BRIDGING BARRIERS INTERVIEW #8 – DEFNE KAHVECI TRANSCRIPT

CAN YILDIRIM

Thank you so much for coming to this interview. I really appreciate you putting aside the time. So, for our sake, for everybody's sake, I wanted to get an introduction from you first. Who are you? What line of work are you in? What do you do? And what's your sort of academic background?

DEFNE KAHVECI

Sure, okay, so my name is Defne, and I'm currently in Istanbul working as a research assistant at a university. My areas of expertise include commercial, company, and capital markets law. I am currently a PhD student here as well, but I am also a law graduate here in Turkey. I have an LL.M. from Boston University in the U.S. and a second LL.M. from Yeditepe University in Turkey. I am registered to the bar in Istanbul and also in New York. I'm currently not actively practicing. I'm more focused on my research assistant position and on completing my PhD. I have like a couple of years of experience in law firms. I know a little bit about how being a lawyer works, as well as how the academic side works in Turkey. And it's a pleasure to be here and talk with you about our experiences in general.

CAN YILDIRIM

Yeah, thank you. I mean, you've had quite a few years, quite the journey with law and education and practice. And what brought you to this? I mean, did you have this sort of journey in mind when you first came into it? Why law? You know, why choose this path?

DEFNE KAHVECI

Well, the first thing is, when I was around 11, 12-ish, I think, my mom's uncle was a judge. And when we got together at family gatherings and stuff, he would always tell some cool stories about how he made decisions and how he affected people's lives. And we would tell all these stories. And I thought at the time, like he's so glorious and like he's doing such an amazing job being a judge. And there's always a prejudice of hearing, like someone is a judge, a prosecutor, or a lawyer. Like, there's always that fancy aura, so to speak. Even in Turkey, you get impressed. So he was someone that I admired and looked up to. And I wasn't, to be honest, I wasn't really good at physics or chemistry or stuff like that. I didn't really enjoy studying them in school. I was always into literature and reading, those kinds of areas. And then, in high school, I decided, look, I'm going to study law. I don't care. I'm not interested in anything else. I'm just going to focus on studying law. And that's what I did. As you may know, we have a university exam here. I took that and started studying at Yeditepe University. I had a scholarship, and I loved it, but it was tough. You know, law school is tough. Four years here in Turkey. It had its ups and downs, but I enjoyed my time at university. And then we'll probably dive deeper into why I pursued an academic career, like master's and PhDs and stuff. But even during classes, I always had the joy of trying to read more, study more, get deeper into a topic, or something like that. So law was a good area for me in that aspect, but mainly my relative, who was a judge, had that effect on me to go do some research about law and what it means to be a lawyer and what it means to practice law.

CAN YILDIRIM

Fair enough. And I mean, there's that glorious, of course, you're a lawyer in Turkey. It means a lot. It's a status symbol.

DEFNE KAHVECI

Well, yeah.

CAN YILDIRIM

I mean, at that point, why not plant your feet in Turkey and say, I'm going to be a lawyer here. I'm going to be a judge here. Why did you choose this path abroad as well?

DEFNE KAHVECI

So that has a relatively longer story. So my university had one of the reasons why I chose that university, and I'm not trying to advertise the university, but I'm just going to mention its program that during my time, and I think it's still the case, we had US law classes and lecturers and professors from several different universities from the United States came and gave us lectures. As we had, I had a legal drafting class, a US contracts class, and a US torts class, you know, while I was taking my Turkish law classes. And that gave me some idea: we can learn from other legal systems as well. Because the main issue, so to speak, with law and what we're trying to move past is that law is local in a way, especially if you're practicing certain areas, you're bound by the laws of that country. So when I had that prejudice, obviously, like, what am I gonna do with US law or like German law or whatever? But then, when you go deeper, you know that Turkish law and some parts of it come from German law, some parts come from French law, Swiss law, whatever. And then when I learned some parts of US law and how things are done there, then I thought, like, I should do more and try to find out, you know, what it means to understand the US legal system or the UK system. During my university years, for two summers, I went to Cambridge for a legal English course, as it teaches you legal terms. English and legal English differ, including terms you need to know and legalese. So one year I went to Cambridge, and I met people from all over the world. And the next year, I went to Yale. We also had a summer school in legal English. During my time there, I had friends from Japan who said they were attending this course to get a head start on their LL.M.s, which they planned to start in September. So they were spending their time somewhere in the US trying to understand the legal system. I was extremely shocked because, like, why are you doing an LL.M. in the US? You're a lawyer from Japan. Like, why do you need this? Like, what's the reason? They were a little

