TL Michael Mansfield Edit

**Michael Mansfield:** [00:00:00] Most people don't recognize I'm getting on a bit. And in terms of age, maybe other things as well, which is why I'm wearing this t-shirt today, which somebody gave me for my birthday, which is the older the moon. It's a sort of Jamaican proverb. The brighter it shines. Well, I like to look at life like that, but you know, getting older doesn't mean you're getting decrepit.

Absolutely. But, you know, parts of my body may be falling off, but the one bit that hasn't fallen off yet is, you know, up top. So I feel that while I've got a few marbles, um, which have been put to good use over the years, uh, I can still give back, uh, and build on the experience that I've had in order to help.

The whole intentional at the start was to, to help those who really don't have a voice, or if they have a voice, are afraid to use it. And there are lots of people in that bracket. And it's getting worse because we've got a, uh, well, we haven't got a government at all at [00:01:00] the moment. And, and, uh, e e even when we do, I don't think it's particularly effective in terms of facilitating what I've just spoken about.

And in fact, the impact of covid, the impact of the cost of living, uh, crisis, the impact of environmental denigration, in fact is upon mainly those who are vulnerable, those who do not have resources, uh, unlike most of the front bench of the conservative party who seem to have more resources than they deserve.

So it seems to me that, um, you know, the need to do what I started out to do is greater now than it was when I started, which is why I've stayed in it. And, um, you know, at the moment I'm doing, uh, the Grandful inquiry on behalf of some of the founders. I'm not alone in any of these. You can't do things alone, part of a team.

Um, I've got a major inquest coming up. Where the police, um, killed somebody in a hard stop. And then I've got the Salisbury [00:02:00] poisoning case and, um, possibly the Covid public inquiry under Heather Hallett. Well, that's pretty much, you know, that's Plateful Yes. In, in each of those cases. It's representing the kind of people I've represented for the last 50 odd years.

Yeah.

**Sally:** Well, Michael, what, what brought you to the Nor in the first place? You know, you are now 81, your marbles are totally there cuz we were having a conversation before we started recording and you were recording the dates. I quickly checked them. You were spot on. So there's nothing wrong with your brain, but what, what, you know, sharp as ever.

But what brought you to the law in the first place? My mother,

**Michael Mansfield:** I mean, it's. For fear of repetition, uh, let alone hesitation and all the other things. Um, I have told this story before and I think it's in the book, but people seem to be intrigued by it. I mean, I, I was, [00:03:00] I was brought up in a, in a, a particularly ordinary, I'm quite proud of you. I don't, I'm not trying to run it down, but it was just an ordinary background, you know, two up, two down in Westone.

Now you say, where's Wetstone? Well, it's where soldiers on the way to the Battle of Barnet sharpened their swords. So it's a kind of historic site, not anymore so much. And it's part of the Finchly constituency now where my mother used to support Margaret Thatcher. So that's the kind of background I come from.

Not a lot of resources. I had two older brothers who left home and gone off around the world doing other things. So I was brought up as an only child and my father was disabled from the First World War and, um, As I say, it was a very safe, secure upbringing. We, we, we didn't travel very much and we didn't, didn't never moved house.

That was unheard of, uh, in the time I was there. So stable, [00:04:00] secure, but very Ted in one sense. And I was very lucky to be in that situation cuz not very many people necessarily have that. So I'm, that's where I came from. And my mother had this habit, well here, lot of habits, but one of them was she'd nip off to Saints Bridge.

Um, I think I'm allowed to say that, uh, fuck on this. It's not a commercial station to Saintsbury and this little local saints saintsbury in Westone every Thursday in her car, which was one of the latest Ford sit up bag. Alia tight cars, like four populous, very few people had them, but she did. My father couldn't drive cuz disabled, she drove and um, she go to Saintsbury.

With him in the passenger seat and um, don't worry, I'll come back to wa the question you asked. That's get, but it's about, then she parks and she goes in and her her order. It is always the same every week. And it's the [00:05:00] order for the Sunday lunch, you know, it'll be not very much. It might be a lamb joint, it might be some pork chops or something.

She gets the same. She comes out, gets in the car, goes home, she gets the summons for parking between the, the no yellow lions. Then this is way back I was six. It's a long time again. Six or seven, somewhere around there. She gets the summons for parking between the studs cuz you weren't allowed to nodding out.

And, uh, she blew a gasket and said, what? Break the door? Never. I wouldn't do that. You know, God fearing, uh, Tory voting. And deep respect for the men in blue. And the women were, there weren't many women then. Um, so she said, I don't understand. I couldn't possibly have done this and I didn't do it. I know where I park, same place every week.

And of course my father was there. So anyway, [00:06:00] she said, I'm gonna fight this now. This is in something, you know, fight parking, summons, you know, nobody. And she went to court. This is Perry Mason. She goes to court. She defends herself as surprise witness, you know, in comes my disabled father, bang, she wins hands down.

Wow. Front page is a finish. She times, you know, housewife, whatever she was called, I can't remember. You know, um, win's case not guilty and all the rest of it. That, that was a turning point. And cuz she said, look to me and others, she said, if they do that to me, if they lie about me and the parking trial, what are they doing to the rest of the world kind of thing.

So she said to me, you must never trust a man, possibly a woman in uniform. Um, you, you've gotta question everything they do. And she then, uh, thereafter she called them blue bottles. Whenever we went around, I'd sit in the back seat. She said, there's one over there. Look, look, what's he up to you. And so there was a [00:07:00] deep, deep suspicion of, um, that kind of authority from a very early age.

And, um, she, she, well, she died carrying that, uh, critique with her and I, and I think that, you know, it, it begin it be, it's not the only factor, but then you have to remember also there was something else happening in this period. And that is, The advent of television. I, you know, I must sound like John CLEs in a shoebox, you know?

Um, uh, I was always much worse often than anybody else. But, you know, we, we took a long time to get to television. Eventually got one of those box ones with doors that opened and all the rest of it, and a screen that's sort of quite small. Uh, but up, up to that point I was having to watch television on a friends' television.

We'd have television days, you know, we'd go and have parties round, round television. Can't believe how different it's, anyway, now we've got it on the mobile phone. Anyway, so I did, so the second factor, which bore [00:08:00] upon my mother's experience, was watching an American series on British television, which, um, as it well blew my mind, uh, because I thought, wow, this is really an, it was called the Defenders and, uh, Many, many years later, when I was in New York, somebody dug out one of the episodes and I, that's it.

That's it. And it was, um, it was a father and a son, I think it was Edward G. Robinson starting it. And what was interesting was, um, they were in depth programs about serious issues. They weren't just criminal issues. So it wasn't just about somebody being accused of a murder. It might be dealing with abortion, social issues just as they are now.

And the other interesting thing is that the lawyers mostly lost. Ah, which was unusual. Yeah. [00:09:00] And so I thought, so I thought to myself, uh, what is the point of these brains? What are they trying to say? And of course, it gradually grew on me very, very slowly then. But what they were trying to say was, We are doing a job of representing people who wouldn't otherwise be represented.

And we are saying the things that would not get said unless we set them. We don't always succeed, but sometimes we do it. One success, you know, is, is, is, is to be treasured and nurtured. So I thought, yeah, I think I'd like to do that. I'd like to sort of, um, get involved with somebody who's caught up against it, whatever it is, and research it, repair it, take it to court, present it now, then you know, it, it has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Yeah. It's, it's a product in an entirely different sense. It's not a physical product, it's an intellectual product, but it has a social purpose. And, uh, sometimes you're defending somebody against something. Sometimes you are prosecuting [00:10:00] somebody or suing somebody in relation to very important issue that those two themes, there's a third which comes up.

Uh, the rear as it were, on top of all that. Um, I, there are, uh, there are books which have had a, uh, an equal effect. Cause once, once this interest was activated, uh, for me, then I started looking around and so, you know, the To Kill A Mockingbird and Gregory, Gregory Peck in the film. Yeah. Uh, which I've seen more than once and I've read the book, obviously.

Uh, and the also only, I think she only wrote two books. Um, this was one of them and, um, was very moving. And I thought, yeah, you know, standing up in a community as a white man doing what was not expected of him and bringing the Roth of the community upon his head for doing it. But he did it. And then there, there, there was another one, [00:11:00] um, uh, b b besides, uh, that another, another book.

And it was English and it was by Love, Vic Kennedy. And he was a broadcaster, investigative journalist, um, medicine on television. But he did, he wrote books as well. Quite a lot of them. I've gotten any, all of them here behind me. One of the one he wrote, which I I read Avidly was 10 Wilington Place. And that was about Timothy Evans who got wrongly hung for a crime he didn't commit.

