

## From the Mouth of A Child, a Pragmatic View On Work-Life Balance

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SAN FRANCISCO — Many have tried, but few have succeeded, to answer the question of how lawyers can maintain some semblance of work-life balance given the high-pressure demands of working in a law firm. This week, litigator Daralyn Durie turned to someone she thinks is much more equipped to answer the question than those who came before her — a 12-year-old.

Iona Tangri, the daughter of Durie and Ragesh Tangri, who branched off of Kecker & Van Nest in 2009 to form litigation boutique Durie Tangri, spoke alongside her mother at a panel Tuesday night on ways lawyers can achieve professional and personal satisfaction.

Iona conveyed maturity beyond her years as she spoke to a crowd of 40 people gathered at Covington & Burling in San Francisco about what it's like to have two busy parents who are more likely to be found conducting depositions than cooking dinner.

The best part, she said, is the ability to be independent at a young age. As she put it, they won't be going with her to college, so she might as well learn now how to operate that laundry machine and run errands.

And dinner? Her nanny cooks well enough, she said.

Iona laughed at the shocked responses

she gets from her classmates when she tells them she takes the bus to school. "What's the big deal?" she asked, "It's public transportation!"

Iona is in seventh grade at The Berkeley School, a private school located near the University of California, Berkeley.

The panel, organized by the Association of Business Trial Lawyers, also included UC Hastings College of the Law professor Joan Williams, newly minted Covington & Burling partner Tammy Albarrán and San Francisco Superior Court Judge Marla Miller.

Durie Tangri attorney Sonali Maitra moderated the discussion that became heated at times as Williams and Durie offered competing opinions on the importance of policies allowing lawyers to work part time.

Ten years ago, Williams founded the Project for Attorney Retention to study ways to curb attrition at law firms and create policies to encourage the promotion of women within those firms. At Tuesday's event, Williams stressed the importance of firms' part-time policies and the correlation between a strong policy and a good overall attitude toward work-life balance.

Durie immediately countered Williams' view, saying going part time is "dangerous" and akin to being in a "marginalized ghetto" where it's difficult to land the most coveted assignments. Speaking about

a firm's bottom line, Durie said it's harder to make money on people who work part time since overhead costs are static.

Williams argued overhead costs are still cheaper than attrition, citing research showing it costs between \$200,000 and \$500,000 to replace a second-year associate.

None of the panelists held the secret to keeping associates and partners happy in what's become an increasingly time-intensive profession, but Durie said she hoped to impart on all the attendees the importance of integrating their personal and professional lives.

"Don't try to hide what's going on in your private life," Durie said. "Don't try to put problems in the closet."

Miller seconded that, recommending litigators talk to judges if they have a conflict with a court date, even if it's for a parent-teacher conference.

As for Iona, she had few complaints about her upbringing. When asked what she misses out on most, she said having her parents home in the morning, because it can sometimes be hard to mentally prepare for the day on her own.

Her mother didn't make it to her soccer games for a while, but that was, as Iona put it, by request. After Durie once told the then 8-year-old Iona she didn't put enough effort into a game, her daughter summarily relieved her of all future soccer mom duties. She's since been reinstated.