older than me. I was in university, and they were practicing already. And they were the ones explaining to me that, look, legal systems are different, but we work in multinational companies and have clients and customers from all over the world. And they said, we use English for every single negotiation. We handle multinational contracts, and sometimes companies prefer to have internal experience rather than hire someone and incur that cost. So they were like, our companies are actually forcing us to have LL.M. degrees, take these courses, and improve ourselves. And I was like, okay, that's not a bad idea. And then they mentioned that we could take the bar exam in the United States in certain states and then practice there. And I was like, you have to be kidding me. Like, that can't be possible because at the time I was a law student, I had no idea how these things worked. I was so impressed, and it gave me a purpose. So when I came back to Turkey, which was my last year of law school, I was focused on graduating. But at the same time, I was like, I want to try this. I want to be someone who knows about other legal systems to the extent possible. And I want to use my English. I want to work in a field where I can be a lawyer, work at an office or company with a foreign touch. I want to use my language. But I also want to be able to review an international contract and understand properly what it entails. And then I decided to apply for an LL.M. program in the US. Then I, you know, applied; there's a lengthy process, lots of documents to prepare, and stuff. And then when I got in, because I didn't believe that I was going to get accepted, because, you know, there was this idea that US law schools or US universities in general only take, you know, the top students. I was above average, but I wasn't like a four-GPA, super-smart student at my university. But when I got, you know, acceptance letters, I was like, I need to go like, this is an opportunity that I can't miss. So I studied really hard to graduate. It was a tough year. And then, you know, as soon as I graduated, the next summer, I came to Boston University to study LL.M.. Yeah, so this is the story of how I ended up getting an LL.M., actually. My friends, you know, were doing it, and they made me, you know, they put an idea in me to look for it, and then I went for it.

CAN YILDIRIM

I mean, fair enough. You had a very winding path, but you navigated your way to an LL.M. at the end. So it sounds like there were a lot of logistical hurdles, both internal and external. Can I go here? Do you find that there were any, you know, skill hurdles? Because you had some experience with legal English coming into an LL.M. program, but did you feel as though, you know, you lacked a certain way of thinking, a certain way of writing, expressing yourself?

DEFNE KAHVECI

Yes and no. So the legal drafting classes I took in Turkey helped me because they covered the IRAC style writing systems. I learned those in Turkey through my American law classes. And when during my LL.M. program, the structure was the same. I wasn't that surprised, but other friends of mine who had no such background were struggling much more than I did to understand how to write an answer or, you know, analyze an issue. So my background actually helped me a lot in that. When I started my LL.M., drawing on my summer experiences and my time at a Turkish law school, I knew their legal system was significantly different from ours. So I had some awareness that it's not code-reliant, but more case-law-reliant. So at that stage, I had read some cases, analyzed them, and so on. So I had a basic idea of how it goes. But once I fully entered the LL.M. program, I have to say I not only took classes open only to LL.M. students, but also took classes with JD students. Those were the ones that were more challenging, so to say, because the classes were full of ambitious students, English were their native language, and they've already finished college in the US, and then came to get a JD. So they already had certain experience. Some of them had worked, and then came. So the discussions in class and the perspectives shared were really different. I was just a fresh graduate, first out of law school (college), so I didn't have that much experience. So when I was trying to analyze cases or understand why a judge thought that way, and what kind of background it had, I struggled from time to time. For example, our classmates had some background in economics and finance. They could analyze the financial aspects of the decision and stuff. I had some struggles, but as I said, not with language or how the classes would go, because I had experience. But if I didn't