And I couldn't. And, and, and the book described the hurdles that have to be clear. It described the almost constitutional opposition that he faced, the institutional opposition that he faith. And, um, in later years, I had the privilege of meeting him and his family and, um, I explained to him what impact the book had had.

So it's those, those, a combination of those factors, you know, the celluloid [00:12:00] film aspect of it, my mother anger, and then. You know, seeing real live cases being, um, in the States and in, in the United Kingdom. And I just thought, well, I think, I think there's something I could do here. I could contribute to this.

But at this, around this time, my father died. But before he died, he said, you know, you're never gonna do this. I, I, you know, he didn't really think I could do it because we didn't have the connections, we didn't have the money. And he, he said, you know, it, it's, uh, a different social world, which of course it is, was then and is a bit still.

And, um, he wanted me to do what he'd done and the whole of my family had done, and that has worked on the railways. He wanted me to be a rail woman, and I brought up with railways, you know, coming outta my ears, including, you know, Hornby and all the rest of it. So, trains meant everything. Trains meant everything a bit, you know, anac, right.

[00:13:00] But I, I didn't have the anac, I just had the notebook and. I, I, I just thought these things built a sort of very strong basis. I thought, come up me, I am going to do it. And then my first wife had a relative who was barrister, who tried to dissuade me. He tried say, don't do it, you know, it's gonna be too difficult.

You haven't got the money, you haven't got contact. In fact, you haven't got anything. And I said, well, that's a good start then, isn't it? It's, um, you know, better to start with nothing and, and get somewhere. And, and so the more he tried to dissuade me, the more I thought, now I'm gonna, I'm gonna give it a go.

And, and that was the story of really, uh, linked to the fact that, you know, um, all my friends got into university and this is a time when a lot of people picking up the results. And I didn't get in, I didn't get into Cambridge, which is what I think my father really wanted, but there we are. And I didn't get in.

And, um, then I, I went for a new university as it was [00:14:00] then keel in North Staffordshire. And I didn't get in there. I'm, and I thought, wait a minute, am I that bad that I can't, you know, get in anywhere? So, um, this has been pervaded things since I sort of thought, well, if no one's gonna defend me, I'll defend myself.

So, um, I'm doing Rose, but all these experiences were tending to support, which is, if you, if you want to do something and you wanna do it badly enough, you've gotta go and you've gotta get it yourself. Do not expect anybody to give it to you. You've gotta go and get it. And, um, that's what I did. I went up to the university at the start of a term.

I knocked on the admission to his door. I found out where he lived. It was on a Sunday there in lunch. And, and he looked at me and he said, who are you? And I said, well, I'm someone you've turned out. So he looked a bit to me and he, I said, no, I, I've come here to ask why. And [00:15:00] he said, oh, well, alright then.

And he, he was, he, we a lovely man. I, I mean, I obviously got to know him very well, but he, he said, well, you better come in there. I said, well, that's very kind. Come all the way from London. So, yeah, I would. And he said, do you want, I said, no. He said, we we're just having angel delight, Guz fool. I just remember all this cuz that's the sort of food that was going around those days.

So I had a gooseberry fool and he said, um, I've got my name. He said, just wait, I'll have to go and get your file. He got the file. He said, you know, I see. I said, look, my friend, who I've known for years and years, and he, he had the same results as me. He had, he had an interview. He did, he said the same thing.

He gets in and I don't, so tell me about it. He looks at it. He said, yes. Well, you are right. You're right, you're right. You all right? And he said, um, he turned to me and he said, okay, I'm gonna interview you now. I said, okay, fine. While we're doing it. He said right here at the, at the lunch table. Oh right, yeah, fine.

He said, you're glad to know that I've only got one question. I said, that doesn't [00:16:00] make it any easier for me, but I'll try. And he said, if I were to offer you 1 million pound today, you know, wanna be a millionaire long before the TV show, what would you do with it? So I said, oh, that's not difficult. I said, that's an, that's an easy question, you know?

And he looked at me and I said, well, first of all, I, I'd take half of it and give it to my mum cuz she's never had any money. And, you know, would, would give her a chance to have a decent holiday. Maybe she'd buy a decent flat to live in. And I said it would just make the difference to her life. Uh, she wasn't that old, but, uh, you know, late sixties.

Yeah. Approaching 70. And I just said, yeah, I'll give her that. And he said, and he said, what did you do the other half? He said, well, I wouldn't come to university. He said, what? I don't, no, no. He said, I, I, I said, no, I go around the world. I'm not traveled. So I spend it going to all those places I've never seen, and then I come to university if you'd have me.

He looked at me and he said, okay, you're in. [00:17:00] So I said, I'm in. That's it. He said, yep. I was interested to know how you deal with it and, um, you've dealt with it in a way and I didn't expect you to. And he said, I think you probably have got an, an innovative brain. So I don't know what he actually said something along this.

So he said, when do you wanna start? I said, tomorrow. But he said, I said the bag I brought, got all my things in, in case I could change your mind. You know, you couldn't do this. Well, I would like to think you could. But anyway. And so that was the beginning of a whole course of conduct in a sense where I ju it said to me, look, you've gotta knock on doors.

You've gotta knock on people's minds. You've gotta sort of wake them up. You've gotta get their attention and you've gotta do it in ways that are attractive and unusual. And it did don't always work. You know, a lot of the time, like the defenders, they don't work, but occasionally they do. So that's how it all started.

And that impetus, [00:18:00] um, if you like, that, um, passion just stayed all the way. It's carried me through. There've been dark times, obviously difficult time, very difficult time, but Right, right. Through your to now. Anyhow, so that's where I'm at.

**Sally:** Well, it's wonderful to hear how it all started, and I think that is an inspiring journey and impetus for anyone really.

Because actually Michael, you know, you've been at the bar for over 50 years. Well, both benches are graze in and they graze in. If you've been at the bar for 50 years, they give you, is it a dragon or the Griffin? I can't remember. Griff. Griff, yeah. And it's sought after I tell you, I remember the late Elgan Edwards, um, had one.

And, um, he was so proud of it in Chambers. He was a judge on the Northern Circuit, well, Wells in Chester and East Sassy Chester a And you know, that's a, an example of sort of greatness of the bar and longevity at the bar, but your career has spanned some of the biggest cases, not [00:19:00] just the inquest that you've got going on right now, but I wanted to start with Steven Lawrence and that, and representing the family because, you know, the memoirs, you know, it's, it's called Michael Mansfield, the Radical Lawyer.

But actually, you know, do you consider yourself as a radical? And did you, certainly, with a case like Steve Lawrence, which is a scourge on, um, our society, really what happened there to that young man?

**Michael Mansfield:** Oh yeah. I mean, uh, I, I, I, the word radical was used because, I mean, using, I, I, if one looks at its roots, that's what it means, roots.

It's, it's going to roots red each to sort of laugh in terms that I've always seen the use of the word radical, meaning that you're prepared to go back and dig deep and maybe start again. So that's how I see myself doing it. Uh, and of course that was that, it wasn't that term. I mean, the term that was used [00:20:00] early on by es the judicial establishment and others was that I was a red under the bed.

That's how they called me. And I worked out of center of chambers that they called Kremlin on the hill. So you can see that, you know, I, I thought others did think of me in that those lives more than radical, somebody who might be, uh, dealing in armed insurrection from what they were set and what they thought about it.

And that was because I was taking a different approach and, um, in a, the different approach involved. Getting an identity with the person or persons you are representing. So not treating it as another body, as a surgical approach to life, just another operation. No, it isn't. You've gotta get inside the person.

And everybody said the opposite. You mustn't do this, mark, you mustn't identify, you've gotta be outside this bash. And I said, no, [00:21:00] sorry. In order to propose what it is, the person I'm representing once said, I've gotta get inside that person. I've gotta know that I'm not that person, but I can try and that'll enlist a certain, uh, confidence, face, understanding.

And I said, all those are things which I find at the bar then were, were missing because it was treated just like a job. Um, there you go, nine to five. And a lot of them were politicians, so they'd nip off to the House of Commons at the end of the day. So basically they're running two jobs. So it was, so I felt that, um, it was important to, to, to, to two as it were, ensure that that, and principles of engagement is what they might call them these days.

In other words, that you, you go, you, you go out of your way to engage with the person. And of course that made people say, well, are you a member of the ira? And of course I'd say, well, of course I'm not a member of the ira. But in order to understand the IRA and the fact that, [00:22:00] you know, there is a political issue in the north of Ireland, which is extremely important now, had a, a great sympathy for the Irish, uh, for a long time.

