

230504 - TL - Nicola Williams - WillEdit

[00:00:00] **Nicola:** I'd like to think that I as a whole am greater than the sum of my parts, but, but my parts are. I sit as a recorder. And I have been doing that for now, 13 years. I write books and my, that is a journey in itself because of the gap in between my first and my second book. But my second book until Proven incident was published last month.

[00:00:23] **Nicola:** And I also sit on a number of boards. I chair two boards. I [00:00:30] co-chair one board, and I'm a trustee for a drugs charity.

[00:00:34] **Sally:** Fantastic, and I think your heritage is Caribbean and Windrush generation. Certainly. Or the generation after

[00:00:42] **Nicola:** Windrush. Yeah, generation after. I, I, I'm, I'm not old enough to be a wind rush generation.

[00:00:46] **Nicola:** You think so?

[00:00:47] **Sally:** As I said it, I thought, oh, no, no, no, no. I'm happy,

[00:00:51] **Nicola:** happy to correct the record. No, I, I'm not, but you are absolutely right. Um, both my parents were from Guyana, which is, um, it's [00:01:00] geographically South American, but culturally Caribbean. So it, it, it has a very unique history in and of itself. Um, and it, the other thing it has, it has a, actually, a big part of Guyana is actually protected as a World Heritage site because they're species of flora and fauna and other animals that you find that you won't find anywhere else in the world.

[00:01:18] **Nicola:** So that makes it a very unique place.

[00:01:21] **Sally:** Fantastic. Now Nicola, you are an example of, um, what's. Careers the bar can lead us to. Mm-hmm. And the [00:01:30] wonderful different way. So I wonder if we can start from the beginning. Okay. Why did you choose law? Wh where did that motivation come

[00:01:37] **Nicola:** from? Well, I always knew that I wanted to go to university.

[00:01:42] **Nicola:** The question was what to study. I also came from a family that really, really actively prized and pushed education. So it wasn't that myself and my brothers were hotheaded, but it was just an expectation that we were going to go onto university. Uh, but I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do. Um, at one point when I [00:02:00] was doing my A Levels, I was doing all languages and I wanted to, um, go to the, uh, UN as a translator.

[00:02:07] **Nicola:** Yes. And then, yeah, I really, really wanted to, to do that. Actually. I've just come back from a holiday in the States and we were staying right next to the UN building, so that was really quite nice. Um, uh, but then I, I. But then I found that I'd like to debate. I'm actually much more of a natural introvert than people think.

[00:02:26] **Nicola:** And, but I found that I could speak up for other people and I could debate on [00:02:30] behalf of somebody else. So I thought law would be also a very good general purpose, all ran degree to do, and then I could work out what I wanted to do after that. And then once I started doing law, I, I, I, I really fell in love with it.

[00:02:43] **Nicola:** Uh, I think from the first year I applied. To go to the bar. And the bar was really what I wanted to go to. I mean, no disrespect to solicitors, but I really wanted to be a barrister. And, uh, I sort of fell in love with the law after I'd started my law degree and then the rest is history. [00:03:00] Wow.

[00:03:00] **Sally:** Mm-hmm. And might I ask you, I suppose, um, what, what was it like when you were called to the bar? Because I think you and I are members of the same in,

[00:03:10] **Nicola:** uh, I, no, I think, are you a barrister? I think, yeah. No, I'm Lincoln's.

[00:03:15] **Sally:** Oh, well this interview must stop right now. Uh, they realize it. You can find out more about Nicola Williams.

[00:03:24] **Sally:** No, I, I'm joking, but I know, um, what, what was it like when you were called by [00:03:30] Lincoln's? Cuz Lincoln's in tends to be the, in that people joined with a more international background, if I may say so. Certainly am I.

[00:03:38] **Nicola:** I, I think definitely at the time that was the case, but honestly, the only reason why I worked, because it, you know, they were, as far as I were concerned, they were all equal.

[00:03:47] **Nicola:** I knew from my father and his cohort of, of people that came to the UK in the sixties, a lot of them came to study law and, and. Most of them came to study law to be barristers, and so went to [00:04:00] Lincoln's Inn. But certainly when I was studying my, my degree, most of the people want, well actually there was a strong affiliation with Middle Temple, but the reason why I went to Lincoln's was because I have a cousin who is roundabout my age.

[00:04:13] **Nicola:** She's like, she's, there's only 11 months difference in our age. And she what? She went to Lincoln's and that was the reason why I went. Yeah, that really was it. There wasn't any other reason other than that.

[00:04:26] **Sally:** Yes. Well, as a black woman, I know one. Mm-hmm. We can't [00:04:30] see. I I'm black. You are black. There are many of us, or certainly there are many of you.

[00:04:35] **Sally:** And I can probably count, um, the number of, um, successful senior, um, women of colors, color in leadership. Roles, um, in the profession, whether on the bench or in, in, at the bar. And so I wondered what it was it like when you, uh, with our characteristics Yes. When you came to the bar, were there many black women, [00:05:00] you know, from Africa, Caribbean heritage?

[00:05:03] **Sally:** Um, you know, what was it like, was there kind of barriers? How, how

[00:05:07] was

[00:05:07] **Nicola:** it? Well, I have to say, I, I still think that they're barriers now, but Absolutely. I mean, I was called to the bar in the eighties, so, um, it, it wasn't as if I was called, you know, if you speak to people who are called to the bar, like in the sixties when they were literally like the only one in the classroom, the only one in the library, the only one in Chambers.

[00:05:28] **Nicola:** Yeah. I mean, those are, [00:05:30] oh, well you could even get into chambers. That was why they're so-called. Rather pejoratively named ghetto chambers while that phrase came up is cause people couldn't get taken on into other chambers and congregated and formed their own chambers. I always hate that word, but that was how I referred to.

[00:05:45] **Nicola:** Um, but, but you know, I, I, I was, I was called in the mid eighties and, uh, then yes, there were people, there were certainly people that were my cohort at, um, at um, bar School. That were black and went into the [00:06:00] profession. But I think really the, the, the, the litmus test was not so much who got called to the barber, who stayed at the bar.

[00:06:06] **Nicola:** I, I really think it was that who got pupillage, who then managed to endure, you know, the early days, particularly if you do publicly funded work, how difficult that can be. Um, getting instructions, staying on the good side of Clarks, who managed to do all of that. Um, So I, I think that's what, um, made it. Uh, yeah, it, it, it was challenging.

[00:06:26] **Nicola:** There's no doubt about that. Um, as an [00:06:30] example where I did my first, I, I did my pupil in two different sets of chambers. Um, and I did the first six at a, almost entirely, in fact, it was, yeah, it was an all civil set cuz I wanted to have a mixed civil and criminal practice. And they did a lot of heavy duty civil work and myself and another, um, black female.

