

# Covenant News

2ND EDITION

ISSUE 2 | JANUARY 2019

## WE HAVE AN A-LISTER IN OUR MIDST: RONALD JJ WONG

Expanding his legal repertoire and honing his advocacy skills with the very best commercial law barristers in South Square, London

Page 09

## KNOW THE ROPES, LEARN THE ROPES

Covenant Chambers LLC continues to invest in our interns and trainees to provide them a holistic, first-hand experience into the legal industry

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## PLANTING OUR ROOTS AT CHIN SWEE ROAD

Our practice has established our first branch office at Chin Swee road (opposite state courts) officially known as Covenant Chambers@ Havelock

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PRESENTED BY

**COVENANT**  
Chambers



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Our firm had our inaugural Family Day 2018 at Denker Sports World Shooting where it was a memorable time for all friends and family.

# FOREWORD

Greetings from Covenant Chambers. Hope all of you had a fruitful 2018 and ready to kick-start 2019 with a bang. We sure are! 2018 has been a year of breakthroughs with major court victories, having the privilege of serving an expanded client base, and having our Director Ronald Wong being recognised as an A Lister- Singapore's top 100 Lawyers by Asian Business Law Journal.

We will start 2019 by having a Community Law Branch @ Havelock, Blk 52 Chin Swee Road just opposite the State Courts. Covenant Chambers was founded with a vision to provide affordable legal services for everyone. We are honoured that in the last 3 years, we have seen exponential growth to our clientele; especially in the area of institutional and corporate clients.

However, we are careful not to stray from the vision that gave rise to the genesis of the firm - to help the man on the street. As part of our corporate social responsibility efforts, the community law branch will target to serve the heartland, including taking up low bono and pro bono work. Our main office at Clarke Quay Central will continue to serve and value-add to our institutional and corporate clients. We hope that apart from growing the company, we will continue to be of service to our community.

In this instalment of our newsletter, we will also be featuring our very own Ronald Wong, including his own journey of how he became an A lister, Singapore's Top 100 Lawyers.

Also, on 30 August 2018, the Committee for the Professional Training of Lawyers published its report of recommendations to revamp the professional training regime for lawyers in a bid to increase the quality and competency of the legal fraternity. When I was recently interviewed by the Straits Times on the proposed changes to the practice training regime in Singapore, I responded "as much as structures are important, the spirit and substance of the training is key to provide the qualitative experience". In this newsletter, you will read from our born and bred trainee and now associate Ms Claire Teng of her growth in the past 2 years with the firm and the training that she went through.

To all our clients and partners, have a great booming start to the year!



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several sweeping, connected strokes.

LEE EE YANG  
MANAGING DIRECTOR  
COVENANT CHAMBERS LLC

# NEWS CLIPS

## ‘Pain’ damages should not be among marital assets: Judge

Selina Lum  
Law Correspondent

Compensation awarded for pain and suffering to a man who was injured in an accident should not be included in the pool of assets to be divided between him and his wife during their divorce, the High Court has ruled.

In a decision last week, Justice Debbie Ong said some components of compensation – such as lost earnings prior to the divorce – may be considered matrimonial assets, but not compensation for pain and suffering as this is not acquired by a spouse's efforts during marriage.

Justice Ong overturned an earlier decision by a district judge to include the pain and suffering component of a compensation sum in the pool of assets of a couple who were divorcing after 22 years of marriage.

Their fight over the division of assets included \$520,000 awarded in a court judgment to the husband for his injuries in a 2012 traffic accident. The husband, 52, a technician, said this money is not a matrimonial asset to be split, but the wife, 43, now a part-time cleaner, disagreed. She was a quality control inspector before she stopped work in 2003 to look after their three children.

Last year, a district judge ruled that the compensation award is a matrimonial asset but included only about \$149,000 in the pool of assets. The sum included money received for special damages, which included medical and transport expenses, and also for damages for the husband's pain and suffering, noting that the wife had taken care of him after the accident.

Sums awarded for future medical expenses and for future loss of earnings were not included.

Both husband and wife appealed. She argued that the entire compensation sum, except for future medical expenses, should be included, while he argued that the entire sum should be excluded from the pool.

Justice Ong agreed with the husband that damages for pain and suffering were personal to him. She said the wife's contributions in taking care of him should be taken into account in determining the proportion of assets to be divided. She ruled that only the proportion of the compensation corresponding to special damages and past loss of earnings should be included in the pool. She arrived at the sum of \$74,975.

Despite the compensation sum being halved, the wife is set to get a larger share of the matrimonial assets of about \$1 million. Justice Ong raised her share from 40 per cent to 50 per cent, noting that this was a long single-income marriage where the woman cared for the children, as well as for her husband after the accident.