Well, the Celtic Fringe actually as a whole, they have a sense of history, a sense of humor, and a sense of politics, all of which that tend to be lacking amongst the English population, but nothing amongst the Scotts, the Wilds and the Irish. So it was that, you know, background that, that, um, false if you like, that is within people that I think made me regard myself as doing it a different way, which is why I wanted to set up a set of chambers that wasn't in the temple.

Yes. And it, it had been done before me by Tony Gifford, who's a friend of mine obviously, and he's now living in, in the West Indies and practicing in the West Indies. I think, I don't, I dunno whether he's still practicing. Anyway, he, he, he had the first one, I had the second one and we were both trying to make a statement, which was we do, we want to be indepe independent?

[00:23:00] Seem to be independent. We're not part of a class structure, even though, you know, we are born into where we are. But what we were trying to break the mold, no question about it. And h his didn't survive very long. Wellington Street. Um, mine, it took, score survived longer, but in the end, um, the cutbacks on legal aid made our public very difficult to survive as a long sets are now found it.

Yes. So that, that, that was, you know, there was a difference taking place. It's difficult to, to, to put it in context now cause we've all moved on in different ways. You've got virtual sets of chambers now, but that, that led me into various campaigns and I've been, and I think it's important to be seen, to be participating in the campaigns, which may lead to the cases because you then see what it is that propels people to object to HS two, uh, to occupy land because it's being, you know, desecrated by government [00:24:00] or, or whatever.

And I know there's, you know, the latest one is, you know, don't play uk. I think it's very important people as a big article today, I think by. Jones and the Guardian about the fact our democra has come to a, a halt stagnation and that, you know, there has to be a collectivity of insurrection. Yeah. And, and I think that's where the bar comes in.

We, we should be sinking. I mean, we've got an attorney general, I'm afraid to say, who, who is a disgrace. And, and I think that, you know, all the things that the, the Boris government got up to that really breached standards and there she is, she unresigned, she stays with it. And in fact, it's getting worse now.

She's accusing the lawyers, he's saying the lawyers are the lefty lawyers. I dunno where she thinks I'm a lefty lawyer or what she thinks of me doesn't really matter what she thinks of me, but the idea that she get, this is the thing after what Tony [00:25:00] Blair did. That's why I say politicians

**Sally:** Well, it it's interesting isn't it, because, um, You know, you've covered a lot of ground there and one of the things I wanted to ask you is about political climate and then doing cases like, you know, the bloody Sunday shootings.

John, Sean Menendez, an lady mentions Steve and Laurens, you know, they're quite high profile cases with press interest and political interest and media. How have you coped with that, Avi, your, your career? I mean, just getting on with it. It's a simple answer, isn't it? But you know, because as advocates that's not part of our role.

Our role is to get on with the job and represent our A clients as best we can. But when you've got these other factors running in the background, I just wondered how you've coded for it and it hasn't stopped looking at the list that's coming o of things you are doing already. I mean, look at Graham Fell, even Graham fell representing those [00:26:00] families there.

It's a lot of sort of press interest and I would say political interest. How.

**Michael Mansfield:** Well, it's mainly because that's where I come from, and I don't mean parents, I don't mean school, I don't mean university. Although university played a part because I did philosophy. I didn't do law. In fact, I wouldn't do law as a, as a degree, and I'm very happy I didn't do it.

So it, it comes from a, a, again, a different inter intellectual starting block, as it were. And the starting block was that I felt that being an advocate isn't just doing it in court, that's the point. So I'm coping with something, which in a sense, I've invited because I don't wanna be seen just as somebody who turns up and can, you know, literally I'm the next taxi.

I know that you're supposed to look at it like that, but I don't look at, I'm not the next taxi. I'm [00:27:00] someday, I've already been with you on your journey, whatever it to begin with. It was to do with, um, drug addiction, and it was one of the first campaigns I got involved in. And so if anybody I was involved in on a campaign basis or an issue based assistance support role ended up in court, I would already know them probably, I would've certainly already know the issues that are affecting their lives to do, to link to addiction and that that hasn't gone away.

Um, so I'm coping with something I've lived with and I You've gotta live the thing. You don't, it, it's, it's, I suppose there is a similarity with, with acting, uh, only a similarity and as much as you get inside a role, but I'm getting, I'm getting inside the role not to pretend that I am or project something that I'm not, but in order to.

Be the person as far as I [00:28:00] can, that's got the problem. And I see the lawyer has, is not essential worker, but we provide a bridge between, you know, the unreality of a court case and the reality of where it's come from. Unless you've been part of the reality of where it's come from. You know, I think you, you, of course you can be embarrassed, you can do the job.

I, but I don't think you, for me anyway, you can't do it as well and as per perceptively, as if you've actually, you know, top the talk, walk the walk, live the life, being there with the people that you are now representing. And so I, you know, that's what I try to do in all these cases. I'm coping with it by being part of it, which of course then end up I can become a

target.

**Sally:** Thanks. Yes, of course. So I'm used to it. Yeah. Well, tell me, um, uh, uh, this, I've measured some of your cases. Have you got a most memorable case cases that you'd like to share? With me. I mean, often ask this question and my guests often [00:29:00] say, oh, the first case I did when I was on my feet. Um, in, I often think about the pro bon cases.

I did others say some of the high profile cases, which can be, and others say the most traumatic cases that they did. I don't mean the factual matrix, but I wondered if you had, and of course you've been involved in Hillsborough, there's so many cases we can wee off. But I wondered if you had one that particularly was most memorable or, and stuck out at you cuz you've changed

**Michael Mansfield:** law.

Well, uh, I mean I could do, I could run through all of those categories, but, um, and people always, perhaps on television at the moment, they always ask about DDI and meth and so on. So of course they're important cases, but you know, if I was to lie them up, you know, they'd all be. In the, in the top three. So you, you, you'd have, you know, Dody, Lawrence, Arthur, [00:30:00] scar Girl one.

I can go forever. They're all up there. But it's none of those, actually, at the end of the day, it's not about those. It, it's something that I've done that's extra curriculum, but linked to, and I don't often talk about it because, uh, it's a very, very sensitive area. However, it's important, uh, I think anyway, important to me and that, that was asked to be, I've now done, I think probably done more than anyone else, but you won't necessarily know about it.

And that is, um, I've started, well this is some time ago. I can't remember the first one. I did it. And the first one I did was in Ireland actually, which was shoot to kill inquiry. In other words, doing, sharing inquiries on behalf of the people. People who say communities who say we've been, uh, misjudged hard done by, we have been [00:31:00] treated unjustly.

There's been an injustice. And then they'll come up with what it, what it is in the shoot to kill inquiry. It was to do with the fact the British troops, uh, it was being said, were firing without warning and all the rest of it and, and to kill. So there was an inquiry in that. That was the, probably the first one, but I've done a lot since then.

I think I added them up the other day. Uh, I've done over 20 of these inquiries on behalf of groups and people who feel, uh, that they have been, as I say, mistreated. So for example, the one that stands out in my memory is based on the model, uh, that was, was fashioned by Ber and Russell. Now Berton Russell was the kind of philosophical figure here and figure of mine at university.

Um, and I've got a lot of his work and, and, and, but what Birch and Russell set up established was what are called the [00:32:00] Russell Tribunals. Now, you know, whenever I talk about this, people kind of begin to close over cuz they've never heard of it. Some of them I haven't even heard Bershire Russell, never mind the actual tribunals.

So what do you, what he did was to look at air, he different areas of the world. There wasn't just in the eye of Kingdom, it was a global reach as it were. The one I got involved in was concerned with Palestine and, um, Israeli invasions. Uh, of Gaza, of which had been a, a whole series of operations, which are very well known now.

I was interested in this not only because of the Russell idea that the citizens come together to have a tribunal of conscience and they fund it. They organized it. So over four years I did. Tribunal Russell Tribunals dealing with issues arising out of Palestine, Israel, which are issues that affect the whole world.

Of course, they're not just limited [00:33:00] there, but they dealing with discrimination, apartheid, that, all those kind of issues. And we visited, um, South Africa where our passid had been practiced, obviously at one time. And we visited Barcelona and we ended up Wow, about four, four or five of these, another one in Brussels at the European Commission.

And we addressed the United Nations. And our object was to, as it were, brain to light the breaches of international law. That's what, and that's what Russell was saying, is what's the point of enacting all these conventions, all these laws and all the rest of it if nobody actually enforces them. And so if, if governments are going to be.

Is it worth, break them with impunity, which we claim the Israeli government was doing that, or on Citizens of Garza and elsewhere, [00:34:00] uh, that we, we would bring this to light with the help of a lot of other people and so on. So that's what we did and, and we brought out reports and, um, pamphlets and so on about what we did.