[00:06:51] **Nicola:** Uh, tenant pupil were the first black pupils that set of chambers had ever taken on, and we're not talking [00:07:00] about a million years ago, you know, the first ones they ever taken on. And in fact, to show how undiverse it was, apart from it being an all white set of chambers. The first woman tenant that I'd ever taken on was only taken on as a tenant the year before myself and this other girl were taken on as pupils.

[00:07:17] **Nicola:** So that really shows you where, where it, where it was. And then my second six was a mixed civil in crime, but but much more on the crime. You know, when you're on your feet and you're going to the magistrates court, and that was for [00:07:30] the time. Considered to be an extremely diverse set of chambers, which now would be normal, but at the time, that was really like out there because they had, you know, people right across the racial spectrum that were there.

[00:07:42] **Nicola:** Um, good balance of men and women, um, at the senior end as well as the junior end. And that was really considered quite groundbreaking, even though now it would be what we would call normal. So, yeah.

[00:07:51] **Sally:** Yeah. Yes. Is so, so interesting. And I notice on your list of many achievements, you're like a serious high achiever.[00:08:00]

[00:08:00] **Nicola:** I always describe myself as a, the overachieving child of immigrants and, and I'm proud of all of those things. I am an overachiever and

I'm not ashamed of that, and I am a child of immigrants and I'm very, very proud of that. I think there is such a thing as the immigrant drive. Yes. And, uh, yeah, I, so I'm very proud of all those things.

[00:08:18] **Nicola:** Well,

[00:08:18] **Sally:** f fantastic. So am I. But you mentioned you're a, a, a recorder, which is because this podcast attracts an international audience mm-hmm. Um, is a part-time, um, judge. It's a [00:08:30] baby judge. I, I often, uh, uh, say that, uh, and when, when one sits. I interviewed a, um, court of appeal judge recently for a professional ma, a legal magazine, and one of the things we talked about was confidence.

[00:08:44] **Sally:** So I wondered when, where did you get the confidence to apply to be a recorder? Because you've actually been a recorder, part-time judge for a very long time. Yeah, I,

[00:08:54] **Nicola:** I, I've been this year, I think this march. Was [00:09:00] 13 years, I think. Yes, I remember actually, sadly, it, it sort of coincides. It's a bittersweet time for me cuz it coincided with the time that my dad died.

[00:09:08] **Nicola:** Um, I say that because, um, I knew he was always. Hugely proud of me and he would cut out the Times Law reports and say them to me and everything. Um, but I, I remember, in fact, I spoke to him. I was in the Cayman Islands at the time on another job, which I suppose will come up later in this podcast. Yes. But I, I was there and I remember one of the last, and, and I was coming back to do my, [00:09:30] You know, you have to do your week residential course.

[00:09:33] **Nicola:** Yeah. So I'd gotten through all the judge's exams. He knew that, he knew that I'd gotten that. He, he was quite ill at the time, but he, he knew that I'd gotten through, through that. And the only thing I had to do was, uh, my residential weeks course. And, and that last conversation was very encouraging. And he said he's still cutting out the law reports for me and all the rest of it.

[00:09:49] **Nicola:** And then sadly, quite soon after that, someone rang me and told me that he had, he had died. Um, And, uh, and then the decision I had to make was if I [00:10:00] was going to actually come back and do the, the course. Yes. And, and I, I spoke to, I dunno if he still runs it, but I, I spoke to the chap who, who ran the course and he was actually incredibly nice.

[00:10:13] **Nicola:** He really, really was when I was at six and sevens and not knowing if I should do it or not. And he said something which was actually true. He said, you know, he said two things. He said, we don't know when we're next gonna run this. It mightn't be for another three or four years. That's one. And then he said, you know, your father, he probably, from what you've said about [00:10:30] him, he probably would've wanted you to do it.

[00:10:32] **Nicola:** And he was right. He would've wanted me to do it. There's no question about that. But it was difficult. It was very surreal. But people were very kind to me. All, all the le clearly all the, all the lectures had been told. They kind of softed me some questions and uh, you know, we still had the tests and everything, but it was more rigorous with other people, I think.

[00:10:50] **Nicola:** And yeah. Um, yeah, I always remembered as a kind of bittersweet time, but I know he would've been in, he, he was incredibly proud when I showed him. [00:11:00] The, the, you know, the queen has to sign off the list and everything. So, uh, when, when he saw that, and I know he would've been very proud to see me being sworn in.

[00:11:08] **Nicola:** I know that. So, yes.

[00:11:09] **Sally:** Which is wonderful. Which is wonderful. But the question I asked was mm-hmm. How did you have the confidence to apply? Because one of the, okay,

[00:11:18] **Nicola:** this is the thing, and this probably will, when you hear about at least one of my favorite books, um, you'll, you'll know why I say this. Um, I think.

[00:11:28] **Nicola:** Despite being an [00:11:30] introvert, which I really am, people don't believe it, but I am. Yeah, I, I really like it. I really relish a challenge and I am ambitious and, and I thought, well, I could, you know, versa. You and I both know that, you know, if you go into court often enough, you see a wide range of judges, both recorders and full-timers, and a wide range of judicial skills, and then you realize, well, you know, If so-and-so can do it, I think I can do it.

[00:11:56] **Nicola:** Yeah. Um, so I had that sort of, kind of [00:12:00] ballsy self-confidence in my. Intellectual ability to do it. Yes. And, and I, and I do like a challenge. I really don't like the idea of anything beating me at all. That's a good thing or a bad thing, but that's really what it is. But, but it doesn't mean that you don't get the wobbles every so often.

[00:12:15] **Nicola:** I mean, after I'd gotten through all the exams, the five stage process, because I think I was either my cohort or the cohort just before me were the first ones to do that proper exam process rather than it being a. Tap on the shoulder. Um, so I think [00:12:30] once you get through that, you know that, well, you know, I've been blooded if you like, I, I I, I have been tried and tested and a appointed, and I can do this, as opposed to perhaps if someone in the, the old-fashioned way, Which was not very transparent.

[00:12:46] **Nicola:** I mean, if anybody should have doubts about their ability, perhaps it should be some of those people, although some of those people are, are some of the finest judges I've ever come across as well. So I think it was that, but the fir, the very first case I heard that was a very [00:13:00] nerve wracking. Um, every so often I still get that.

[00:13:03] **Nicola:** I don't think that sense of nervousness really goes away, and I think you should be a bit worried if it, if it does go away completely, because then I think you're a bit blase if it does.

[00:13:13] **Sally:** Yes, quite. I mean, I, I agree with you. I, I, I, I often think that, um, that's sort of, uh, uh, I think I'm an adrenaline junkie.