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## Firm suing buyers of wine stolen by ex-employee

Hock Tong Bee seeking to retrieve wines or retail sum, with claims as high as \$900,000

Tan Tam Mei

Hock Tong Bee, one of Singapore's oldest wine and spirits merchants, is suing buyers who bought stolen wine from a former employee, with claims for amounts as high as \$900,000.

It is seeking damages or return of the wines that they bought from its former relationship manager Luciana Lim Ying Ying between 2011 and 2013.

During that period, she sold about 15,000 bottles of stolen alcohol worth \$7 million to clients and pocketed the money.

In 2015, Lim, then aged 43, was sentenced to seven years in jail and fined \$30,000. There was no element of restitution in her sentencing.

According to court papers obtained by The Straits Times, Hock Tong Bee is trying to retrieve the misappropriated wines or the retail sum of the wines, which range in price from \$65 to \$8,673 a bottle.

Court records show that the company, which was founded in the 1930s and owns CornerStone Wines, has been involved in at least 50 cases in the State

BUYER KNOWLEDGE continued on B2

## Cases hinge on buyer awareness of stolen status

FROM B1

Courts and High Court combined since 2016.

However, it is not clear if all the cases are related to its legal action in recovering damages and stolen wines sold by Lim.

Some of the papers were served as recently as October this year.

Of the 50 cases, about 10 were filed at the High Court, where civil cases involving claims exceeding \$250,000 are dealt with.

Responding to queries through its lawyers, Hock Tong Bee confirmed that it has various cases before the courts but was unable to comment further “so as not to interfere with the administration of justice”.

Queries to confirm the exact number of court cases as well as those that have been settled went unanswered. The company also declined to comment on why it was pursuing this course of legal action.

Court papers filed by some buyers indicated that they did not know the wines had been misappropriated at the time of purchase.

Lim had sold the wines to clients under the ruse that she had staff discounts or that she was representing another Hock Tong Bee customer who had run into financial trouble and was looking to sell the wines cheaply.

According to the court papers of a buyer, the wines were sold at prices about 40 per cent to 50 per cent below market rate.

Following investigations, the police reportedly recovered 1,102 bottles from buyers. However, some bottles could not be returned as they had been consumed or given away before the case came to light, said a buyer in his defence papers.

Criminal lawyer Amarick Gill said the crux of the cases was whether the buyers knew the wines had been stolen when they bought them. “If they had knowledge and intention of it, then a case would stand. And the police would have charged them for it,” he said.

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Training next generation of lawyers

# Supervisors set the bar in quality of trainee's experience

Size of law firm also counts – bigger cases at larger firms, closer interaction and more front-line work at small ones

**Selina Lum**  
Law Correspondent

Every lawyer-to-be has to undergo life as an apprentice for six months at a local law firm. But the experience of one such trainee can differ vastly from that of another.

Lawyers say the quality of training ultimately boils down to the supervising lawyer, who is responsible for ensuring that the trainee is adequately trained.

"We know from anecdotal examples that the experience is mixed. There are a few who have gone through practice training contracts

who feel they haven't been trained very much," Law Society president Gregory Vijayendran said. Inadequate training will eventually affect the quality of the services a lawyer provides to his client, he added.

Of the varying experiences, Mr Abraham Vergis, managing director of Providence Law, said: "Because it is essentially on-the-job training, what trainees experience and what's expected of them depend heavily on who their supervisor or mentors are, the kind of work they do and how busy they are."

Generally, trainee lawyers should be exposed to five areas of legal work: civil litigation, family law

cases, criminal litigation, corporate matters and conveyancing matters, said Mr Peter Low, managing director of Peter Low & Choo.

A trainee typically gets exposure in drafting affidavits and correspondence, taking notes during meetings, drafting submissions, and taking part in negotiations, research and analysis with the supervising lawyer, said Covenant Chambers' managing director, Mr Lee Ee Yang. Mr Lee said he normally applies for his trainees to be "part-called" after three months, which allows them to appear in court for certain types of hearings. This helps them gain advocacy experience, he said.

Trainees can be paid between \$500 and \$2,000 a month. With the competition for training contracts in recent years, tales have emerged of aspiring lawyers willing to train

without pay or of parents offering to pay for a contract.

One factor that accounts for the difference in experience could be the size of the firm, said lawyers. Trainees in bigger firms are exposed to larger transactions and bigger ticket litigation. While it may be challenging for a supervising lawyer to devote time to his trainees, there are seniors the latter can turn to.

Smaller firms provide for closer interaction between trainee and mentor, and trainees are exposed to more front-line work and given more independence.

But Mr Low said that regardless of firm size, what is critical is whether the supervising lawyer promotes professional development of the trainee.

Mr Low has a 26-point checklist of how to be a good practice leader

when mentoring trainees.

Such a view is mirrored in the report by a committee tasked by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon in 2016 to review the professional training regime. Key recommendations announced last month include a more stringent Bar exam and extending the training period from six months to a year.