have those, it would have been a huge shock for me, because in Turkey, lecturers or professors usually come and mention the topic they are going to lecture on that day. Student-teacher interactions are not as frequent as we see in the US. But in the US, a professor randomly calls you out and asks you about some sort of case, or what the ruling of the case was, and stuff like that. So that would have been pretty shocking and maybe a little bit traumatizing if I, you know, if I wasn't prepared beforehand. My background was helpful in that aspect.

CAN YILDIRIM

Okay. So, you know, with that sort of background in mind, and you came in fully prepared, maybe some challenges. Do you think you developed a different voice through all these challenges?

DEFNE KAHVECI

They say that each language you speak reflects a different personality. In law, it is also similar. Like in Turkish law, you are, I'm going to say more serious, but I'm not meaning word-for-word, like you're bound by the codes more. Of course, precedent matters, cases matter. But if the law is open and certain about something, you don't really have a way of moving past that. But in the US, it's more of a case law-based system. Of course, there are codes, regulations, and everything, but it's more of a case-law, precedent-based system. And it is refreshing to see how one person can interpret something, only to have the other interpret it differently. But they are all court decisions; they're valid cases that you can rely on. So that gave me a more relaxed, more open perspective on an issue and let me say, "It's something I couldn't come up with if I were dealing with a Turkish law issue, because there's a certain answer." But if it's related to US law, I could go, "Okay, maybe we could try this approach." You know, it's more open, so to speak. So it gave me the idea of looking more open and thinking through all the alternatives to see if they work. So that, yeah, it's different.

CAN YILDIRIM

Yeah. Just out of curiosity, in that openness, do you feel as though you try to bring that back to Turkey? When you interact with someone now in a Turkish (law) context where you are right now, do you try to have that same dialogue, or do you feel as though you have to sort of code-switch between here's a more serious Turkish, you know, code-based dialogue versus...

DEFNE KAHVECI

Yeah, if I can, I try to be open-minded when I work with US law. But most of the time, I have to adopt a more serious tone and say, "Look, the law is clear on this." You know, I don't think there's a discussion; if there's no background discussion or anything, you know, this is quite open. We're going to apply this and move on. Yeah, I do. I am more of a, you know, this-is-it approach to Turkish law issues. Yeah.

CAN YILDIRIM

You try to bring an open-mindedness to the Turkish dialogue. Do you feel that the Turkish, more code-based approach, is beneficial in the US as well? Or do you find it like a more of a hindrance to your communication?

DEFNE KAHVECI

Well, to be honest, it's easier to find a solution if you have a clear answer written somewhere. So if there is a US law issue I need to look into or address, it takes more time to find the answer. So I sometimes wish there were a simple answer I could find. But even if I look at the code or the law, it seems quite open. It seems this is the answer, but I always

have the urge to look at the case law if it's US. I can't be as certain as I am. Well, in Turkey, too, in Turkish law, too, you have to look at cases at certain issues, but you know whether a clause in a code in Turkey is final, like the courts interpret it the same way, you know, all the time, but in the US, you can't see that as often.

CAN YILDIRIM

Right.

DEFNE KAHVECI

I can't carry too much, but I do hope I can sometimes; it would make things easier, I think. But also, you know, I carry more from the US to Turkey than Turkey to the US.

CAN YILDIRIM

Okay.

DEFNE KAHVECI

I think, yeah.

CAN YILDIRIM

Okay. And, you know, sort of building off of that, I do feel as though if there's a difference in communication, there's a difference in relationship, right? So, one lawyer to another, a lawyer to a client, a legal educator to a student: they communicate differently because they perceive each other and their relationship differently. In what aspects do you think, you

know, that exist? Is it a power dynamic difference? Is it a difference to, you know, hierarchy or the place of law in society? I mean, why are those relationships different in your mind?