[00:13:23] **Sally:** Mm-hmm. Um, don't, I don't say that cuz I've competed in Marathon recently. Yeah. I, I know that feeling, uh, of, [00:13:30] of going there. Now I want to talk about books because assuming the law, we've got a book club. You're up to come up on it. We can't wait, but you, thank you. Two books. Mm-hmm. Published by Penguin. I mean, they've even got a proper publisher.

[00:13:46] **Sally:** I'm like, where this, I'm nowhere near. And tell me your first book, which I've read. It is great. I don't want to give too much away cuz I want people to, um, read it. It's called Without [00:14:00] Prejudice by Nicola Williams. Thank you. How did that come about? And then you backseat like a major global publisher

[00:14:08] **Nicola:** too?

[00:14:10] **Nicola:** That is a story. It really is. I will honestly say there are things, particularly around my writing, there are things that happened around that, that with the best will in the world, the best, all the best planning I couldn't have made happen. So without prejudice. That was actually first published in 1990.

[00:14:28] **Nicola:** Late, no, July, [00:14:30] 1997. And then it was republished in, uh, February 21. And uh, the first, the first time it was, it was, oh my gosh. Alright. This is the speeded through Cliff notes version. Because it really, even telling it, it sounds a bit sort of fantastical to me. I was doing a. Long and quite difficult in terms of the people I was co-funding with, um, civil case outside of London.

[00:14:56] **Nicola:** Yeah. And I would, I was traveling up there every day and, [00:15:00] you know, I was sticking to it, and I'm glad I did because it, it actually, what it eventually paid, it did pay quite well. But, um, it, it was trying in lots of different ways. But, uh, back then I was a Cosmo reader, so I was reading Cosmopolitan and I saw that they had the Women of Achievement Award and I thought, well, you know, I could do this, but then I thought, well, I don't really wanna ask anybody to, I feel a bit shy about asking people to put me forward.

[00:15:26] **Nicola:** So I thought, well, all right, I'll put myself forwards. If it doesn't, if it doesn't work [00:15:30] out, no one's gonna know. And if it does work out, that'll be great. So I nominated myself in the professions category. Then I didn't hear anything for months. And then I got, um, uh, a letter saying I was down to the last hundred in the professions category.

[00:15:43] **Nicola:** Then I didn't hear anything for ages. And then I was invited to come to the Dorchester where they're going to make the, the prizes in each category. Mm-hmm. And I, at, at one point I was thinking, well, I'm not really sure I can come because of work and everything, but they were saying, I should have realized this.

[00:15:57] **Nicola:** Oh no, you really must come. You really must come. [00:16:00] Um, anyway, I, I, I went there and my category was one of the last ones to be announced. And, um, it was actually, um, Helena Kennedy that announced the, the winner. It was all the professions, not just a legal profession. And she started off by saying, and the person who's won this is a member of my own profession, and then my name was announced, I did not have a clue before that.

[00:16:24] **Nicola:** I really didn't. Nobody tipped the wink to beat nothing. So I was. Shell shocked as I [00:16:30] walked up to the stage to get my prize. So, so there was that. And then whilst I was there, uh, somebody who was making, uh, she, a woman approached me and said she was making a documentary about barristers and asked me whether I would want to be in it.

[00:16:43] **Nicola:** So I said, well, yes. And then that took about a year and a bit. So fast forward later that came out. I don't even know how to find it now if I was looking for it on YouTube or something, but it came out, it was me and two other male barristers. And in the meantime, I was, I'd started writing, but I didn't. I was in [00:17:00] full-time practice.

[00:17:00] **Nicola:** I didn't wanna tell my clerks, I didn't wanna, didn't even wanna tell members of my family because you think you've got a book inside you. And I do believe, um, most people have at least one book inside them. But it, getting it from inside you onto a page and someone taking you seriously is, is a completely different thing.

[00:17:15] **Nicola:** So I was writing away quietly, and then I got a letter from a literary agent saying they were just like surfing the channels. And they happened to come across my 20 minute segment in this [00:17:30] program and they said, I think you've got a book in you. If you've been approached by other people, please ignore this.

[00:17:36] **Nicola:** But if you haven't, please come and talk to us. Wow. So I thought, wow, this is, this is it. So I went and I, and I met them. And I signed with them. But like in all, in all interesting tales, it didn't really work out the way that I thought because ultimately they wanted Youi to write a different kind of book.

[00:17:54] **Nicola:** They wanted me to write a sort of sex and shopping Jackie Collins' legal novel. And, and I [00:18:00] didn't wanna write that. So we parted ways and I, I didn't know what to do then. So all I did, I just looked at all the spines of the books that I, I used to read a lot of legal fiction back then, and I just sent it off to, um, different publishers.

[00:18:15] **Nicola:** And it, one of them was um, headline, uh, which is an imprint for hotter and Staton. And it had actually gone in because it was submitted, not by an agent, it had actually brought into the slush pile and someone fished it outta the [00:18:30] slush pile and put it on the desk of one of the editors and said, I think you should read this.

[00:18:34] **Nicola:** Cause I think it's really good. And that was how I got my deal initially with, um, headline and then wow, I, that was it. That was how it happened. And then I, but believe it or not, despite all of that, I actually, cuz I was still in full-time private practice and, you know, you are sort of, you're hustling, you're grinding, you still got your practice to, to, to keep up.

[00:18:54] **Nicola:** Yes. And, um, I started, uh, I, I was writing between midnight and four in the morning. That was [00:19:00] how I finished that book. And then, uh, I, but then I started to have sort of doubts about whether or not I could do it again. And as a result, I had a two book deal with, um, headline, which I didn't fulfill because I never, I.

[00:19:12] **Nicola:** Did the second book had a real sort of crisis of confidence and I didn't write for a very, very, very, very long time after that. And then fast forward to just before the first lockdown, probably early 2020, I was invited actually by, by someone who I think is a mutual friend on, on, on a [00:19:30] WhatsApp group that we are currently on.

[00:19:31] **Nicola:** Um, yeah. Um, I was, I was in, I was invited, Susan and I, I was invited by her to. Um, go to, she worked around the corner from me when I was the Ombudsman, uh, for the UK Armed Forces. She worked around the corner for me and she'd invited me. She's very quiet, but she has her ear to the ground and she invited me to an, an event at Slaughter and Maze and uh, and I thought it was the women Barrers, sorry, the women senior partners having a book club.[00:20:00]

[00:20:00] **Nicola:** And I really didn't wanna go for lots of. Different reasons. I really did not, nothing to do with Susan, and in fact it was because it was her. That was the reason why I pushed myself to go. So I arrived, and this was like Notebook Club that I'd ever heard of. First of all, they had piles of books from Bernadine, Evero, Mallory Blackman, Diana Evans, and Louise Dowdy.