And they were pretty well received as far as I know. Um, and I went on to do other ones. I did one for the families of people who'd been killed, uh, by, uh, the regime in Iran. So we did one in the Hague for them. I've recently done last year, um, that's what I've mentioned earlier on the People's Covid inquiry set up by a number of very concerned practitioners who felt that, you know, the government was ignoring the NHS and hadn't used the resources that.

Were there and had not been properly prepared as they could have been, had they, were they listening and were they using the resources properly? So I did that, that lasted four months. There's a report on that, and I think [00:35:00] it's the things that haven't necessarily grabbed the headlines, but have provided communities with a little bit of hope.

That's all, that's all you can hope to do, is you give them a bit of hope and recognition of the truth. So those are the, those are the things and, uh, in a way that rise to the surface. All the other cases are important, uh, for their, uh, for their issues as well as their individuals. But the people's inquiries and the citizens inquiries.

I did another one for Northwest London Boroughs commissioned by the Borough of Hammersmith. Looking at Jeremy Hunt's, a really quite dreadful n h s policy Closing hospitals in, in a London. And we, we did some good work on that and that lasted over a year, which I did. I fitted it in with everything else that I'm doing.

So, but they don't, you know, yes. They, those who are interested got to know. Those who followed it were supportive, but actually on a wider public front, [00:36:00] it, it hasn't had, even the covid one hasn't yet had the recognition. It should have hurt.

**Sally:** Yes. Well, um, tell me, Michael, you know, we've talked about your prayer and things are memorable, but you've done so much, uh, in so many different ways.

Uh, one of the things you have done is to enable through setting up refugee chambers. And of course, you know, your head of Nexus chambers now as well as having been TOS, chambers and bla and so on, um, is enable black practitioners on the issue of race, um, to be in chambers and doing decent work. But I think when you came to the bar, because other guests have alluded to this, There weren't chambers for black people.

They were called ghetto chambers. And, you know, you weren't dean as good as others if you weren't in a, a posh chambers, uh, quote unquote. I, I wondered if that was prevalent, and that was one of the reasons you were keen to set up chambers to [00:37:00] enable all Yeah. To practice,

**Michael Mansfield:** because Yeah, no, no, you're absolutely right.

That was the, um, prime motivation that when, when I felt, uh, able to, I mean, obviously I was a member of, well, not traditional sets, but, uh, primarily clo as I think a set that was, as I've already set anyone described as Kremlin on the hill when John Plats Mills was there. But, um, uh, which I enjoyed enormously, but I wanted to do what Tony Jeff had done and with his, uh, uh, guidance and advice as well, is to establish, uh, bases which, uh, were diverse and genuinely diverse, not tokenism.

So when we started Tuks, for example, there was an equal divide between black, white men, women, and gender, which was not unheard of, but it was very, very rare. And so he said, you know, that's what we're trying to achieve. We've only started with small numbers, [00:38:00] you know, 10, 12 people to begin with. The very first day, I think we only had six, but, but very soon we had 12.

And it was growing quickly and, and we said all the time that, and we had, well I can, I can see them now there. I don't think they're practicing or one's dead unfortunately. But there were three black women. And while were they a force, I mean, you know, something I'd never encountered other than, you know, in bigger meeting.

Suddenly I'm working alongside three black extraordinary women. Christiana Hs. One I, I think she's still alive. Sandra was another one. She's now dead in the west. At West India. Or the third one, Janet Plange. Those three were phenomenal. And they enabled us to encourage, well, as it happened, young black women, but we were also young black men.

Yes. And that's what happened. And I maintained that for the whole time that talks existed until it, until it's collapse. [00:39:00] Um, and I, you know, went off and tried to establish a different model, not, not in terms of constituent members, but in terms of how we operate. So yes, that was the idea to do what I felt was not being done.

Cuz I, I felt I was an outsider when I joined at the bar and Graz. I mean, you know, I just felt I wasn't part of the established order and I was being told that I wasn't part of the established order. And so I realized that amongst the, as it were, the unwashed, I was one of them. But, you know, there were black barristers and women barristers.

We, we were all on the same boat. Yeah. And me socially, and then the color of their skin or, or, or possibly their gender. So I, I felt very much part of that, which enabled me to say, you know, come this way. If we can accommodate, we will. Yes. Um, but you know, it's not always been easy to fulfill that [00:40:00] ambition, but I think we helped.

We helped.

**Sally:** Yes. Well, um, Ernesto Weeks Queens Council who's been on this podcast, um, was your pupil. And I know that when Anesta comes up North Up country, she's still quite shocked where she gives an Nairobi room in Liverpool and doesn't see anybody. You know, occasionally I go to Liverpool, who, who is brown or otherwise, plenty of women, thank goodness now, but certainly in areas like the northern circuits and the Northeastern circuits, um, you know, haven't hugely improved in race.

But I wondered were you thought about the state of the bar, now there's a bar strike action. There are seven women QCs appointed now, according to the stats, to, um, this year and last year. Do you think the bar has changed, um, at all in that time in its entirety? Or do you think there's bits of it has changed or bits of remain elitist or, you know, what, what do you think about the progress?[00:41:00]

**Michael Mansfield:** Well, I think, you know, it would be very shortsighted to say I'm somewhat cleared to say there hasn't been change. There has been change, hasn't there? Yeah, there has been change, but I think the change has been difficult and I think there are pockets of resistance still as there are no sorts of institutions, um, in, in, in those fields.

And they have to be worked on every single day to maintain the progress that has been made. And certainly, you know, obviously the atmosphere now is, is in stark contrast to the atmosphere that confronted me when I first started, however, You know, to, to, as it were, bottom it all out. Then I think the structure of the bar has to change and practice methods have to change.

And there are still, you know, cases and, and you know, one might might smile, I don't smile, but some people do smile. You know, when black lawyers get mistaken [00:42:00] either for the defendant or a cleaner,

**Sally:** it happens to me or the interpreter. It happens to me. And young, young solicitors tell me all the time, London's solicitors, they say, oh, I can practice on your circuit.

People think I'm this or that. And it's certainly not that they could be the solicitor or the advocate. Yeah, I know. I don't smile about it. I find it deeply offensive. But the issue is having the energy to call it out every time, isn't it? And having allies who are calling it. Well,

**Michael Mansfield:** I have, I have always done this.

And in fact, it led to a headline in. Oh, I don't know. I think it was the Independent on Sunday or something. Some years ago, Deborah Ross interviewed me. The headline was, why don't you Shut up? And what I think what she was highlighting was the fact that, um, I was doing what you are suggesting, Naomi. I'm very reluctant to let [00:43:00] things go.

If I think there is, I'll give you this example cuz I know my, my family will smile when I say it all, the son who was with me and say, oh dad, you know, I, I, you know, I like football and I, I don't particularly support any one team. And I had a, my sons have supported different teams and that this son was supporting.

Aston Villa. And of course we lived in London, Aston Villa could be closer, please. Anyway, it wasn't so we used to watch them play all over the place. I'd take him to the matches normally, I'd rush from work on whatever in the middle of the week. And, uh, we ended up at, uh, crystal Palaces where Aston Villa was playing Crystal at that time.

This is good few years ago. And because I'd been quite often that the, um, the stewards knew who I was. So thank God. Um, anyway, there was a, a guy in the front, just in the rope in front of me where he builders jeans. [00:44:00] And he was about as big as a bu uh, a building himself. And he decided he was gonna take over.

You know, the Aston where that supports squad. Hold on. Not only he stand up, he stood on the seat as well with his jeans around his knees, virtually shouting, abuse of all kinds. Nobody said a word least to all students. So I thought, well, and I said to the son I'm is with, I said, if he stands in front of me.

And so this son said, no, don't, don't. I said, I'm not gonna let this go on. This is ridiculous. You know, it setting an example, which none of us want to lead, none of us want this purely because Sam would like to watch the game and not him. But I said there, there's racism gone mad here. And I said he was white.

Um, anyway, he did, he stood in front of my feet. So I'm wearing a pin suits, [00:45:00] fri, you know, suit in those days or suits. Anyway, white collar tie and all that stuff. And then time to change. So I sort of touched him on the shoulder and he could hear this whole edifice turn, you know, like this, I, oh, here we go.

You know, I could see his, This way. Right? And then I thought, I'm probably gonna get whacked. But anyway, um, and so I can't do the Birmingham wax. Anyway, he, he sort of, so, so what's your problem then? I said, well, there are a number of problems if you, if you've got the time to bear with me. And this sort of, I tried to put on a, a really mock situation.

So I said, well, well, the thing is, you know, I'm sporting in away achievement. You know, the thing is I can't actually see the game, but, and I can't see three super soul. Were they, you know, they're not playing good football. I said, well, they may not be playing good football for me, but look at me. I mean, I'm I standards of football.