Besides the structural changes, the committee also made specific recommendations on initiatives focused on training the trainers, providing better guidance for law firms in relation to training, and introducing a mechanism for random audits.

In the light of complaints from some trainees and junior lawyers about being treated as "slaves", the committee stressed that supervisors must take their teaching responsibility seriously. At the same time, trainees have to temper their expectations.

Mr Lee said lengthening practice training is likely to give a more robust experience and even out the steep curve in transition from practice trainee to legal associate.

"But at the end of the day, as much as structures are important, the spirit and substance of the training is key to provide the qualitative experience."

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19 September 2018

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## Singing high praises

A-list lawyer Ronald Wong, director of Covenant Chambers, received praise from Edmund Koh, general counsel/chief legal knowledge engineer of INTELLEX, a provider of knowledge banks for law firms, who says: "Ronald is a rare breed of lawyer who can handle both disputes and transactional work. He is very capable of guiding a startup properly through all legal issues it may face. Further, he is well-versed in technology and can advise on how technology will intersect with law."

John Fellas, a partner at Hughes Hubbard & Reed in the US, has this to say about Francis Xavier, senior counsel at Rajah & Tann in Singapore: "I have worked directly with Francis and he is a brilliant strategist in international litigation."

# BRANCH

## OFFICE @ HAVELOCK

Covenant Chambers LLC had a phenomenal year in 2018, having clinched major court victories for our astute clients, and building our relationships across a wider client base. Covenant Chambers LLC will no doubt continue to grow exponentially over the next few years.

Even with such great successes, the Covenant Chambers LLC family always made a point to stay true to the original intention of our practice – to provide affordable legal solutions to the man on the street. As we continue to explore and apply our bespoke legal solutions across burgeoning markets, we also strive to give a voice to the voiceless and to actively extend a helping hand to the weak – where help is needed the most.

As a result of our tireless efforts to reach out to such communities, we're proud to announce that we've established our Covenant Chambers @ Havelock branch office; situated within the heartlands of Chinatown and Chin Swee localities. Every single person that walk through our branch office doors will feel welcomed and be treated with the same high service standards and legal advice as our main office.

Our values define us for who we are, but it is the action that we take that will continue to touch and make an impact on the lives of others.



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# SPOTLIGHT

## FEATURE



### SAL OVERSEAS ATTACHMENT TO THE UK

Our Director, Ronald JJ Wong, has been selected to go on a Singapore Academy of Law (SAL) Overseas Attachment with a leading law chambers of English Queen's Counsels and barristers, South Square, in London from April to June 2019. Such an opportunity is reserved for the most outstanding lawyers in the industry who has proven to further value-add to the legal fraternity in way of knowledge sharing, best practices and more.

This is in addition of being named as an A-Lister – Singapore's Top 100 Lawyer by the Asian Business Law Journal.

South Square is a leading set of commercial law barristers who have acted in many important restructuring, insolvency, banking, commercial, company and fraud-related disputes of recent times. From this attachment, Ronald hopes to expand his legal repertoire, acquire new skills, and hone his advocacy methodologies from the finest barristers. Ronald will continue to run his Singapore practice remotely with the able assistance of colleagues and Directors/Associate Directors of our firm.



## AN AFTERNOON WITH A-LISTER

*Ronald JJ Wong*

**Question:** What/who inspired you and charted your journey to become a lawyer? And how would you describe it?

**Ronald:** In law school, I was fascinated by how law and justice impact people's lives and the world. Even as a law student, I volunteered with NGOs like HealthServe and saw firsthand how the application of legal thinking can turn outcomes that matter to people. I also enjoy being an advocate and speaking up for people, whether in court or outside. It is about listening to their story and telling their story to people who have power over their lives. It is about doing what is within your ability to improve someone else's life.

**Question:** Have you always been interested in commercial litigation and arbitration?

**Ronald:** Yes! I enjoy the cut and thrust of dispute resolution—strategizing, unpacking legal issues, drafting elegant submissions, making oral submissions in court, and cross-examining at trial. I've also always been interested in various aspects of the law such as extending existing legal principles to novel and emerging issues like technology and new types of transactions. My non-disputes practice was born from that.

**Question:** What/Who inspired you to explore Technology Law and blockchain as your niche forte?





**Ronald:** It was my deep interest in applying legal principles to novel issues, coupled with my interest in technology and science, that led me to develop a practice in technology, media, and blockchain-related matters. I dabble in some technological and programming experiments when I can. I find it exciting that fast-paced innovation in technology is pushing the frontiers of law as well.