[00:20:21] **Nicola:** And there are all these parts of books on, on the table. And then I looked around and there were people serving for secco and very nice nibbles and, [00:20:30] and it was a top floor of slaughter base. I thought, okay, well this is a book club with a difference. Or maybe I've misunderstood and

[00:20:37] **Sally:** that's, yeah, I, I wanna go to this book club.

[00:20:39] **Nicola:** Yeah, I, I think, I think I misunderstood it, but I mean, the senior women partners were there, but I think I, I certainly, it wasn't like anything I'd ever beat to. And then, um, Nevero spotted me and I, oh my God. I only knew her because I then realized that not only were the books there, but the authors were there as [00:21:00] well.

[00:21:00] **Nicola:** So, uh, Bern Neese, cuz she's tall like me, I mean, she spotted me and I, and, I, I only knew her as someone who read her work. I didn't know her as a friend or anything like that beforehand. And she clearly has a

good memory for faces cuz she said, I know you don't I. And I said, no, I don't think you do. She said, yeah, you wrote that book ages ago that, that sort of legal crime book, didn't you?

[00:21:22] **Nicola:** And I said, yes. And she said, What happened? Why didn't you write another one? And I just looked a bit shame faced and I said, well, you know, life got in the [00:21:30] way. I kind of lost faith in myself and she just looked at me really quite sort of quizzically. She said, that's a shame. I thought it was really good.

[00:21:37] **Nicola:** And that was it. And then, uh, I, I, in the meantime, I've, I've decided I was going to start writing again. Um, you know, I just had an idea. It was burning a hole in my brain and I just had to get it on paper, even if no one read it. I had to do it. And then we had the lockdown, of course, which meant that I, I would use my commuting time to write.

[00:21:55] **Nicola:** But, you know, I thought that was a lovely encounter from Bernard Dean, the encouragement for me, but, um, nothing [00:22:00] more than that. Then she won the booker. And then about three to five months after that, I got a call from a very, very persistent caller, from a withheld number. And normally I don't answer those.

[00:22:11] **Nicola:** I just let them go to voicemail and they wouldn't leave a message. They kept calling. So eventually I just answered and was rather ungracious. I think when I answered and the person said, oh, you don't know me, but my name is Hannah and I'm calling from. Penguin and Bernadine wants to, um, get to re [00:22:30] have your book and five other books reprinted as part of the, um, great Britain Writing Black series, uh, because these are books from the last century, from 1900 to 1999 that she felt should have had more, um, attention than they did.

[00:22:46] **Nicola:** Yeah. Which is not to say I didn't have attention the first time around. I, I did. I'm not in any way, shape or form criticizing hotter headline or anything like that. I think in many ways, perhaps it was the book ahead of its time. I think cuz this is 1997. Yeah. When it came [00:23:00] out, you know, a lot had changed in terms of the legal landscape, the willingness to hear certain types of stories.

[00:23:06] **Nicola:** Sadly, George Floyd and I think that did have an impact too. Um, anyway, yes. Um, so, so they, they approached me about that and I'm like, yes, cuz I'm writing anyway and this will be great, you know? Um, and so I said yes. So that book comes out in, uh, March 21, sorry, February 21. And then,

um, and then shortly after, and which actually was received really [00:23:30] well, bearing in mind how, how old it was or how long ago I'd written it, and that people thought it was very topical still.

[00:23:35] **Nicola:** Um, It was,

[00:23:37] **Sally:** I I read it as if it was a new book, I must admit. Yeah. Cause it's lockdown, so it's good you, you ahead of your time.

[00:23:44] **Nicola:** And, and I think that was probably the reason why, although, you know, I I, it, it did sell first time around. I mean, I had a US publisher and all the rest of it as well as a UK publisher, but I definitely think it was, it was a book whose idea the time had come for it, um, the [00:24:00] second time around.

[00:24:00] **Nicola:** So it, it came out, it was well received again and. And in, and then, um, penguin republished it. And uh, at that point I then had an agent. I didn't have an agent the first time around without prejudice, but by now I did. And my agent said, well, you know, she's writing another one. Cuz once I've started I thought, I'm just gonna go now.

[00:24:20] **Nicola:** I'm just gonna keep going. And they wanted, they wanted to have a look at it. And, um, the rest is history, I guess. Wow. Yes. I have a two [00:24:30] book deal with Penguin, so,

[00:24:32] **Sally:** Amazing. I mean, it's, it's fantastic and I'm so thrilled because actually it's also meant, you know, stormy and, uh, murky books. Yes. Um, is actually supporting black authors because it's not, you know, I think it's something like only 2% of authors are actually black.

[00:24:49] **Sally:** And whilst is it, is it as

[00:24:51] **Nicola:** small as that? Oh my God.

[00:24:53] **Sally:** I think it's because, um, last. Well, not, not last year, um, just post pandemic, I think it was. [00:25:00] Mm-hmm. I, I was, um, I, I won a, an award for professional services and, and at that there were several authors. It was run by Flukey, uh, Precious's Awards, uh, which you remind me familiar with.

[00:25:12] **Sally:** And, um, The presenters were very keen to get people to not only support authors, um, likers, but actually review the books. And I looked,

yeah, I looked at that, uh, uh, statistics. So it's great what everybody's doing. And of course [00:25:30] it's pointers writing books from minority authors or anybody. If nobody reads them, that's always, if they Oh,

[00:25:34] **Nicola:** absolutely.

[00:25:35] **Nicola:** I, I've always been. I've always said, I, I, you, you never know how your book is going to be received when you write it. And there are some brilliant books that a lot of people don't get to read. But as far as I'm concerned, I do think it is possible to write a book that is well written and commercially successful, and that is definitely what I aim to do.

[00:25:55] **Sally:** So, yeah, absolutely. But just before I move on to my next question, can I ask you to [00:26:00] tell us briefly what is until proven about,

[00:26:05] **Nicola:** Okay. Until proven innocent is sort of the flip side of, as you know, um, uh, Sally, the ba, the typical the barrister is dinner party question, how can you represent someone you know is guilty?

[00:26:16] **Nicola:** And that was the impetus that that led to me writing without prejudice until proven innocent is the flip side of that, which, how can you represent someone who everyone else thinks is guilty? Has been accused of an absolutely heinous crime and is a [00:26:30] really nasty, horrible individual that doesn't suddenly see the light.

[00:26:34] **Nicola:** It is a really horrible individual, and despite all of that, Maybe just, maybe they didn't do it. And so this is a, a, um, police officer who is accused of shooting, uh, a, a, a black teenager in the, in the face. And, um, but his father's a pastor. And there's all these sort of different issues around, um, those sort of ethical questions that barristers have to face.