DEFNE KAHVECI

Well, I'm a research assistant right now, so maybe I can start with the academic side, like how a professor-assistant relationship works. I don't think I've experienced that in the US. I was not a research assistant, but from what I could observe, the boundaries here are clearer. And the level of respect and how you act is more obvious here. And I think in the US, you tend to have a slightly friendlier environment, even with someone much older than you. Of course, there's still respect; you don't throw that out of the window, but like, I think it's a little bit different. I think people in the US are more open-minded and more willing to assist and guide in certain areas. But here in Turkey, there's more structure and hierarchy in the academic world, as far as I can tell from my experience. For lawyer relationships, like legal office relationships, let me think. Well, I haven't worked in a US law firm, so I can't fully compare it. But there is a hierarchy here in law firms as well. Like I have a senior partner, partners, counsels, and everyone, um, interns are the ones that suffer the most, you know, I think it's the same in every country, um, when you don't have experience, it's a part of your journey. I think, well, yeah, I mean, in Turkey, it's more hierarchically structured, I think.

CAN YILDIRIM

At the time, when we were talking about your own background and why you came to law, you mentioned that there's a certain veneration with which you might see a lawyer or a judge in Turkey. Do you feel as though any other sort of cultural aspects might come into that in terms of how Turks view law, legal professionals, the place of law in society, or the responsibility a lawyer or legal educator might have to society, versus what you've perceived in the U.S.?

DEFNE KAHVECI

Let me think about that. Well, it might have changed recently, but judges have always had the duty to make proper rulings. Even if it's not like in the US, there are certain court levels in Turkey where your decision is binding. And, you know, it will become a precedent. So everyone is trying their best at what they do, but with caseloads and other issues, the consistency of their decisions is not what we would wish for. But I'm assuming the same can be said in the US as well. And the inconsistency there would probably be mainly based on how we interpret a law or a prior precedent, or something like that. Um, but I'm thinking like, um, in terms of society, I thought this is a difficult question, like in law, politics, and everything. The public's perception of lawyers, at least when I was studying, was better than it is now. Um, but that is based on many factors. I'm talking about in Turkey: we have so many lawyers, so many new law graduates, some of whom are good at their jobs and some who aren't. So that affects how the public perceives the lawyers and their jobs. It was highly regarded. There are, of course, still many people who think, you know, being a lawyer or being a judge or being a prosecutor means that you're doing public service. In our country and under our laws, being a lawyer is defined as a public service. But nowadays, there can be a sort of prejudice, like with the AI and everything: people tend to think, "I can prepare that document by myself." I don't need someone who's experienced in law or someone who knows the law. I can just open and read it up. So, I see or hear more and more of those kinds of issues. I do hope it's not like this in the US. I don't have that much information. When I was studying in the US, I said I was a lawyer from Turkey, and the people I talked to were really impressed and said, "Okay, you're doing something really difficult." You know, it's a challenging thing to do. Not only are you not doing it in your own country, but you're doing it in a foreign country. I think people in the US, at least, understood better what it meant to study law and become a lawyer or a judge than they do today in Turkey. But it's a really leveled-up question that, you know, we could discuss for hours and hours. It has many different aspects.

CAN YILDIRIM

And with those changing perspectives, I'm curious, do you think your view on your own career path, your own, not just the past path, but your future path has changed? I mean, do you see your legal profession differently because society has seen it differently, and you've seen that change?