**Question:** How are you giving back to society?

**Ronald:** I try to take on as many pro bono cases as I can manage at any time. Many of these are outside of CLAS or LAB schemes, (eg. foreigners in civil matters, and needy cases that fall outside of CLAS eligibility). I help run a pro bono legal clinic under a charity Bless Community Services, which I serve on the board of as well. When I can, I try to engage actively on feedback for law reform so that the law is just and equitable for not only the rich and powerful but also the poor and weak.

**Question:** What was the one case that you handled that left a lasting impression on you?

**Ronald:** There was a criminal case where my client took her own life; she had depression. I wish it didn't have to end that way. Apart from that, I started my legal career at a large firm and was on a complex multi-million dollar banking case involving novel issues of law on private international law, or conflicts of laws. I persuaded my boss to apply for a summary determination of law. The legal authorities on the novel issue were so scarce that we were breaking new ground in that case. We succeeded. That was really one of the most defining moments of my career.

**Question:** What are your views on “lifelong learning”?

**Ronald:** I enjoy constantly learning new things in different areas. Last year, I went for a language class. I learnt to

develop a contracts generator on my own. I try to read widely on philosophy, science, history, sociology, and more - to broaden my horizons and to stay sharp!

**Question:** If you are not in the legal profession today, what profession would you have gone into?

**Ronald:** I probably would have started a business in another industry, probably tech. Or I would have walked down the path of a filmmaker. I still harbour dreams of making films. I produced a documentary two years ago, and another one last year.

**Question:** How would you describe Covenant Chambers LLC as a firm and its people?

**Ronald:** Our firm is a community of passionate like-minded people who believe in doing good work to do good for all.



# CASE

## SUMMARY



High Court provides guiding principles for the approval of a litigation-funding arrangement wherein the liquidator assigns the causes of action of a company undergoing liquidation to a third-party litigation funder

Case Summary by Lee Ee Yang and Claire Teng

### I. SIGNIFICANCE

On 28 September 2018, the Honourable Judicial Commissioner Ms Audrey Lim (“JC Lim”) rendered her detailed grounds of decision in *Solvadis Commodity Chemicals GmbH v Affert Resources Pte Ltd* [2018] SGHC 210 in respect of approving the draft Assignment Agreement dated 13 July 2018 (the draft “Assignment Agreement”) between the Liquidators and the third-party litigation funder (the “3PLF”). This is the first reported case in Singapore in which the High Court (“HC”) provided its detailed guidance underscoring its approval of a litigation-funding arrangement between a liquidator and third-party litigation funder, which assigns the causes of action of a company undergoing litigation, to the third-party litigation funder.

Our **Mr Lee Ee Yang** and **Ms Claire Teng** acted for the third-party litigation funder in this case.



## 2. BACKGROUND

Pursuant to the draft Assignment Agreement, the Defendant will assign two categories of rights (the “Assigned Property”) to the 3PLF:

- a. The Defendant’s right of recovery of receivables due to it from a list of specified third parties (the “Assigned Receivables”);
- b. The Defendant’s causes of action against any person who has inter alia conspired with, assisted in or participated with the specific third parties relating to the Assigned Receivables and/or its non-collection (the “Assigned Causes of Action”);
- c. In return for the Assigned Property (the Assigned Receivables and Assigned Causes of Action), the 3PLF will pay the Defendant an upfront fee of S\$50,000. Thereafter, the 3PLF will pay the Defendant 40% of the first US\$10,000,000 it recovers and 50% of any further sums recovered (less costs and expenses incurred for the recovery process). Such payment will take place within 30 days of the 3PLF receiving those sums (or part of those sums).

In addition to the aforesaid terms, the other salient terms of the draft Assignment Agreement are as follows:

- a. The Agreement cannot be further assigned to another person;
- b. If no enforcement or recovery action was commenced by the 3PLF or no settlement agreement was reached in respect of the Assigned Receivables and/or Assigned Causes of Action within 6 months and 1 year, respectively, from the HC’s sanction of the draft Assignment Agreement, the Defendant can purchase the Assigned Receivables and/or Assigned Causes of Action from the 3PLF for S\$1.
- c. The 3PLF is not permitted to commence proceedings in the Defendant’s name or join the Defendant as a party to any proceedings.
- d. The 3PLF must provide the Defendant with reports, on a quarterly basis and at any other time required by the Liquidators, which sets out the progress of its recovery actions including a breakdown of the costs incurred by the 3PLF.

## 3. ISSUES FOR THE HIGH COURT’S DETERMINATION

Aside from addressing the principal question of whether the Court should sanction the draft Assignment Agreement, the HC also had to consider whether Section 272(2)(c) of the Companies Act (Cap. 50, 2006 Rev Ed) (the “Companies Act”) permitted the approval of such litigation-funding agreements. In its decision, the HC further elaborated on the host of circumstances for the Court’s consideration in approving litigation-funding agreements which would be weighed against the Court’s need to strike a balance between enabling liquidators to fully realise a company’s assets whilst preventing undue trafficking in litigation.

a. Threshold of Section 272(2)(c) of the Companies Act

(i) The liquidators' power of sale under Section 272(2)(c) of the Companies Act

Section 272(2)(c) of the Companies Act provides for the liquidators' statutory powers of sale on behalf of a company. In affirming the Honourable Judicial Commissioner Chua Lee Ming (as he then was)'s observations in *Re Vanguard*, the HC held that the liquidators' sale of the Assigned Causes of Action fell within the ambit of Section 272(2)(c) of the Companies Act as the Assigned Causes of Action would constitute part of the Defendant's property.