[00:26:58] **Nicola:** And did he do it? Did he not do [00:27:00] it? That, that kind of thing. So that was, that's the impetus behind it. It also deals with other issues like gentrification of areas and such nice side issues like that. So, yes. So that,

[00:27:11] **Sally:** that is it. Wow. Well, um, I've, I haven't got that. I think I pre-ordered it, so I'm, wait, I'm waiting.

[00:27:18] **Sally:** But I'm excited to read it and I'm looking forward to you joining, um, us and the women in the law, uh, uh, Bookla, because we always invite Thank you. So it'll be wonderful. Um, I, I can honestly

[00:27:29] **Nicola:** [00:27:30] say to people, and you know, Mike Saudi models, but I do believe it's true, if you like, without prejudice, you really like until proven innocent, because I've had an extra 25 years to hone my craft.

[00:27:42] **Nicola:** Love it. Love.

[00:27:43] **Sally:** I love that. Well, whilst we're on books Yes. What's your favorite book and why? And if I may yes. Ask you a follow up question about, you know, who's your favorite fictional character. So firstly, what's your favorite book? Amne. I know I'm restricting you to one. I'll [00:28:00] let you have too. The push

[00:28:01] **Nicola:** I, I, I honestly look.

[00:28:03] **Nicola:** I, I'm just looking at my books on my bookshelves right now. I cannot be restricted to, even if, I just think that of, of like fairly recent books I can't be restricted to. So may I have a fiction and a non-fiction? Well, no, actually they're both non-fiction. Um, alright, can I have two? Because they're for two different reasons.

[00:28:24] **Sally:** All right. As as this isn't Des Island disk. Yes. Am I stretch? I'm feeling generous. It must be [00:28:30] the marathons affected my brain. There you go.

[00:28:32] **Nicola:** Thank you for that. Yeah. Okay. Um, the, the, the first book is one that I had sort of referenced when I talked about being ambitious. It's a book that I read. I mean, it's probably about 20 years old now, but it was a book that I do keep going back to, cause it really resonates with me.

[00:28:48] **Nicola:** It's called Ethical Ambition, and it's by, uh, uh, Professor, uh, Harvard, um, law professor called Derek Bell. Uh, come to think if he might have passed now, but I think he was the, [00:29:00] the, the first black professor to be appointed to Harvard. And then there was some issue about the appointment of another, um, black.

[00:29:07] **Nicola:** Professor longer after he came a woman. And I think the attitude it, according to him, I'm not saying it was true cause I don't want anyone to sue me, um, that it seemed as if, you know, we've got our one minority, we don't need another one. And he resigned his post. So it was all about ethical abi how you can keep your ethics and still be ambitious.

[00:29:26] **Nicola:** So that is why I keep coming back to that. [00:29:30] And the other one is from the person that everybody likes, Michelle Obama becoming. Yes. I thought that was absolutely an amazing book. Um, I, I've got her latest one, but I haven't read it yet. Um, but I just think in, in, in, in what it says about her and how she's navigated certain things and her outlook on the world, and I, I just, yeah, I mean, The risk is, I sound a bit like a fan girl if I talk about her too much, but yes.

[00:29:58] **Nicola:** But, uh, those, those two [00:30:00] books, I mean, honestly, I could, I could do a whole list. A whole list, yes. Like I love Shakespeare and I started off reading Shakespeare. That is still my love. When my mom came to this country, um, they had, uh, she read Shakespeare when she was pregnant with me, and she said, that's the reason why I like it.

[00:30:16] **Nicola:** Um, so. So, but those two, and thank you for allowing me an extra one. So

[00:30:21] **Sally:** yes, and I tied generous for now. And then tell me, um, you know, as I'm looking at you visually, you look quite glamorous, [00:30:30] you know, your hair's down, you've got your glasses on, very tidy office. Um, you know, what's your favorite fictional character now?

[00:30:38] **Sally:** You know, legal character. I mean, no

[00:30:40] **Nicola:** you're not. Um, Well, oh, I was gonna ask for two, but all this time I'll, I'll just stick with one actually. Um, I think it's funny it's changed over the years, um, but I think if you're talking about recently, one that I like, it would be, um, [00:31:00] Diane Lockhart from The Good Wife and then The Good Fight.

[00:31:04] **Nicola:** Yes. Which is again, somebody, and I think it's probably. You know, she's a mature woman, but she's very bright. She's a, she's at the top of her game. She always looks great too. And, and, and, and, and she deals with like tricky ethical issues. And, and I really like, she's like the. The conscious of her firm in many ways.

[00:31:25] **Nicola:** Yes. And you've just seen her different iterations about when she was at her original firm and then when [00:31:30] she went to the firm that, um, Delora Linda was running and you know that, all of that. And, and I just, I also think that series is extremely well written anyway, and I think it's really nice to see.

[00:31:40] **Nicola:** And I suppose, you know, as I get older, I'm probably looking at the, the way that, um, parts for. Like women over 40 are drawn and it's really nice to see someone who's not a, a caricature or anything like that. So, so I, I, so that's the reason, I mean, if you, if you, if you were going to let me have another one, I would [00:32:00] say she, she is a lawyer, but not a lawyer.

[00:32:02] **Nicola:** So I would say, um, Olivia Pope from Scandal, uh, because I just think that's also a very interesting, uh, role. And I did have the, um, the good fortune to meet the real person. Of, of on whom? That No. I did. Wow. Yeah, I did. And, and now I'm trying to remember the, the, the woman's name I nearly swore, but the woman I was trying to remember, oh my gosh.

[00:32:24] **Nicola:** She really is based on a real person. I did meet her, it was at a conference in the States [00:32:30] and, um, she was surprising. I, I think she's somebody who I. Probably cause of the work that she's done. She likes to keep a low profile. Yes. But then she came, she spoke, it was a very high end law legal conference and so she ca and, and it was actually in Washington.

[00:32:43] **Nicola:** So it's probably the reason why she spoke. Um, but she was also very impressive. So yeah. That's

[00:32:50] **Sally:** such amazing. And of course the Series Scandal, which is a fantastic series. I also watched and loved it and I didn't watch Mte. Um, another, it's also very,

[00:32:59] **Nicola:** [00:33:00] very well written as well. Yes, I love it's well written dramas.

[00:33:03] **Nicola:** I love to see it.

[00:33:04] **Sally:** Yeah. So that, I was going to say brilliantly written by, um, Shonda Rhimes. Yes. Who of course deliberately writes characters for black women. Well, and all backgrounds really. She, of course, grew, uh, wrote Grey's Anatomy, which showcased, you know, the Diverseness of

[00:33:23] **Nicola:** America. Yes. And I think she's behind Bridgeton as well.

[00:33:25] **Nicola:** I behind Bridge. I've never actually seen Bridgeton, but I know she's, I think she's [00:33:30] behind it in some way.