DEFNE KAHVECI

Well, to be honest, some days I feel like, why did I study law? Like, there are some days in my life I regret my choices, but then I'm like, what you're talking about, you know, you love what you do. But on some days, I feel like we are practicing law. I'm not practicing law at the moment, so I'm a research assistant, but, you know, I'm part of the legal system. In any case, legal scholars and practitioners should be taken into account when people decide on matters, create laws or legislation, and similar things, as well as in their daily lives. Sometimes we're not as valued as we should be. Like, there are lots of not just law but other career areas that we are not appreciated or valued enough. But that relates to the country and, you know, everything relates to that. So I'm not going to go into that in depth. But sometimes the way the law is applied does not make me happy, as I would have hoped it would be handled differently. So sometimes I get hopeless. Like, sometimes I see that there is a new law, whether it's in the US or the EU, like 90 pages of code. Like, when I see the AI Act has entered into force, I'm like, why are we still talking about AI and regulating it? It seems surreal. And I get so excited. Like, I was studying contracts and the constitution like we're talking about AI right now. And it gets me so excited at the same time because law is not something set in stone. Like it changes so much. It has changed, and it will continue to change. So to be part of that journey is also exciting. So I have conflicting emotions depending on my mood and on events happening in the country or around the world. But for the future, I have hope that our jobs will get easier with AI tools and everything. But I'm also interested to see how laws will change, whether our basic understanding of some concepts will shift with these technological developments, and, you

know, what will happen to how we interpret things. Are they going to change significantly in, I don't know, 20 years, 30 years? So it's hopeful, but also disappointing on some days, and hopeful most of the time.

CAN YILDIRIM

I'm curious about something you mentioned, which is this idea of the change you want to see in the world as legal professionals or as legal researchers, that you have the sort of knowledge, the space to inform policy decisions, inform how people might see an issue. And that sounds to me a lot like the idea of like advocacy that people in America have. You use your profession to make a broader change that, in my experience, I sense less in Turkey in the experience that I've had.

DEFNE KAHVECI

Yeah.

CAN YILDIRIM

You sort of feel as though your general cultural identity, like not focusing as much on the current, but your, a background of being Turkish or growing up in Turkey, being educated in Turkey in a Turkish context, of course. Do you feel as though that identity versus then an educational identity in the US shapes the way that you view this advocacy? Did you have this idea before? Do you think it evolved in a different state?

DEFNE KAHVECI

If I hadn't gone to the US and studied there, I wouldn't be as interested in how legal developments in other countries and around the world unfold, AI, sustainability

discussions, and international corporate issues. I wouldn't probably be that interested. I would just be doing my job in Turkey, applying Turkish law and moving on. But knowing that, how, and eventually those acts, codes, or laws we're talking about in those countries or the EU, for example, would eventually come to Turkey and become applicable at some point. So I would have to learn, probably eventually. But to be able to follow up on that news, to look at the developments and the perspectives and how they are changing their legal systems and how that could work for us, I don't think I would be this open-minded if I hadn't gone to the US and had that experience. I would be more closed off and less interested. And this has been reflected in the thesis I wrote in Turkey for my second master's, which I completed here, where I compared EU, US, and Turkish legislation on a capital markets issue. So studying in the US made me want to study comparative law more, like comparing laws and how we can improve them here. I would like to choose a topic for my PhD thesis that focuses on something like that, drawing on another legal system to help our system. Maybe interpreting an issue, or having something we don't have here that could help our legal system.

CAN YILDIRIM

And in sort of, you said doors to other systems, doors to other people. Do you think this new perspective has helped you solve challenges when crossing those doors?

DEFNE KAHVECI

Yeah, I think it did. And I, you know, this isn't specific to studying law, but studying outside your home country or, you know, I was, I'm currently in Istanbul, but I'm from a city called Bursa. So until high school, I was with my parents, and then I moved out and lived in dorms. So that gives you some sort of independence and, you know, to be braver and to be more open. But when I relocated to the U.S. and lived by myself for a year, that made me more courageous, not only to have a more open-minded perspective on the legal system and its approach, but also living by myself in a whole new country, which gave me the idea to be

more bold and to be more open when I'm expressing things. So not just from a legal perspective, but also in my daily life. And that made me more open-minded, freer to express myself, more powerful, and bolder when defending my opinions and stuff. And that comes with defending your opinion as a lawyer. So it's overlapping. But it also made me more courageous in my personal life in my daily interactions.