To allow the Court to reasonably exercise its supervisory jurisdiction under Section 272(3) of the Companies Act, the liquidators' exercise of its power of sale under Section 272(2)(c) of the Companies Act is also contingent on the subject-matter to be sold being sufficiently identifiable (*Re Novaline*). As for the Assigned Causes of Action fulfilled this condition, the HC found that the Court had supervisory jurisdiction over the draft Assignment Agreement.

(ii) Section 272(2)(c) of the Companies Act is a statutory exception to the doctrine of maintenance and champerty. Where the sale or assignment falls within the liquidators' statutory powers of sale, the sale would be authorized by statute despite the doctrine of maintenance and champerty (*Re Vanguard* at [27] to [29]). If not, this would frustrate the liquidators' discharge of his statutory duty under Section 272(2)(c) of the Companies Act and render meritorious claims, unpursued (*Re Movitor*). Thus, Section 272(2)(c) of the Companies Act stands as a statutory exception to the doctrine of maintenance and champerty.

Further, the HC upheld the Honourable Chua JC's decision in *Re Vanguard* that it was reasonable for the 3PLF to stand to make a profit from the sale of the Assigned Causes of Action. To do so otherwise would be commercially unrealistic whilst simultaneously stifling opportunities for the Defendant to pursue meritorious claims. This, would in turn prejudice the Defendant's creditors. Thus, the draft Assignment Agreement was found to not run afoul of the doctrine of maintenance and champerty.

b. The liquidator must act bona fide in a sale under Section 272(2)(c) of the Companies Act

The overarching consideration in determining whether the liquidators' power should be subject to the Court's control is whether the liquidators have, in exercising those powers, acted bona fide or in good faith. That said, the HC noted that the Court does not readily interfere with a liquidators' discretion, especially where bad faith has not been established (*Kumagai-Zenecon*).

c. Factors in favour of the draft Assignment Agreement

The HC considered the following to be factors persuasive in its decision to sanction the draft Assignment Agreement:

(i) The Liquidators had acted bona fide in its sale of the Assigned Property (pursuant to Section 272 of the Companies Act) to the 3PLF.



- (ii) Prejudice caused to the Defendant's other creditors (Any sum recovered from the 3PLF's recovery actions would be distributed to the Defendant's creditors according to insolvency laws)
- (iii) The Liquidators received no other offers from the Defendant's creditors for funding for recovery actions and had raised the possibility of third-party litigation funding whilst inviting the defendant's creditors to participate in the same.
- (iv) Level of funder's premium (Defendant would stand to gain 40% to 50% of any successful recovery action)
- (v) The initial purchase price of S\$50,000 payable by the 3PLF to the Defendant
- (vi) The consequences of preventing the draft Assignment Agreement from coming into effect would discourage other insolvent companies from pursuing legal remedies against its debtors.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In the course of the Court's determination of whether to sanction litigation-funding agreements under an insolvency situation pursuant to Section 272 of the Companies Act, the Court will examine whether such agreements are balanced against the reality that an insolvent company may not have the ability to pursue recovery actions with the fruits of the same, which is ultimately for the benefit of their creditors. To deny the possibility of a 3PLF entering into an agreement similar to the likes of the draft Assignment Agreement would be to frustrate plenty of insolvent companies from pursuing legal remedies against its debtors, unless their contributories or creditors are agreeable to funding such litigation. And by extension, should a 3PLF be prepared to step in the shoes of the Defendant, it is not unusual for them to take a share in the profits.

At present, there remain two statutory exceptions to the doctrine of maintenance and champerty i.e. the Civil Law (Amendment) Act 2017 (the "CLA") (supplemented by the Civil Law (Third-Party Funding) Regulations 2017 ("Civil Law TPF Regs")) which established a framework for third-party funding for international commercial arbitration in Singapore and Section 272 of the Companies Act. However, it does appear that the CLA is more restrictive. Contracts affected by the doctrine of maintenance and champerty remain contrary to public policy and are unenforceable unless they fall into the categories of dispute resolution proceedings as stated in the Civil Law TPF Regs. Further, third-party litigation funders must also meet certain qualifying criteria (e.g. having a principal business in Singapore) amongst others. Third-party litigation funders who fail to meet the qualifying criteria would not have the right to enforce their rights under any third-party funding arrangement, subject to applying for relief from the Court or Arbitral Tribunal in respect of their non-compliance with the aforesaid qualifying criteria. It remains to be seen whether there will be more statutory exceptions to the doctrine of maintenance and champerty.