[00:33:31] **Sally:** Yes, well, you should because, um, there were of course books. So I've read the books and I've seen one or I think the first series. But,

um, yeah, I, I think it's, it's really great and it's important for authors to write part of course for, um, you know, actors of all characteristics course.

[00:33:50] **Sally:** So they don't even go to the states. So no pressure Nicola? Um, well,

[00:33:55] **Nicola:** well, you know, there is actually, and I think this, this is known, so I can say this, there is. [00:34:00] There is some TV interest in, uh, or, or let's say the screen rights have been optioned for without prejudice. Wow.

[00:34:08] **Sally:** Yeah. Oh, I can't, I can't wait now because we started talking about Bridgeton and um, you know, actors parse and so on.

[00:34:17] **Sally:** Mm-hmm. Um, lawyers or those are the bar likers as well. Yes. We love the theater. You know, I sit on the theater, the theater board, and um, and so I wondered what do you do for your wellbeing, you know, to kind of look after [00:34:30] yourself. Um, cuz you look great. I mean, you how old you are. I'm old enough

[00:34:37] **Nicola:** not to tell

[00:34:37] **Sally:** anybody.

[00:34:38] **Sally:** You still have to tell, you don't have to tell anybody. People tell me between us, but not on here. I just wondered how you look after yourself. Cuz let's face it, you know, well, the bar, we've got better at wellbeing. We talk about law can doing great things, but the truth is it's still long hours. It's still.

[00:34:56] **Sally:** Early starts. So how do you look after your own wellbeing or [00:35:00] how would you, and your own mental health, I

[00:35:02] **Nicola:** guess? Well, when I was at the bar, because I was at the bar for 16 years and then I left and I became an ombudsman, so I was an ombudsman for defense. I, I lived in the Cayman Islands for five years and I was an ombudsman there.

[00:35:16] **Nicola:** Um, I, I, but one, certainly when I was at the bar, it was people, if, if you had any sort of, I would even say a mental health crisis if you were just having a difficult time. Yeah. It might be e even if, [00:35:30] and heaven help you if it was a full burn crisis, like depression or something. But if

you are having a difficult time because of the doggy dog nature of the bar, you didn't wanna tell people, you didn't want to let people think.

[00:35:39] **Nicola:** You just crack up if you, if you didn't have a case or you, you, you just didn't want people to, to know that. So, and sadly, you know that there's a big, um, Wellness at the bar at the moment, but that really started because of the. Deaths by suicide of, of three, at least that I know of three barristers. [00:36:00] So, um, it said it has a very sad genesis, but at least people are now thinking about things like that.

[00:36:05] **Nicola:** So, to myself, when I was, when I was at the bar, I was terrible at it. I really didn't look after myself properly. And so if I, I volunteer for speakers for schools and I like to go and talk to young people about. You know, the professions and, and, and one of the things I told them is, whatever you do, always make sure that you have a, a, a, a good balance.

[00:36:23] **Nicola:** You might not get an exact balance in your life, but your life has gotta be about more than just work. It's [00:36:30] gotta be about other things that replenish you. So it, it could be anything. I mean, honestly, sometimes, sometimes it's watching Judge Judy with a glass of Prosecco and some crook or, or, or just like, Sitting back and reading in and, and not all, not everything I read is high brow.

[00:36:46] **Nicola:** I have to tell you that. Uh, it's a real mix of high and low brow actually. Um, sometimes I, I, but I do like, I love going to the theater. In fact, um, I've just come back from New York and I saw two plays when I was there, uh, [00:37:00] in one of which was Prima Facey.

[00:37:03] **Sally:** Oh, I love that. I missed it was See it in real life.

[00:37:07] **Sally:** Be Pardon? Sorry? I said you got to see it in person. Yes, cuz I saw it in Empty Live. Cuz I love J Coma. Yes. Who I'd love to invite onto this podcast.

[00:37:17] **Nicola:** Yes. I, I, I, I saw it in real life and it was, I missed it in the, I missed it All right. I missed it in the theater and I missed it on Empty Live. And just when I went to the States, it opened the same day I was there and I thought, this is a [00:37:30] sign.

[00:37:30] **Nicola:** Yes. So I've got to go and get a a a a, sick that it was once they'd won the awards. The seats were very expensive, but I thought I've gotta go and see it, and I'm so glad I did. Uh, Jodi covers absolute ful. She really,

really is. And what it talks about is very important to talk about. And, and there's, they're doing a whole thing with showing it to teenagers and, and issues around consent in the states as well.

[00:37:53] **Nicola:** So that I think is really good. So I do like, I love the theater, I love music across the piece. [00:38:00] Um, I, I, I, I like, and not just because they're a diverse orchestra, so that does help, but chink, I think they are brilliant as an orchestra. But I, but I like, I like classic music, I love jazz, I love all sorts of stuff.

[00:38:13] **Nicola:** Um, long time ago I was engaged in musicians, so that's probably one reason. But, but, um, yeah, but I mean, I, I, but all those things I, I, and I love film, but I like to. Films on my own. I like to just go to a nice cinema where you can get a glass of wine and sit and watch, sit and watch maybe an old black and white [00:38:30] movie or something like that.

[00:38:30] **Nicola:** So, so it's a mixture of things. If I'm in a more introverted space, I like to just read, um, go to the cinema on my own, sort of get outta my head sometimes. Go for really long walks, which I only started doing during the first lockdown when the weather was so good. Yes. I started going for longs in, and I explored my own neighborhood in a way that I'd never done before.

[00:38:50] **Nicola:** And so I still love doing that. I just, I, I really love doing that, particularly if the weather is good or early in the morning, and sometimes I'd just like to be with my friends and go out, hang [00:39:00] out, still like to dance if I can. I, except you have to be, you know, I, I only go to age appropriate places if I'm going to do that.

[00:39:07] **Nicola:** I don't want to be dancing with a whole bunch of kids. So, but, you know, all, all, all, that's the, the different types of things. Um, But I, I, I always tell, uh, but this is something I've actually only learned as I got older. When I was young, I didn't have a handle on it at all. So I was just working work. Come to think of it, I probably had to pass 40 before I changed.

[00:39:27] **Nicola:** Um, yeah. And I didn't realize it. I just, I. [00:39:30] Didn't realize what I was doing. I was just working almost to the point of burnout. And, um, so I would absolutely tell people don't even get near to that. Just don't, yeah. Um, particularly if you're doing cases that are very challenging, like very challenging, um, cases involving children, for example, or Yeah, very nasty murders or anything like that.

