

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY

UCD Sutherland School of Law, University College Dublin on 16 June 2014, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, on

President, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The eloquent words of the late Robert F. Kennedy capture the effect of one who often un-represented individuals who cross the threshold of the Free Legal Advice Centre seeking legal guidance and support. As Director General of FLAC, Noeline Blackwell has provided unparalleled leadership in establishing FLAC as one of the leading organisations in Ireland for the promotion of justice for all. Noeline has been instrumental in leading the campaign to reform Ireland's archaic debtor laws, as well as seeking changes to housing and social welfare laws that affect the country's poorest. She is rightly regarded as one of Ireland's leading human rights advocates.

A Tipperary woman by birth and committed to human rights in Ireland long before the concept became as well known and as popular as it is today, Noeline graduated from University College Dublin in 1976 with a Bachelor of Civil Law degree. Qualifying as a solicitor, she practised in her native town before opening her own law firm in Drumcondra in the midst of the mid-1980s recession. The law firms where Noeline honed her craft were not fashionable boutique firms dealing with high profile cases. They dealt with the bread and butter matters of

everyday importance for their clients: from wills and conveyances, to repossession cases and, later on, immigration matters (making Noeline one of the few Dublin practitioners in the 1990s offering expert legal advice to asylum seekers). Noeline a very grounded sense of what human rights means in practice, illustrated, perhaps, by her advice to those interested in a ca

reputation in this sphere. It is fitting that UCD today should, by the conferral of this honorary degree, recognise a woman who continues to use the law to give voice to those with no voice, articulating on their behalf and providing that necessary unwavering ripple of hope that a solution is possible even if not immediately apparent.

Praehonorabilis Praeses, totaque Universitas,

Praesento vobis hanc meam filiam, quam scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico; idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.