# MOOTING

## COMPETITION

Covenant Chambers LLC is proud to support the team from the National University of Singapore (NUS), and congratulate them for emerging as 1st runners up in the inaugural International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) International Commercial Mediation Competition – Hong Kong.

Taking place from 12-15 October 2018, the competition was co-organized by the Hong Kong International Chamber of Commerce and the Hong Kong Justice Department.



In Photo (Left to Right): Mark Lim, Leanne Cheng, The Hon. Teresa Cheng S.C. (HK Secretary of Justice), Samuel Teo and Tan Su

The team (Leanne Cheng, Mark Lim, Samuel Teo, and Tan Su) was assessed on their ability to work in client-lawyer pairs to broker amicable solutions to complex commercial problems including a construction dispute involving state-owned companies, a cross-border manufacturing agreement and a software licensing dispute. Competing against teams from China, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, and Singapore, the NUS team eventually narrowly conceded the finals against the City University of Hong Kong in a 4-3 split decision by an esteemed panel of judges.



Covenant Chambers LLC is committed to supporting the legal education and training of the next generation of lawyers, and is particularly pleased to invest in the growing interest in Mediation as an effective tool for dispute resolution. With greater exposure to the legal processes and advocacy skills, it is without doubt that such opportunities act as a stepping stone for all trainees.





In Photo (Left to Right): Mr Marcus Lim, Mark Lim, Leanne Cheng, Professor Simon Chesterman (Dean of NUS Law School), Tan Su, Samuel Teo and Professor Joel Lee

In the words of team member Mark: “My team is extremely grateful to Covenant Chambers LLC for their generous support and encouragement. This was a great opportunity for us to practice mediation advocacy, and also learn both from peers and from some of the best ICC mediators from around the world. I am especially grateful to Ee Yang, who has supported my interest in advocacy and dispute resolution since my first year of law school, where he was my Legal Analysis Research & Communication (LARC) module tutor.”

For more information, please feel free to check out the article published by the NUS Law faculty at: [https://law.nus.edu.sg/about\\_us/news/2018/ICC\\_HK.html](https://law.nus.edu.sg/about_us/news/2018/ICC_HK.html).

*Train  
with  
us*

We always believe in the potential of the individual who is driven by the sparks and passion that is inspired by the legal profession. If you believe you've got what it takes to embark on an exciting and fulfilling journey with us at Covenant Chambers LLC - We want to hear from you and experience first-hand what the next generation of lawyers can bring to the table.

Send in your applications to [info@covenantchambers.com](mailto:info@covenantchambers.com)

# TRAINING

@ COVENANT CHAMBERS



## JOURNEY WITH

*Claire Teng*

My name is Claire Teng and today, I'm proud to say that I'm an Associate at Covenant Chambers LLC. I graduated from the University of Nottingham with a Bachelors in Law (Honours) in July 2016. To keep the long story short, I joined Covenant Chambers LLC on 21 June 2016 for 6 months of Relevant Legal Training (a compulsory element of training for overseas graduates), then took a year off to pursue the bar and thereafter returned to Covenant Chambers LLC in January 2018 for a 6-months' long training contract. I was blessed to be part-called in May 2018, fully called to the bar on 30 August 2018 and began my formal practice as an Advocate and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Singapore on 1 September 2018 with Covenant Chambers LLC.

If you asked me at the start of 2016 if I could have predicted where I would be today, it would be a firm and resounding no. Back in April 2016, I had already secured my training contract with another law practice but received an email out of the blue from Covenant Chambers LLC's Managing Partner, Lee Ee Yang, on whether I was interested in heading down to the firm for a short interview. Of course, it isn't difficult to guess what my eventual choice was.

During the short time I spoke with Ee Yang, I was deeply moved by his vision to defend the weak and make legal help more accessible to the less privileged and the public. He spoke of a legal practice that went beyond the work done and one that sought to touch the lives of those they interacted with and to most importantly, leave a lasting positive impact on their lives.