[00:39:52] **Nicola:** You really need to, you've gotta have some balance. Otherwise, you, you, you know, you, you, you just, you will break down. You [00:40:00] really will. Yes. And, and I think it's, even now that I, I, I've only in order to write, I knew if I was going to write full-time, I'd have to give up something. And what I have given up is, I suppose, A full-time practice, uh, or working full-time in any other capacity.

[00:40:17] **Nicola:** So I do a lot of sitting, and I'm even with judges, I would say. I mean, I've not had this discussion with judges, but I think probably, especially with judges, you really need to have a good balance in your life, whatever that [00:40:30] balance is, however you find that balance that is.

[00:40:32] **Sally:** Fantastic. Well let, we're coming to the end of the podcast, but before we finish, I want to ask you a, a serious question.

[00:40:40] **Sally:** Yes.

[00:40:41] **Nicola:** You mean the rest haven't

[00:40:42] **Sally:** been serious? No, no, no. Joking. But this question is about, Advice and guidance. You know, I'm trying to use my platform to make sure that the, the women and the young people of all characteristics coming behind us have a [00:41:00] slightly easier journey. Yes. In their crew. And you've demonstrated, you know, the transferrable skills that certainly in our branch or the profession can give you in being a woodsman, a writer, part-time judge.

[00:41:13] **Sally:** You know, it's been wonderful. But I wonder, what would you say to somebody starting out in their careers now? Um, About getting into, whether it's our sister profession, solicitors or silex or, or, or, or the bar. You know? Have you got any [00:41:30] advice or tips or guidance to a young person,

[00:41:33] **Nicola:** a young person, starting at, so are, are you saying this person would be, they've, they've done their degree and they're just about to start into the profession, that kind of age.

[00:41:42] **Nicola:** Well,

[00:41:42] **Sally:** yeah. Or it's someone literally who's got pupillage and wondering how to maneuver. Okay. Um, the, the profession, maybe they're from, you know, a background where they don't know any lawyers like I was and didn't know anything.

[00:41:54] **Nicola:** Okay. Well, I, well the first thing I would do is congratulate them. Even forgetting that far because [00:42:00] if I think back to, uh, and you know, I would like to think this has changed.

[00:42:03] **Nicola:** I sincerely hope it has, but my own careers teacher, when I was doing a Levels told me not to even think about. Going to university and I should go and work in Woolworths. Um, yeah, she did. Yeah. And I, and I, I say there with no fear of contradiction cause that's exactly what she did. And uh, it was actually kind of funny because I.

[00:42:23] **Nicola:** Later on when I was doing my degree, she saw me working at, at a, at a shop in Croydon, just like in the summer. And she [00:42:30] came up to me and she said, oh, I'm so happy you found something that suited your talents. I said, well, actually I'm at the end of my first year of my law degree. And she just sort of disappeared off into the corner, very red in the face, and I never saw her again.

[00:42:41] **Nicola:** So, so I would say at least the person who's gotten to Pupilage has gotten past, not the worst actually, but you've passed a big hurdle because it was difficult getting pupilage. When I came to the bar, and I know the competition's even fierce now, and then you've got, you know, everything there to the barrister [00:43:00] strike.

[00:43:00] **Nicola:** Um, covid, all those, a lot of people leaving the bar, which is a real shame, I would say. Um, work-life balance and, and it's not just a phrase, it's something you really should do. Whatever your thing is. Just make sure you have it in, in, in, in your life. Um, and realize this is a, um, it's a marathon, not a sprint.

[00:43:22] **Nicola:** If you really want to have a, a long-term career, you need to, um, think about that. And I suppose I say particularly for women, I would say that if [00:43:30] you want to, if you want to have a family, particularly with the bar being a kind of, um, like exciting, but sometimes a little bit precarious career in a way.

[00:43:40] **Nicola:** Yeah. You have to really work out. When you, you basically have to plan your life, so you have to work out. If for example, you know, by, let's say for example, you know by the age of 30 you want to either started your family or you're with the person that you want to start a family with, then if you are getting your pupillage at sort of 22 ish, [00:44:00] you know, you've got eight to 10 years in order to try and build up your practice, plus set things and train so that you can have.

[00:44:08] **Nicola:** The family life that you want as well as the career that you want, and I think sometimes you can. Not deliberately forget those things. But I think that the bar is, you can get so focused on like, without, like with lots of things you can get so focused on one thing that you can take your eye off the wall for something else.

[00:44:24] **Nicola:** And for women you have to think more hysterically. So you have to have your eye on both. [00:44:30] And that's of course if you, if you want to do that. Some women don't wanna do that. Some women don't think that by 30 they have no interest in kids. And then who knows? A lot can happen between 30 and 40. So, you know, uh, it's so, it's, but it's just taking.

[00:44:43] **Nicola:** For both men and women, I would say, but probably slightly more for women. Remember, it's your whole life that you're thinking about, not just your

[00:44:49] **Sally:** professional life. Yes. I love that. I mean, what a wonderful place, um, to kind of pause and, and, and might I ask you this? What about advice and tips? You've [00:45:00] already alluded to this, um, for, again, maybe especially women mm-hmm.

[00:45:05] **Sally:** But people who are their kind of, you know, 10, 12 years call of their career thinking, right. You know, should I think about a non-exec role chairing a board, chairing a trustee, maybe go and work in the Cayman Islands for five years? Well, what advice is that apart from just do it, which we can't coin from, you know, Nike?

[00:45:27] **Nicola:** Yes, they definitely can't cuz Nike will come after us [00:45:30] actually. Well,

[00:45:32] **Sally:** but you know, on a serious note, sometimes. You know, we've been through a pandemic. It's been a difficult couple of years. Yeah. Many of us practicing. You know, I've got three children. Mm-hmm. I'm in court. Uh, you know, I have to do, I'm now sitting, there's a lot going on.

[00:45:47] **Sally:** I You had any, um, Again, uh, tips and advice or guidance for those kind of women who are thinking about the next

[00:45:57] **Nicola:** stage? Well, [00:46:00] again, I would congratulate them on at least thinking about it cuz you need, I'm a big believer in planning, and I would say this to people at any age, including the A-level students.

[00:46:08] **Nicola:** If I'd go into schools and talk to them, you should have a plan, but be prepared to pivot from your plan. So, for example, my plan was always to. To stay at the bar and at some point either become a, a, a recorder or a, or a Casey or both, you know. But that was, but it was to stay at the bar and not leave. And then I ended up leaving, uh, because I [00:46:30] was approached about another job, which actually sounded really interesting.

[00:46:33] **Nicola:** And although it was a bit strange to leave, I'm really glad that I had the courage to take that pivot. Yes. And then when the Cayman Islands job came up, um, that was, that was a real. Leap in the dark because it sounded interesting. But I didn't know a soul in the game in Ireland at all. So I thought, well, you know, If it, if, you know, if it doesn't work out, I can come back after a year, but I didn't know.

