



Dr Anamah Tan

Lawyer and women's rights activist

Born to a Chinese family, Dr Tan was adopted by parents of Ceylonese heritage. She went to St. Margaret's School for her primary and secondary education and completed her GCE-A levels at Bartley Secondary School. In 1963, she graduated with LLB (Honours) and was called to the Singapore Bar. Her first job was as a legal officer with the Housing and Development Board (HDB).

At St. Margaret's School (1947 – 1956), her fondest memories were of Ms Jessica Kilgour and Miss Nora Inge – headmistresses who were strict yet motherly and loving. Indeed, the commitment of the teachers to educating the young left an indelible mark on Dr Tan. The friendships formed in those formative school years have also lasted till today.

In Dr Tan's view, St. Margaret's combined the best of academic teaching and moral instruction. She strongly credits the school for the career choices of her classmates and herself, particularly in the areas of law, medicine and education. This led her to specialise in family law and to champion the rights of women. In 1974, together with seven others, she set up the Singapore Association of Women Lawyers (SAWL). The association aims to raise legal literacy among the community, particularly the under-privileged and women in blue-collar jobs in Singapore.

Charity, devotion and patience – these words of the St. Margaret's school motto - have been guiding principles for Dr Tan in her career spanning over 50 years. She has served in leadership positions in many women's councils and ministerial committees on community and family projects. In 1980, Dr Tan became a founder member of the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations and served as its president from 1991 to 2000. She was also President of the ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisations from 2000 to 2002, having served there in various capacities since 1992.

She has received several awards including the Singapore National Medal for Community Work in 1993 for helping women and the underprivileged, and a Public Service Star for community work in 1998. It is no exaggeration that Dr Tan has significantly paved the way for women, community work and service to the nation. We are certainly proud that she is a St. Margaret's alumna.

Adapted from <http://www.swhf.sg/the-inductees/10-advocacy-activism/96-anamah-tan>