I said, there's another problem then that is, I don't need your commentary, which is, you know, really a offend. Pardon? [00:46:00] And I said, you know, you can see. So I said, um, I think everybody here, and they were all going like this. Nobody was joining in and my son was reading the program at Aley. I said, I think most people here would appreciate it if you would, um, stop these, this, this running commentary, which is plainly abusive, offensive, and racist.

He said, well, he said, who are you to tell me? I said, I'm a fellow human being, and he says, I don't even think you support Western Binner. I said, well, I don't really know, but I've been to all their matches. Oh, have you indeed, and all that stuff. He says, well name a few so. Fortunately I had remembered, you know, and he suddenly, he changed.

He said, you really are. I said, you know, I go with him last month. Yeah. And I said, I fortunately I haven't run into this before. I don't wanna run into it again. [00:47:00] He said, don't worry. He said, don't wear it. And then instead of thumping me, he took my hand and began shaking it. He said, I'll wait outside.

Really spoke up for a drink. And I thought, yeah, very likely. So I, I didn't actually, obviously take up the invitation. I waited till everybody got on the steward. Said, we saw that. Yeah. And I said, well, you didn't do anything about it, but you can do something now. And he kept me out of this grant without me having to go buy him, cuz he's waiting outside the gate.

But, you know, and then people say, well, why did you do it? And I said, well, I did it because, you know, if, if the people who, who understand the. And have a certain amount of courage, don't do it. Then those who are unable to or unwilling, you know, are gonna end up in that. It's the old thing about Pastor Nael or in the Second World War, you know, first they went, they went, but then they were, yeah, in the end it'll [00:48:00] be you.

You've gotta stop it somewhere down the line. So that's why I do it.

**Sally:** Oh, well that is fantastic. Now, um, what advice would you have for people coming to the bar? And before you answer that, I wanted to ask your opinion on the bar. Action from the bar are are taking, because I think some years ago you suggested that there had to be a refusal of work, uh, careful rates, didn't you?

And you were probably laughed out, weren't you? That it would never happen and of course it is happening and will be happening more so from the 5th of September. 2022 following a ballot by the C B A. Is that the case? And what do you think about the, the bar

**Michael Mansfield:** strike, do you think? I I think that the, the CBA are entirely right because, um, and I suppose looking, looking it in a broader context, you know, we have [00:49:00] spiraling cost of living, spiraling, which is gonna hit every single home within days of us recording this.

So it's a much bigger problem than the bar, the bar. And it's gotta face up to it as well for the first time in a big way. And the difference now is that we are dealing with a global, uh, situation of crisis on the economic front, environmental front, political front, and so on. So people have got to begin thinking about taking back power for themselves.

Because what happens when something like this comes along is the establishment turn around and point at the workers and they say, you are putting up inflation. Excuse me, wait a minute. They're wanting to have a living wage and they are the cause of inflation. No, of course they're not. The cause of inflation, which they refuse to tackle is, of course when it comes to energy, the energy companies and so on need to be tackled that source.

So that's why I think [00:50:00] the bar along with rail workers, teachers, postal workers and so on, are making the point. And the public I think have got it. The public agree and say they're not asking for outrageous, you know, wage rises and so on. They're not asking for profits of the kind that the oil companies are knee deep in, but they're just saying, you know, what do we do?

Eat the house or eat. I mean, that's, and, and, and we're thinking of, uh, of opening libraries as warm banks. What kind of world is this? So yes, the bar is quite right, and, and they, you know, they're not being treated fairly. And, and when the government wants to borrow money for some of their projects, they borrow it Hanover Fifth, and they had to borrow, you know, squillions in relation to Covid.

And yes, okay, it puts us in debt and all the rest of it. But the idea that at the end of the day, [00:51:00] we, the working public have to pay for the inequities are of global exploitation by global companies and government is iniquitous. So I'm totally in favor of the bar saying, enough is enough. We can't go on.

And I, I've listened to junior barristers. I'm not only in my own set, but elsewhere who say we can't make a living. We are paying for the cases we're doing because they won't pay us the transport costs. All transport's gone up and of course it will go up again. So, you know the young barrister going, if he's, if he and she's going outside London, they're gonna have to pay 50 70 quid for return tickets or more probably.

Uh, they won't even get that for their appearance fee. Yeah. So they're saying grat live well quite right. And these examples, which I think possibly the public are woken up to, you know, I don't begrudge plumber is what they earned, but actually barristers earned less. Yeah,

**Sally:** yeah. Um, yes. [00:52:00] Um, and also where will the future come?

But what about this Michael, that, you know, the argument that some people advocate, which is that, do we need an independent bar? Actually people can go, well for the C p s and prosecute, they're employed and people can go Well for the public defender's service, like in America, they're employed, they can earn a wage there.

And I try and explain the importance of the independent bar. And I just wondered, you know, what do you think about that? Do you think that it is worth saving? What are the benefits of the independent bar? You know, in America they have employed in public defense service. I don't say that it's great and the depictions here are great.

Are they? But what do you think about that argument?

**Michael Mansfield:** I think the public defender's role is there, and there is, I wouldn't want to abolish them because they have a part to play, but the independent bar should be what it says it is. [00:53:00] In other words, you, you are, you, you are in a sense, although unto yourself, you are regulated.

Obviously there's things you can't do, but basically you are, you are not beholden to and shouldn't be to government or, or, or anyone else for that matter. In other words that you are there making independent judgements about whether. Certain cases have merit or don't have merit, and how to proce process them or not process them depending on the view you take and, and of course being able to articulate what's, what's important, but what the issues are that arise in those cases requires an independent bar, which has got an element of courage with it.

Because what the problem now is that people don't wanna rock the boat, as it were. And they're a bit worried and they won't get any more work if they stand up and say things. Yes. But I think it's extremely important that they do stand up and say things in court about the cases they're [00:54:00] doing and out of court if it's to do with, you know, an injustice that needs to be remedied, leaving aside talking about your own cases and all the rest of it while they're going on, but, which is a different issue.

But it is important that, you know, we have qualified, experienced lawyers who you can depend on getting a really. Not a jaundice view, but a genuine accomplished view of how you should be dealing with certain issues and that in should be influencing government with, of course, as I already said, I don't have much time for politicians

**Sally:** anymore.

Yes. Um, well tell me Michael, because you're such, you are a fantastic advocate, I wonder if we can get to some advice stages, cuz I know you mentor so many people, um, and you know, so many, uh, Julia Barristers as well as students and have done for years, haven't you? So let's start with three advice to somebody entering the law, coming to the bar now.

And then I want to, [00:55:00] for you to give me three tips about advocacy. Uh, and then I, I've got one or two questions and we'll be finished.

**Michael Mansfield:** Well, I think my position on, uh, coming to the Barong has remained unchanged. I think it's vital at the, the independence and the health of the independent bar is sustained and it can only be sustained by people.

Passionate about wanting to do that job on behalf of, uh, well, I say people who would otherwise lack that representation. But also there are people who, who can afford to pay, and then, I'm not saying they shouldn't pay, but also have issues that need to be canvased and you need an independent vow to do that.

So the, my advice is that number, and I, I actually, it isn't advice just about the bar. I say it about whatever you're gonna do. First thing is you've got to be committed to it. You've gotta understand what it's about. And it's [00:56:00] not just a job. Now, some people are, are, are unlucky that they don't necessarily have the resources, the wherewithal to choose a job, which provides a commitment.

And there are some jobs you can say, how do I get committed to picking up lifter or whatever, you know, some sort of job that doesn't involve. More than that. But the bar undoubtedly does involve the exercise of judgment and intelligence and application. Therefore, that's a huge responsibility. So the main thing is, you know, you've gotta be committed to doing that.

It's gotta be something you feel inside that you want to do, just like, whether it's writing, acting, or anything else, um, that, that, that has a, an inner propulsion. An inner conviction that if you're not convinced and you haven't convinced yourself, um, then you are not hardly [00:57:00] gonna convince anybody else because the hurdles are gonna be huge.

Now, this applies to not just noise, as I say, across the board, whatever you're gonna do, there are gonna be huge hurdles, particularly in the N where there's a shortage of provision and all the rest of it. So you are gonna have to. First of all, establish that you're ready to do it and you want to do it and you will not be deflected.

All of those go together. So one, and, and that's usually, I call it just a passionate commission commitment, not a clinical one, which sort of can be ditched cuz you're gonna do something else. So I think that's, that's the most important thing, uh, that is for me. Obviously there are areas of law where probably it will say, well, we don't need all that, but you know, we just need to lend the money.

Well, that's not what I do. So for me, if wanting to do the kind of work I do, then you've gotta have that commitment. Now. Secondly, I think that that's the passion side of it. Having decided it's what you want to do, [00:58:00] you have to begin thinking immediately about how you're gonna do it, because the sources of income for the independent bar are drying up fast.

