our decision to move to Washington, DC, my wife and I made the decision to move to Central Asia because of the quality of people working at the institution and the nature of the work that the opportunity offered.

What's the most difficult thing to adjust to, working in Central Asia?

The language barrier can make it difficult, though I am studying Russian and hope to become proficient in the language over the next three years. The political instability can also make it difficult.



For instance, in April there was a revolution in Bishkek where the Bakiyev government was overthrown and many were killed. Though there are still some safety concerns in Bishkek, I am hopeful that the security situation will improve over the coming months—especially after the elections scheduled for October. In this regard, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan have been more stable.

What has made it easier to adjust to working in Central Asia is having the support of my family, especially Emily, my wife. I am grateful to share this experience with Emily and our two sons.

How long do you plan on being in Central Asia?

I have committed to being in Central Asia for three years. We are planning to return to Canada in the future as it will always be home to us. In fact, after our time in Central Asia I hope to teach international law in Canada and continue to pursue, on a full-time basis, my current research in the areas of international investment law, the interpretation of treaties and international law and development.

How do you think your UBC law degree has helped you in your career?

I strongly believe that the legal training in Canada is among the best in the world. It is in no small part due to the legal training that I obtained at UBC and Burnet Duckworth & Palmer that I was able to excel (in the LL.M. program) at NYU, and ultimately graduate as the valedictorian across all graduate and professional faculties.

It is not just Canada's legal training that is among the best in the world, but the education system in Canada more generally. Based on my experiences, I have always been impressed by how those educated in Canada compare to others educated in leading institutions across the world. Having competed internationally in debating and public speaking, I know first-hand that Canadians are among the best in the world, often beating out those from Harvard, Yale, Oxford and Cambridge. ●

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