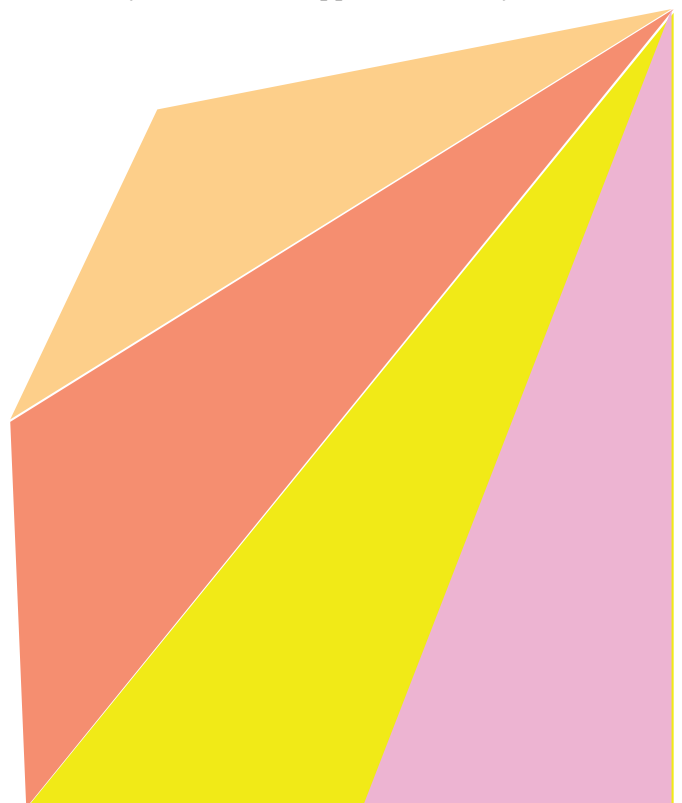
Thus, I began my Relevant Legal Training at Covenant Chambers LLC in July 2016; embracing the same vision and with the great desire to be part of a team that goes above and beyond for their client's and have a hand in touching lives through restoration and healing. I was tasked with a diverse spectrum of cases ranging across simplified and contested divorce matters, insolvency matters, probate matters and civil litigation matters. Furthermore, I was blessed to be under the mentorship of Ee Yang where he allowed me the opportunity to have client-facing opportunities and to be wholly responsible in overseeing various matters.

That being said, training in a small firm has its own set of challenges, as any firm would. Whilst you would have more liberty to run your own files in your own style, resources were limited and there were plenty of occasions when you'd have to take the initiative to broaden your learning. One thing that I greatly benefitted from was developing the mindset that one should not be expected to be spoon-fed. My Relevant Legal Training experience at Covenant Chambers LLC has taught me the importance of being self-motivated, to take ownership over my work and to be accountable to my team. You need to be hungry for work and to have a passion to hone your skills independently. This is one invaluable lesson that has carried through till today.

I returned to Covenant Chambers LLC on 2 January 2018 for my 6-month stint as a Practice Trainee. Expectations were definitely higher as compared to my time as a

Relevant Legal Trainee. Back then as a Relevant Legal Trainee, I was tasked with simpler drafting work but as a Practice Trainee, I was given more difficult legal documents and advice to draft and in a sense, the stakes were higher. Still, I was grateful to have a team that was patient and transparent with me with their guidance and constructive criticism.

In May 2018, Ee Yang gave me the benefit to be part-called to the bar, meaning that I had attained permission to attend Court on my own; which was a daunting experience for many who were in the same shoes previously. I have to admit that I was so incredibly nervous prior to attending my first case conference at the Family Justice Courts. It was so nerve-wracking that I even fell down in my court attire on the way to Court! But, over time, you grow. As long as you don't shy away from the challenge, there are much experiences to learn and grow from. Today, I am overwhelmingly thankful for the opportunity to have that two extra months of Court experience which has indeed left me more prepared, composed and ready to attend any kind of court appearances today.





I was called to the bar on 30 August 2018. Was there any difference between the work that I did as a Practice Trainee and Associate? Yes. In September 2018, I was tasked to take on Personal Protection Order trial solo and thereafter an interlocutory civil application hearing in October 2018. I dare say that these are court experiences that most of my peers would rarely have the chance to get in other firms. Although these were daunting experiences, I was nonetheless grateful for the opportunity to take part in the same and for Ee Yang's confidence in my abilities. Trust me when I tell you that you grow so much from these experiences and there is no better way to learn about advocacy than through a first-hand experience. It is one thing to be part of a firm that has a good practice of law, and it's another to be part of a firm that invests time, effort and training in you so that you can become an excellent Advocate and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Singapore.

I'm sure you're curious about the work-life balance at Covenant Chambers LLC and how that measures up compared to other firms. I'm not going to lie to you and say that you're going to be able to enjoy that dream of having a strictly 9-6 working day. Even so, one benefit of working at Covenant Chambers LLC (that I still enjoy till today) is that the firm is extremely tech savvy and stores all its content on the cloud server which increases accessibility. That means I don't have to stay long hours in office and I can even go for a meal with my family and friends and thereafter return home to continue working. I know that people hate the idea of taking work back home, but really, this is a much better arrangement than continuing to stay at the office to slog it out. That being said, working hours at Covenant Chambers LLC is significantly better than the stories that I've heard from my peers in practice. The firm does appreciate the need to enforce this work-life balance so that their employees can perform better at work without compromising on the important things in life. This, is something that I truly appreciate to date.