Now, you might manage, obviously to get a government job, but you might get a job at the United Nations. You might. End up employed an employed barrister working for a big firm, and lots of big firms with hundreds of partners, whether you've become a consultant or whatever. But you, you, you've got to decide how best you are going to results.

The thing you're gonna, you have to think how you're gonna do it. And one thing that says you have to start thinking about, uh, the, the way in which money's raised at the moment. It, it, you know, there's crowdfunding and all the rest of it, but that's gonna change as well. So it's not necessarily going to be the, the future, but it is the moment.

You know, there are other ways of raising money for issues where people are in Pekin and legal aid is not stepping in because it's been cut by 40%, [00:59:00] but you do have to start thinking about how you're gonna survive, not only in it, survive yourself as an individual. But that you can help sustain the issues you feel strongly about.

So you have to identify what they are. So it's, it's a big task. So that would be the second thing you gotta look at. And I think the third thing is, is, is gaining experience of a, I've always said this, uh, do not, if you can avoid it, go from school to university to the bar, preferably somewhere tucked in there, ditch the lot and go off and do something else.

Something that may be unrelated, but, but takes you on the frontline somewhere. May, may be, I dunno, working from Medicines on Frontier or creating Avatar San Frontier, which is what I tried to do at one time, to give yourself an experience of how other jurisdictions are under [01:00:00] pressure of the kind that we've got, but from different, uh, from a different background.

So go and do something completely different. Give yourself that breadth. Of vision cuz you need vision. Yes. And if all you've done is study from school and it's like a hothouse now, cuz unless you get into the Russell group, I had a case the other day, two days, again, somebody didn't get into the Russell group.

They feel life is anger. But wait a minute, you know, and say what, what I'm trying to say is that it's the person you are, we are all capable, absolutely every single person. If I can do it, you can do it. Other people can do it. You need to be able to tap into the resources you've got. You may need help to do that.

You may need somebody else coming on and say, Hey, you can do it. You can do it. So it's those three things. They're very personal about building yourself and the integrity of self so that you can then practice. So, um, that, that will be the general way I approach the bar at the moment. In terms [01:01:00] of, um, tips for the bar, tips for advocacy.

Okay. These are tips that people go, he's mad. He's mad. First thing is don't write anything down.

Uh, I'll tell you this story and is the hard way at KE University where I went. I've never done any fabulous speak. Um, I ended up as a union official secretary, I think, or something. I ended up having to speak at all sorts of events. And so I made a basic mistake. I wrote these speeches out, including silly jokes, which obviously don't work if you write them out.

And I, I delivered these speeches to a completely glu silent audience. And I thought, well, they're listening while they're asleep. Well, they think it's rubbish. They think it's rubbish. So I ditched all notes. I obviously, I keep notes and I write them out. But when I get up to speed, [01:02:00] No comes from in here actually it comes from here and once the brain recognizes you've given, you've liberated the brain to do what it wants, it will operate within the framework.

It's like programming and computing. You give it a program overall and you let it go. And I watch my brain and it, like, I do a lot of talks obviously, and I watch it going around the rock and people say to me afterwards, they said, if you, you deviated all over the place. We never thought you, but you did.

You came back. I said, I didn't come back to the topic, the brain did because I've got accustomed to trusting that I don't have to be, you know, shivering in my, in my heart, my knees when I get up to speak because I dunno what's gonna come. I don't actually know what the first one will be, but it happens.

Because you, you are allowing the brain to do that. And then secondly, you are interacting [01:03:00] with the people you're speaking to. You've got a look at them, size them up, who are they? Look 'em up maybe in advance and you gotta always do that. But they wanna know you are interested, they don't wanna see you.

And then I went round the corner and I found sick. Bang Johnny in it. And, and they're going, what? And people are going, oh, sit down and shut up. However good it is, however brilliant it is, you know, you've got to be able to instill that, convey it to somebody. You may not always survive, but then they listen.

Then they listen because they know you're watching and you can tell whether they're writing things down or they're not. That doesn't mean to say they're writing down good things. They could be writing down. Bad, bad thing. Engagement with, that's the whole thing again, listen with the tribunal cuz unless.

Unless you're going to be sitting in an office and never speaking, advocacy comes in at all stages. You've gotta be able to show that you mean what you're saying and you're not playing a game. [01:04:00] It's not a game. It's not like acting where it is a bit of a game, but you're being convinced to understand the plot.

Here it's different, so people compare it to acting, but it's different anyway, so engagement and don't write anything down. So it's like a, a structure. Another thing is don't talk too quickly. People are so concerned to get to the end of what they gotta say, they rush it. And, and so that's the next thing, timing.

So you wait to see if people look up. And what I've discovered, I did it at a, at a UN committee in Geneva where they had interpreters in, and it was on behalf of the Russell Tribu. And I had to deliver something in five minutes. I was, give him five minutes and it came my turn and the chair was rushing and he, he, he, I [01:05:00] dunno what he was doing, but he wasn't, he wasn't listening.

There were 15 that all in the semicircle. The, some them were guy, you know, I was looking another watchers out guard soon be lunchtime, you know. So I said to the people who were there, I said, I'm not, I'm not gonna say nothing. So I sat there, gradually silent, sunk in. Now the chair looks up, you know, who, who, who, what.

They're not following. They haven't been following. And suddenly I said, um, it, it's me. Actually, I, I haven't said anything yet because I'm just waiting to ensure that, you know, you have your pen at the ready and all the rest of it if you wanna take any note and, and so on. They listen like billionaire because, you know, silence is a very important thing.

It's very difficult to me to use it, but you have to use silence Sometimes I, in, in that way. Finally, I think I, I think this is to do with advocacy. [01:06:00] Uh, I haven't been to the Edinburgh Fringe for a long time, but you, you, you need to be able to bring humor into this. So I have a string of anecdotes, which I won't bore you with now, which I used to use.

And Halla Kennedy, my, my closest friend at the bar, the way, um, I did the same, you know, if you have anecdotes to illustrate the point that we wanna make, and of course judges sit up saying, what's he on about? Now he's talking about rabbits in it, which is one of them. And, um, you know, and then, and then when the jury see the punchline, which isn't, isn't it gonna be a punchline?

And you fall about laughing. Are you sudden again? Oh, right. Yeah. Two, you, they get it. So you've managed to convey a message in a different bottle. So they'll pick it out, they'll use it. I I, these are just tips. They, they may work, they may not. And you have to be over certain, I dunno, deme yourself to [01:07:00] carry it off.

Um, from time to time I've managed it. Time to time I have, but, you know, and you can't do the same thing with, you know, the court of appeal telling funny stories. But I, I do try to lighten the atmosphere. I just said try for

**Sally:** Yeah. Just a little bit. Um, that is brilliant. You know, even I've been writing it down cuz I, you know, I'm a keen learner.

I've flawed these years. Oh, all tips are good. Yeah. I'm like, God, that is good. You know, unless this is a masterclass, you need to come back and graze in and teach all the young people. Um, Michael, um, we're getting to the end. I wanted to ask you this actually, and it's about, you know, what's been the most testing time in your career?

And, and how did you get over it? It, it may be that it was, I don't know, imposter syndrome or there was an incident, a family, or I don't know, a case. Well, I, I just wondered. I if, if there has been those times what Oh, yeah,

**Michael Mansfield:** yeah. No, there had, um, yeah, several [01:08:00] of them really. Um, obviously they're a personal bereavement.

Yeah. My daughter committing says suicide's pretty difficult. I'm sorry. And I was in the middle of Hillsborough and, uh, suicide always comes as a shock. And, and I would like to just put in a small plug here that as a result of a death, myself and my wife s here today, we decided that, um, something had to be done, uh, that something we decided was to set up an organization called SOS Science Suicide.

The idea being that. It was only after that I suddenly realized the extent to which there was a taboo connected with the word suicide. Nevermind the experience of suicide. People were frightened about talking about it. Wouldn't and are retreated into themselves and were castigating [01:09:00] themselves. And this came to light in Anna's, um, funeral when I had said a few words, and one of the words I said was, you know, suicide.

And people came up after us and they said, you said Sue sk. And I said, yeah, that's what it was. And that it's another Latin word. It it tells you what it is. You kill yourself. He said, but you know it. And I, and then people started saying, you know, my father, my cousin, you know, neighbor down the road, I suddenly realized there are a whole load of people who need to be released.