CAN YILDIRIM

And having acquired all these different skills, as you look forward, what do you sort of want to use these for? I mean, you've built up that courage, you've built up this open-mindedness, the ability to discuss. Where does this lead you in the next five, ten, fifty years?

DEFNE KAHVECI

Yeah, well, I want to be a lecturer. So even if I end up going to legal practice somehow, I always want to have a foot in teaching. I like being able to tell people things and teach them things. So hopefully, even if I end up practicing law after completing my PhD. I would hope to be involved in teaching here, in the US, you know, wherever, whenever. I always want to be involved in that. I also really like getting emails from prospective applicants who are applying to all those graduate programs in the US. Sometimes my alma mater, BU, connects them with me. Sometimes at my own university, where I'm currently working, they reach out to me. I really, really love talking to them about these things to encourage them, because I was lucky to have friends from Yale who encouraged me. And I know how it feels to have no idea about what to do, but they have that ambition to evolve themselves. So I really hope I can give that kind of advice as well in the future. So, like, mentoring, teaching, and practicing law, all three together combined somehow. Yeah, that's what I want to be able to do in the future.

CAN YILDIRIM

So if I were this prospective student coming to you, if I were this LL.M. or JD or whatever student, a Turkish law student who's thinking about, or a young lawyer thinking about studying abroad, doing any of these different things, I mean, what's your sort of advice? What strategies do you suggest? What do you suggest they take?

DEFNE KAHVECI

Oh my, that's a loaded question. It starts with which country you want to go to study, and which legal area you're interested in. Do you speak any language other than English and Turkish? Like if you already have some idea of, like if you speak German, for example, and if you want to come back and study, like work in Turkey or pursue an academic career in Turkey. And if you already speak German, I would probably recommend checking Germany, checking Switzerland, checking their programs. You know, it depends on the candidate's qualities and interests. But if I had questions like this, like if someone is set on pursuing a degree in the US, the first thing I would say is, are you really sure? Because you're going to be away and you're going to miss it, it's going to be difficult. It's a heavy workload. And if you're not used to the legal system, you're going to struggle a lot. So I, first of all, try to scare them and tell them the risks first, financial aspects, you know, scholarships, how are you going to live there? And for that kind of stuff, I lay out the toughest parts of studying in the US. If they have some idea of how to move past those issues, or if they've already looked at them and found a solution, then I move to the next step. Okay, like, did you look for universities? Do you know which area you want to work in? And then we move forward in those areas. I had discussed universities and programs. With people, I always ask, "Do you want to come back to Turkey, or do you intend to stay in whatever country you're going to?" “Are you aware that some countries allow you to take their bar exams? It's not just the US; in the UK, I know you can do that, too. Are you aware of those things?” I try to give them as much perspective as possible. And then if they're still into it, then we move on to specifics like which university, which program, and whether they have any scholarships. If they do, how to apply, whom to reach out for, what to look out for, what are the steps of applying, and what are the costs of applying? Now, all the