[00:46:56] **Nicola:** And then my dad died seven months in, so the, the real pressure was [00:47:00] to come back, well, not pressure, external pressure, but more of an internal pressure. But yes, um, I, I, my father and I were really close and I, I know he would've wanted me to stay at least a year in Cavan. So I did. And then he got a bit better and it got a bit better and people started coming out to visit me.

[00:47:14] **Nicola:** But to your question, I would say it's, um, like that, have a plan. So I would like to think that someone, by the time they got to that midpoint in their career, so they'd be about mid thirties ish, that they would early to mid [00:47:30] thirties, that they already have a plan, which is why they got there. And but. But have a, if you like, a plan A and a plan B, so you might be thinking, oh, you know, I, I, I, I think I, I want to take silk or, or actually I want to ease up from my full-time practice because I want to start a family or just because I, the one thing that the pandemic has made people realize is that work doesn't have to be the way it used to be.

[00:47:58] **Nicola:** Yes. So you don't actually need [00:48:00] to have. What would have deemed to be in the past, an excuse of, I want to spend more time with my family. Now you can just think, you know what? Life is short and if the pandemic taught us nothing else, it's that. And really, I just want a little bit more time to, a little bit more space to stop and smell the roses.

[00:48:18] **Nicola:** And if, if it works out financially for you, you can do it. Then I would say, if, if that's your plan, then you should do that, but always have a plan because if you've got a plan, You can go away from it and come back to it or the [00:48:30] plan can change. But I, I would advise you, I would

advise anybody at this point not to be just drifting and see where life takes them, cuz it mightn't take you where you want.

[00:48:39] **Nicola:** It might take you down a blind alley, which is not where you want to be. So, Yes. Quite.

[00:48:44] **Sally:** Oh, I love that. I'm writing it down. I think we could all of this. Yeah. Nicola Williams advice. Now, um,

[00:48:51] **Nicola:** I, I, maybe I should write a book about this actually.

[00:48:54] **Sally:** Yes. Nevermind your fictional, you know, legal thrillers. I'll tell, are you, [00:49:00] come on.

[00:49:00] **Sally:** We moved on now from legal thrillers, which you're always re reviewing idi. Um, yes. I wonder what's next? Then, you know, you introvert, as you described yourself. What, what's next? Is it going up into a full-time circuit judge role? Is it more books, is it, um, or is it all of those things? What's next for Nicola Williams?

[00:49:23] **Nicola:** Well, I never rule any of those things out. I will say that right now I have been approached about, Uh, [00:49:30] many times before now about a full-time position because I've been, uh, recorded after 13 years, and I, I know that I couldn't be a, a full-time judge and write. I just, I don't even know if Judicial SEC would allow that, but, but I also wouldn't have the time to do it, what it takes to be a, a full-time and write.

[00:49:48] **Nicola:** I, I couldn't do it. The other thing is, I think because when I was younger at the bar, I didn't get that work-life balancing, um, Right. I think, yeah. And I suppose what I want to do, particularly post pandemic, [00:50:00] I want to get that right. I, I want, I always want, I, I will be one of these people who'll be working till a dying day cuz I like to work.

[00:50:07] **Nicola:** I really do. I like to have my mind, um, engaged and I, I, I really like that. But, but I, I, but. I always knew, I mean that a turning point for me was, I think it was probably like the year before the pandemic when I was the service complaint zoman for her Majesty's Armed Forces, and then I was the highest ranking person of color period, let alone black person in UK defense at that time.[00:50:30]

[00:50:30] **Nicola:** And Wow. But, but I, I still had to travel it on the train like everybody else. So I remember going in on a winters morning to London,

British, walking across the bridge to get to my office, and I thought, I don't, the idea of, of strap hanging for the rest of my life. I can't when no one will give you a seat and your back's hurting.

[00:50:48] **Nicola:** And all I said, I, I, I said whatever I do. When the pandemic happened and I really had to think about my life going forward, I thought one thing I don't want to do is that again, which means I'm gonna have to really start rethinking my [00:51:00] life and how I, my working life and how I wanted to go. And also I want to leave.

[00:51:05] **Nicola:** Time for people. Time for like downtime in in between, which as I say, when you, when you're. Particularly when you're on the way up at the bar, that first 10, 15 years, that is just a grind and you, you know, you can be quite, maybe, maybe it was just me, but I know it's possible to be the person who has to cancel things last minute with friends or because you got a brief to prepare or something like that.

[00:51:27] **Nicola:** Yeah, I, I, I wanted to be [00:51:30] the person who didn't do that anymore. The person who just had a bit more time to enjoy life. On a regular basis, not just when I went on holiday. So, so it, it, it really was looking at my life in a very different way. So I think it, it will, my life, my working life will always have books in it.

[00:51:47] **Nicola:** And maybe even a non-fiction book about, I dunno, the world according to Nicola Williams maybe. Um, but it, it'll have, um, books in it and it will have the law in it because I really do love the law. [00:52:00] Um, I don't want the balance that I have now as a recorder and an author is probably the happiest that I've been in my working life.

[00:52:06] **Nicola:** And also, you mentioned Ned roles and I, I, I do sit on a, on some boards and that is still a new thing for me. I'm still trying to, you know, none of them I've had longer than. Three years, three to five years. So that's still quite a new thing for me, trying to get used to that. But I, I like the, the flexibility.

[00:52:26] **Nicola:** All that builds in. You have to be very good at your time management and all the rest of it. [00:52:30] But I love the flexibility of that. So I, I, I really like the flexibility and choice. That's what I've got now and that's what I want to have going forward. Great. And also to be able to advise people, um, people more junior coming up with the profession.

[00:52:47] **Nicola:** Well, just younger people generally, even if they're not going to be lawyers, um, just to give them the benefit of my advice. And maybe I, I, I know that there would've been, I would've loved to have had sort of [00:53:00] real world advice from people who looked like me in my profession when I was coming up. And there were people, it wasn't that there wasn't, but everyone was so not unfriendly, but they'd kind of head down and.

[00:53:13] **Nicola:** Everyone was it, it felt very precarious for all of us. So I think going forward I would very much like to be that for younger people.

[00:53:21] **Sally:** Amazing. For sure. Amazing. Well, Nicola Williams, it's been, uh, wonderful talking to you on [00:53:30] Talking Law by your career and wonderful to get your advice and views and hear about, um, being an author and just wonderful to see where the transferrable skills are from starting out life as a barrister to such a wonderful career that, um, you are still having.

[00:53:48] **Sally:** Um, so thank you for spending time being interviewed by me on Talking Law.

[00:53:53] **Nicola:** Thank you very much, Sally. Again, it has been a joy. I listen to your podcast all the time, so Oh gosh.[00:54:00]