Yeah. From the burden that they've got, but they just need to talk about it. Now, the Samaritans don't do this. They, there are one-to-one alcohols anonymous. Do it for groups, but nobody does it for suicide. So we set up this group, the idea being informally, and we've taken it to the Ministry of Justice Prisons, universities.[01:10:00]

I've done it for the bar. We did it for the bar, one year bar, annual conference. Great. And, and I ha I have at some point, I can't remember when, suggested it to Grays Inn that we do one for Grays Inn. What we do is we go Inve and myself, but anybody can do this. It's not that, it's not rocket itself and we just facilitate.

We just say, it's okay. It's a safe place. You can talk about it. We are not, you're not gonna lose your job. They're frightened, especially the bar are frightened about talking about mental wellbeing. My God. Because they feel, you know, there's a weakness. It's not, it's a strength. You've gotta be able to.

Convey where your weaknesses are in order to build on your strengths. So we've set that up. Uh, during c Covid, very difficult cuz we haven't been able to travel and my wife has set up a helpline and a telephone helpline, um, for on a one-to-one basis, not quite the same as the Samaritans do it, we do it rather differently.

So [01:11:00] that's almost like a full-time job. Well certainly for, for my wife, it is a full-time job to keep, to have training, making sure standards are kept up and so on, and giving the right advice. So I suppose that's a period of my life, which I'm hardly likely don't get. But the good thing about it was not only having family to support me and I was living with Yvette said, and a friend had come to stay.

So on the very day it happened, I had support there. I also had support from other clients again, because this is where they feed back to me. And it was Hillsborough. And they said they made a very, you know, a remarkable observation. They said, well, our children died when they wanted to live. Your daughter died when she didn't want to live, but we understand that the effect on you is gonna be the same as effect on us.

And so they gathered round to ensure, I mean, I did continue not to meeting. [01:12:00] I got some time off, um, to sort of gather my thoughts really. And so that was a tremendous support mechanism and the case itself. So that was one, one. Well, there've been many, but that's one very dark period I have to say, which in a transgresses, both the personal life and the professional life.

The other one, which does the same as that, um, is when I was doing the Irish cases, I was living in North London. I was doing a lot of terrorists, gay. I represented price sisters, loved and bombings. So I wasn't persona grata by any means. And there were a lot of threats aimed at me and, uh, well, unfortunately managed to avoid them reaching the family, but they were just on the cusp of reaching family as well.

And, um, Excretia put through the letter box, [01:13:00] stuff like that, because they thought I was a traitor. And I think if my mother had been alive, she probably would've thought I was a traitor as well. So I got, you know, I got branded in a sense. Nobody ever a, as the English never really say too much to your face.

They say it So I realized there was a sort of rumor mongering going on, and it was difficult to take these cases on because, you know, I, I, I doubt that reputation of doing it and that. They sort of felt that I kind because of my approach to work, they thought in some sort of strange way I was advocating explosions, which of course I wasn't.

But that's, um, you know, that's difficult to deal with. You take home, you tell you to work. Absolutely. Court stars didn't wanna know. So lost your week. Bit more than that. Yeah. So it's, it's kind of, um, that was the mid [01:14:00] seventies that was difficult, period. Two for there bits, some others. You're living on the edge.

I mean, for me, I keep saying, listen, what I've had to put out with, there's nothing compared to the Jewish lawyers representing Palestinians in the Middle East and those on the peaceful grace who go into the Amazonian jungle to protect the indigenous tribes from being murdered. When they're defending their, their lands and their forests and so on.

So I think I'm lucky. I'm lucky, but I've had to brought up with that. That's the least of my worries. But you asked, anyway, there, those are two now

**Sally:** examples. Well, tha thank you, um, for sharing this. Now, I'm sorry about your daughter. Um, Michael, uh, we're coming to near at the end, but there are two things I wanted to ask you.

Really. Number one is, um, you know, you're so passionate about them. Why haven't you thought about becoming, um, it's bit too late now by virtue of the age, uh, [01:15:00] bar Thought about being a judge, just becoming a full-time judge, just sort of, yes. Were you a full time, were you a full-timer? I mean, just leave him with

**Michael Mansfield:** No, no, no, no.

I, no, what happened was a judge or remain NamUs, who was I was in front of, said exactly that time for you to sit on the bench, you know, and that I said, I don't want to do it. The days. Now I didn't even wanna take silk either. And he said, no, no, no. You, you, you, you, we need people like you on the bench.

Anyway, I, my name was put up, I had an interview with the Lord Charles Spill Mackay at the time. And, um, I think that they were half smiling to themselves. I'm not sure. I said, look, I don't see how I can be a judge because I'm politically very active. Not, not with conservative and labor politics, but, um, now that's not gonna work, is it?

Furthermore, I don't think judges should ever sum up the facts in a case because they can't stay objective. And I can't put myself above that. I think I probably wouldn't be either. So I [01:16:00] sum up cases without the, I said all this in the interview, you know, they said, well, I think that's alright. I think we can deal with that, you know, and, and I got appointed.

So then I, and, and then they said, right, you've got to go before it's. Finally sort of signed and sealed. Um, you've gotta go on a training course. I said, okay. And it was only a week. It wasn't very long, but nevertheless, it was, I was in the middle of doing Birmingham six, and I said, I haven't got a week.

And so they said, all right. And then they, they tried again now about a year later, and I said, it's impossible. I ha I really haven't got the time. And I'm, I'm not sure about it. They said, all right, it will give you one more chance, and if you don't do, obviously we can't appoint you. Anyway. I never went on the course, so I never sat, I did think about it, but I'm glad I didn't.

I didn't really want it. You know, a lot of people said that I a sell out. You know, that that's, they're gonna get you on their sign and then say, oh, look, Lou, we've got, [01:17:00] I said, well, I wasn't afraid of that, but, and a friend of mine who's now retired from the high court bench did go on the high court bench, and then he, he made an extremely good job of it.

But, um, so I didn't regret any of it. But I did think about it. That's the closest I got.

**Sally:** Yes. And so, um, uh, tell me, um, what's, what's kind of, what's next? Firstly, if there was a film about your life, cuz so many of your cases of course have been featured in documentaries and so on, and, um, these, what are they called?

That dokey dramas, you know, where they, yeah, yeah. Um, and, but I, I mean, but, but for you, if there was a film just about you, Michael Mansfield, the Radical Lawyer. I know there's another book coming out, but what, what, who would play you and would, uh, is there an angle you'd like it to show?

**Michael Mansfield:** Uh, well it's very interesting because I can't say too much, but there is one.

Oh, [01:18:00] brilliant.

**Sally:** There is one. No, that, that's not reason for my research. That's just my pure No,

**Michael Mansfield:** no, you won't see, I mean it and say there is one. It's in, its, uh, embryonic form. A writer is working on it at the moment. Uh, I think, um, you know, Kenneth Braner, I would, I'd, I'd like one of the classic English who've, who really get their heads round roles and all the rest of it.

Yes. You know, I see Hugh Grants very serious, but he, he's also, he's more associated with romantic holidays, whereas Kenneth Brown has got, you know, real substance and, and, and all the rest of it. And I think he would be able to convey what's in here. But anyway, the film company, no doubt will have different ideas about who might claim.

I'm not actually bothered who does it? I'm I as well as it's somebody who, who can get inside the character. Look, the write it depends on the writer. Yes. [01:19:00] Translating what he's getting from me into a form that a professional actor can do it. Whoever they are, they can do it. In some way, one do it and others will.

And people have played me in various film. Um, and one Jeremy and Gone, I've forgotten his second name. I mean, he did a brilliant job of, of, uh, reconstruction of the, the little, uh, Lawrence Inquiry. Yeah,

**Sally:** yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Michael Mansfield:** And he, he, he, he went to the lengths of getting the same clothes and the same pens and everything.

Um, so, you know, it can be done on that level. But I, I think that, um, as I said, I'm not, I'm not, uh, straight Jacketing who would do it. I'd be very pleased that anybody would do it and that it'll, if they get it written or I kick the bucket, um,

**Sally:** well, you're gonna be here for a, for a long time. And what about, what's next?

The film's coming out, just doing all these inquiries. Is there anything [01:20:00] that he, you know, you, you haven't done that you'd like to do? Oh

**Michael Mansfield:** yeah, lots. But it's getting too late for all of that, I think. Uh, I've just done my legging in an accident in London, but I'm sorry, I, I, um, I fancy myself, but no one else does.

As you know, a jazz drummer. I love drumming. I've got a kit here. I'm still, and, um, I have played with a group once of lawyers. Oh, they were called The Mindless Pleasures, and we played at the Edinburgh Castle in Stone Newington on a Saturday night. And I was paid, you know, 50 p or something, 10, um, for an evening.

So I, I have not exactly been there, God laeticia, but it's something that, uh, I would like to music. It's something I'm very fond of and I would like, I mean, I haven't spent enough time. My mother was keen that I learned the piano until I took out a knife and stabbed the Middle Sea, so that rode the piano off.