For those who are still contemplating about applying for training at Covenant Chambers LLC, come prepared for a challenge that would be worth your time. Legal practice is an extremely long journey, but with the training and skills that you develop at Covenant Chambers LLC, you really don't have anything to fear. I look forward to walking alongside with you in your journey at Covenant Chambers LLC, where we continue to strive for excellence and to deliver quality legal services to our clients and the masses.



## LACUNA TRAINING SOLUTIONS WITH MS SIM KHADIJAH



In accordance with the firm's belief in nurturing our employees, we sent our young trainees and lawyers to attend two workshops conducted by Lacuna Training Solutions ("Lacuna"), where their skills in legal research, legal strategy, and legal drafting were honed by the ever enthusiastic Ms J. Sim Khadijah, better known as Ms J.

Ms J is a legal professional who is highly experienced both in the bar and on the bench. She was formerly a litigation lawyer from Rajah and Tann LLP before joining the Singapore Legal Service and served as an Assistant Registrar at the High Court, as well as a District Judge at the Family Justice Courts after. Ms J chose to start Lacuna after observing that there is dearth of structured training programmes for young associates in small to medium sized law firms and as a result, she found a calling to assist in filling this gap. In supporting these young associates, it is Ms J's hope to help reduce the attrition rate in the legal industry.

For the first session, Ms J went back to the basics and refreshed the trainees' memory on legal research and legal analysis strategies. She also directed them to the available resources to tap on, to ensure a more efficient way of legal research.

At the second session, we acquired handy tips on how to refine our legal drafting skills. Several key takeaways include the methods of reasoning and writing skills to make our legal submissions more persuasive, as well as how to structure our submissions for more clarity. Ms J also offered insights on how to craft legal submissions in clear and concise manner for the judges' convenience. There were also several exercises which allowed the participants to apply their newly acquired knowledge - conducted through games and puzzles. It is without doubt that Ms J made the sessions fun and engaging by incorporating fun facts about the legal industry and enticing the participants with prizes.

Upon reflection, one of our trainees, Cheryl Tan, commented that, "Personally, I felt very thankful that Ms J recognised the lacuna in the legal industry and it was heartening to learn that she is trying to help those who are falling through the cracks. It was definitely a great experience learning from someone with such wealth of experience!"

Covenant Chambers believes that constant training and improvement is important for us to stay relevant and on top of our game in this fast-paced industry. Furthermore, it is crucial for young lawyers to start off their careers with a good foundation. That's why we put such emphasis on courses to help supplement our employees' skills as we view our employees as assets to invest in.





# FAMILY

## DAY 2018



Here at Covenant Chambers LLC, we are more than just a legal practice that aspires to serve the greater public, we are a family of talented individuals whose close bonds allows us to understand each other's frustrations and pain points as well as our motivations and aspirations. For our inaugural Family Day 2018, the firm wanted to surface the chance to develop deeper bonds with one another by opening the invitation to our employee's family and friends to join us for our event.

Our firm had decided to break the mold and embark on an entirely new experience for our employees, friends and family, by trying out an activity that few people had even considered – Air Rifle. Initially, the announcement for the event generated quite a bit of buzz within the office. The younger ones donning on their competitive spirit and raring to go, whereas, our senior folks were concerned about the weight of their air rifles, or if their near-sightedness were going to be in the way of their aiming.





The Air Rifle indoor range at Denker Sports World Shooting presents a cosy environment for the activity to take place. The trainers were experienced in guiding us through the different parts of the air rifle, the air pistol, the target systems, as well as the scoring system, and the event was up and running in no time at all.

As you walk down the lanes, you get a sense of immense focus and concentration as the shooters peered through the sights and onto the target just down the firing range. Especially so for our younger male shooters who had their fair share of range firing in both the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and Singapore Police Force (SPF). Our female and senior colleagues were no slouch either, the former having an acute sense of attention to detail which allowed them to consistently achieve high scores, whereas, the latter brought in their wealth of experience in adapting to various situations.



Even the little kids that were present were having a ball of a time, armed with their very own Nerf Gun, and shooting mini targets propped up against the stairs.

The top three scorers were awarded vouchers of their choice, but they also got to bring home something even bigger, and more precious – memories of the event that would be a talking point for months and years to come, as with the rest.



It was a heartening experience to witness the laughter and joy throughout the event from the occasional blunders, the perfect scorers, the bobo shooters, and more. Our firm has a set of strongly rooted core values, one of which is “Rejoice”. We believe in putting in our very best for every single client that walk through our doors, excelling and contributing in the way we do best. However, we are also reminded to take the time to consolidate, wind down, and enjoy the lighter side of things, as a family, as Covenant Chambers LLC.



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*Honour Excellence Attentiveness Rejoice*