details that you would need, the tricks that you would need, to file an application. I know mostly from my US-based experience, but for EU countries I have a basic idea of what to look for and the issues they might face. I always tell people they need to improve their English; it should be as good as their native Turkish, at least a C level. It has to be fluent. You have to understand what you're reading. Legal English is not the same as daily English. If you want to pursue a law degree outside Turkey, you will need not only perfect English but also a good understanding of legal English. So I try to guide them to read legal news online and listen to some legal stuff. I'm not expecting anyone to become proficient in legalese in one day, but I want them to get a sense of what they're going to face. And then if they have any specific questions, I answer them. Sometimes I meet with people who are trying to decide whether to choose BU Law. And then we ended up talking about Boston and how cold it is for about an hour. So it depends on the candidate who contacts me. But I'm open to anyone who reaches out. Actually, through the “Emails to a Young Lawyer” Project, I've received many emails. I really enjoy it when someone reaches out for guidance, because we need it more in Turkey. We need people who can guide young, great minds to achieve more and become legal practitioners who know not only Turkish law but also have experience in other legal systems. Oh my, that's a loaded question. It starts with which country you want to study in and which legal area you're interested in. Cause like, do you know any other language other than English and Turkish? Like if you already have some idea of, like if you know German, for example, and if you want to come back and study, like work in Turkey or pursue an academic career in Turkey. And if you already have German, I would probably recommend like, check Germany, check Switzerland, check their programs. You know, it depends on the candidate's qualities and interests. But if I had questions like this, like if someone is set on pursuing a degree in US, the first thing I say is, are you really sure? because you're going to be gone away and you're going to have you it's going to be difficult. It's heavy workload. And if you're not used to the legal system, if you don't have any idea, you're going to struggle a lot. So I try to, first of all, try to scare them and tell the risks first and, you know, financial aspects, you know, scholarships, how are you going to, you know, how are you going to live there? And those kind of stuff I lay out the toughest parts of the you know, studying in outside US, like outside Turkey, then if they have some sort of idea of how to move past those issues or if they've already looked to them and found

a solution, then I move to the next step. Okay, like, did you look for universities? Do you know which area you want to work at? And then we move forward in those areas. I had discussed universities and programs. With people, I always ask them, " Do you want to come back to Turkey, or do you intend to stay in whatever country that you're going to? Are you aware that some countries allow you to take their bar exams? It's not just the US; in the UK, I know you can do that, too. Are you aware of those things? Do you want to do those? I try to give them as much perspective as well. Like, I want to give them scary things. What can you do if you get, you know, if you decide to go to that country and get that degree? And then if they're still into it, then we move on to specifics like which university, which program, and whether they have any scholarships. If they do, how to apply, whom to seek out for, what to look out for, what are the steps of applying, and what are the costs of applying? Now, all the details that you would need, the tricks that you would need, to file an application. I don't know; the tricks and stuff I know mostly from US-based experience, but for EU countries, I have some idea of what to look for and the issues they might face. I always tell people they need to improve their English; it should be as good as your Turkish, at least a C level. It has to be fluent. You have to understand what you're reading. Legal English is not the same as daily English. If you want to pursue a law degree outside Turkey, you not only need perfect English but also a basic understanding of legal English. So I try to guide them to read legal news online and listen to some legal stuff to get some terms into them. I'm not expecting anyone to become proficient in legalese in one day, but I want them to get a sense of what they're going to face. So I try to do those if anyone approaches me. And then if they have any specific questions, I answer them. Sometimes I met with people who were deciding whether to choose BU. And then we ended up talking about Boston and how cold it is for about an hour. So it depends on the candidate who contacts me. But I'm open to anyone who reaches out. And actually, through the Emails to a Young Lawyer Project, I've received lots of emails. So I really enjoy it when someone reaches out and asks for guidance because we need it more in Turkey. We need people who can guide young, great minds to achieve more than we do and help them become legal practitioners who know not only Turkish law but also have experience in other legal systems.

CAN YILDIRIM

So as we sort of wrap up, I want to ask, if you had to leave one insight, one story, one strategy on navigating these cultural differences, legal differences, language differences, what would you sort of leave to a future lawyer who wants to cross those same system, culture, linguistic doors that you have crossed?

DEFNE KAHVECI

Be open-minded. That's all I'm going to say. Be open-minded. Do not have any prejudice—not only in the law, but when you're interacting with someone from outside your country, with different belief systems, different—how they grow up is different. How they were educated is different. Be open-minded and try to understand where they're coming from and their backgrounds. Then you can build stronger friendships and relationships. And then you can learn from each other as you go. Be open-minded. Do not have prejudices. That would be the key thing that I would say, yeah.

CAN YILDIRIM

Okay. Well, thank you so much. If you have anything else you'd like to mention, you're more than welcome to, but otherwise, I will end the recording now.

DEFNE KAHVECI

Great, great. Thank you. It's been great.

CAN YILDIRIM

Thank you so much.