I [01:21:00] didn't, you know, I wasn't very keen on Roses from the South. I wanted to play Scott Joman. Um, but then I got into drumming and, and I, I love it. I love it. Um, I mean, that would be something, but, you know, I, I kind of feel who, who's, who's gonna wanna play with me. Um, you know, and I'm in the country style anyway.

Yeah. Who knows. But that's, that's, that will be next on

**Sally:** my list. Yeah. Oh, that is brilliant. And, um, this, um, Michael ha, have you got any advice to your younger self? You know, the young Michael, you, you mentioned that, you know, the, the article, the headline where the, the, um, journalist said, you know, can you shut up because you were calling out, you know, things that ought have been called out.

But, um, I just wanna defeat, do you have any regrets? Is there any advice that you would give your younger

**Michael Mansfield:** self? Um, yeah. Well, the, uh, sorry, it's not a, not advice to it, it's advice from it. [01:22:00] The thing I have lived by, I really have is I have no regrets. You cannot possibly, I don't think that, it's not to say you don't care.

You do care. And you continue caring, but you cannot afford Well, I said in the phrase, the soften news is to beat yourself up over something and really regret that you did something. There will be things that you know are not necessarily good things. Yeah. As they work out, they turn out to be bad thing.

Now, I could sit here and say, if only on, I said about the accident I had last week. You know, if only, but the thing is I didn't, and the thing is, sometimes I did think about the right things from factors to be taken into consideration. Sometimes I didn't. If you're going to lead a positive night, if you're going to be after, you will make mistakes.

As long as they're not intentional, obviously, in which case they're not mistake. You have to allow yourself to be vulnerable. You have to allow yourself [01:23:00] to be fallible and that's it. Do not think of yourself some sort of 10 God, cuz that's not, it's not gonna work, and you will destroy yourself in the end.

And funnily enough, I think that the, you, we have a fine example in the ex-Prime Minister, a little 10 God who, uh, in the end has almost destroyed himself because of this sort of, um, attitude to life, which is, well, I need to go further. But I think, you know, it, it, we need to be conscious of ourselves, uh, and do it in the context of caring for others and be aware that we all make mistakes, but at the same time reco and recognize what they are.

And change them obviously, but you cannot afford to, as it were, uh, destroy yourself in the process cuz otherwise you can't get up and mind it. Yes.

**Sally:** Yeah, abs absolutely. Absolutely. And, and so Michael, we mentioned drumming before, actually it's [01:24:00] such an important point, but wellbeing earlier we talked about mental health at the bar and people seeing that, I mean, they used to as a weakness talking about any sort of illness or trauma, you know, I remember hiding pregnancies or even when my own son had a very difficult, um, illness.

But, you know, what did, what do you do for wellbeing and what did you do?

**Michael Mansfield:** Um, well there's a lot that I did do. I can't do it anymore, unfortunately. I'm very keen, oh. And I'm not particularly good at it, but I'm very keen on sporting activities. So every week. With another lawyer friend for 30 years. I played either tennis or badminton or squash and we just played for the hour and then we'd have a chat and all the rest of it and then go on separate ways.

Uh, that, [01:25:00] that, that, that was very important cuz he could beat the living daylights outta the ball or whatever. Drumming, certainly, because I had the habit of I'd had a bad day in court and there was a particular individual who'd, you know, really got on top of me. I would draw an image of that person on the drum kit and then I'd beat the living daylights outta the drum kit.

So I did that for drumming. And, and I think, well the other big thing and, and my children will not thank me for this. I mean, the other thing that helped me personally, now I've had a lot of children, I. They don't wanna know what you've been doing in court when they're at age six, seven, and eight. They want you to come and play with me.

No. And this, and, and so I got used to going home and becoming involved in indel, you know, immersed Lego, whatever it is, you know. So, um, so these [01:26:00] are, these, these were unconscious. I mean, I didn't have children for that purpose, but you know, at the end of the day they, they were, uh, they, they were a whole interland of activity.

Yeah. A as were sports and as with music and drumming. Cuz I, I, I like that. Going to not just clubs rather than concerts, but you know, the round town said North London's terrific, the jazz and 6 0 6 in South London, the jazz cafe in Camden Town. They're all great faces. Yeah.

**Sally:** Yeah. And Michael, you've hinted on something there and it's about presence, but you know, often when people ask me about how I manage my family life and work and you know, then having interests like podcasts and you know, telling the stories of those leaders in, in, in, um, and I said, well, whatever I'm doing, I'm present.

So when I go on a bike ride, uh, you know, later on today with my kids, I'm present. I'm usually, you know, the fool fooling around saying, chase me, you can't get me or whatever. You know, you are lose whatever. Is [01:27:00] that what you've done? And when I'm being caught, I'm present and doing what I need to do there.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then if you were done the same, you know, whatever you are doing, you do it well and you immerse yourself totally. Not sort of half, half hearted.

**Michael Mansfield:** Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. Usually. And what they want to do, the younger child wants to do, and I've got grandchildren of us in it. A granddaughter came to stay here and, you know, murder in the dark come, our version is called Monsters, where, you know, I'm a complete monster and if I get whoever it is, they get tickled to death.

But, um, so I do all that. But the other thing you've just touched on, they kept me, I think, going as well, is I took up cycling to work in London in 19 nine. That's that long ago. I remember the year I did it and thereafter I cycled everywhere in London. So I had bikes, bicycles, [01:28:00] stationed all over the place at, at railway stations outside Chambers said that I always had a bike on an so I sied and that kept me fit as well.

So that's something else that's, you know, uh, I could do it with others cuz pedestrians would overtake me. So yeah, they'd have a chat as they're walking by.

**Sally:** Uh, and I, and I'm pleaing him. There's no sign of retirement anywhere? No. Not really. Good. Good, good. No. Um, well, Michael Mansfield, qc. I know that this isn't the only podcast that, uh, involved me. Tell me about your other one, which is really fascinating cause I've been listening to it.

**Michael Mansfield:** Uh, the other podcast is a series.

I am, um, a ludite. I absolutely loathe social media. I don't do any of it. Um, I don't do Facebook. I don't do Instagram, none of it. [01:29:00] And I'm so relieved that I don't, I don't regret at all because what I see going on horrified me. Of course, they're good things about it, but actually the bullying, the harassment, the racism, ugh.

Can't be doing and the, the providers are not particularly responsible. So that's why I don't do that. But the reason this has come up here is that I do appreciate that there are other ways of communicating and reaching generations that are so far outta sight now that over, I'm over that hill. So I felt that doing, using the podcast as a medium ass Marshall McCluen, for those of us who sat age will remember the medium is the message as what he was saying all those years ago and the, and the books that he wrote.

So I thought, yeah, medium's the message. I've gotta get him the cross. And what am I trying to get across? Well, myself and another barrister called Lorna Hackett, who I work with on other [01:30:00] cases. And so we have quite frequent conversations and in the end we decided, because I'd been asked by Cambridge University to do a symposium, um, on lateral thinking, which was something I came up with.

Years and years and years ago that really the importance for all our work and life is what is now called thinking outside the box. In other words, being able to extricate yourself from a straight jacket and look at topics in a different way. Now these conversations are doing that for everybody. They're not meant just for lawyers far from it.

They're meant for the average person working or not working. Talking to them as adults, that they are intelligent. They're not gonna get sound bites. They're not gonna get the kind of current affairs programs that we've got at the moment that we thought we'd have, you know, 20 minute intelligent discussion on a topic which could be affecting anybody at any time.

So [01:31:00] it could be an environmental issue or economic issue, or political issue, or a cultural issue woke and all the rest of it that's going on at the moment. So, uh, and we do it in a chatty style. It's not scripted. And because we know how our minds work pretty well, we're able to construct something that, um, as far as I can see is going down really well.

So we're going to continue to do another series of that. It's called Two Heads and sometimes it goes under the title Legally Speaking. But anybody who googles my name and will see that the two Heads series comes up, I think the last one goes out today. Bang.

**Sally:** Oh, brilliant. Well, I'll have a, a more of a listen.

They're really interesting. I've already started listening to, um, thank you. Um, Michael Mansfield, we know you're not on any kind of social media, but it's wonderful to follow what you are doing, uh, and how your work has spanned over, been know 50 years far. Well, soon to be 60 years, isn't it? [01:32:00]

**Michael Mansfield:** I like 67, I got called.

So yeah, sort of getting on. Yeah,

**Sally:** it's slowly getting on. Well, it's been wonderful to be talking to you, uh, on here Talking Law about your career and your journey in the law. Thank you so much for giving up the time to talk to me.