

**Conferment of the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Law
on
Baroness Scotland
Thursday 4 July 2019 – UCL Laws Graduation Ceremony**

Vice-Provost, I beg leave to present to you Baroness Scotland for conferment of a UCL honorary degree.

At UCL Honorary Degrees are awarded in recognition of exceptional scholarly or intellectual achievement and contributions of outstanding importance in academic fields or in public life. Honorary graduands of UCL are persons who have attained the highest distinction in their field and have made a distinguished contribution, not only to their subject but also to the welfare of society in general.

Vice-Provost, ladies and gentlemen, we are delighted to present Baroness Scotland of Asthal for conferment of an Honorary Doctorate (LLD) of UCL.

Patricia Janet Scotland was born in Dominica, the tenth child of twelve. She has said, “I was brought up to believe that everyone is the arbiter of their own fortune. If you said to my father, ‘But no one else is doing it,’ he would say, ‘Well, good, you can be the first’.” Her life and career have been an ascent to the highest offices and to an extraordinary range of firsts.

Her family emigrated to the UK when she was two years old and she went to school in Walthamstow. She graduated with an LLB of the University of London in 1976 and was called to the Bar at the Middle Temple the following year. In 1991 at thirty-five she was the youngest ever woman to be appointed a Queen’s Counsel as well as the first black woman to be appointed a Deputy High Court Judge and Master of Middle Temple.

She went on to found a set of chambers at number 1 Gray’s Inn Square. In 1995 she was elected as a Bencher of the Middle Temple. She was named as a

Millennium Commissioner and was appointed to the Commission for Racial Equality. In 1997 she received a life peerage and was created Baroness Scotland of Asthal.

This stellar legal career led her into senior political appointments. From 1999 to 2001 she was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with responsibility for the UK's diplomatic relations with North America, the Caribbean, Overseas Territories, the Consular Division, the British Council and all parliamentary business in the House of Lords. She established the Pro Bono Lawyers Panel, a group of British-based lawyers who provided legal advice on a pro bono basis to UK nationals imprisoned in foreign countries. She created an Overseas Territories Council for the Caribbean, and she reformed and restructured the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Consular Division so that it was better able to respond to emergencies and disasters abroad.

In 2000 Baroness Scotland was appointed to the Privy Council, and in 2001 she became Parliamentary Secretary in the Lord Chancellor's Department. She was the minister responsible for civil justice and the reform of the civil law including comprehensive reform of land registration. In that department she was also responsible for international affairs, and the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, appointed her as the UK Alternate Representative to the European Convention. She was awarded the Polish Medal for her contribution to the reform and development of Law in Poland.

From 2003 to 2007 she was Minister of State for the Criminal Justice System and Law Reform at the Home Office and deputy to the Home Secretary. She achieved major reform of the Criminal Justice System including the creation of the National Criminal Justice Board and the Local Criminal Justice Board. She established "Alliances" to reduce reoffending and to combat domestic abuse, as well as an advisory group on victims. In particular she was founder and patron of the Corporate Alliance against Domestic Violence, and she was a prime mover in the passing of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act which, among other things, instituted for the first time the offence of familial homicide. After her reforms of the law domestic violence was reduced by 64%.

The office of Attorney General was founded in 1315: six hundred and ninety-two years later Baroness Scotland was the first woman to be appointed to that office and she held it under Gordon Brown's premiership until 2010. When Labour left government she became Shadow Attorney General.

Currently Baroness Scotland is Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, the first woman to hold that post.

Thus far I have but scratched the surface of Patricia Scotland's legal and political career and achievements. She has worked also in the areas of the public relations of the Bar, racial equality and race relations, child abduction, and the BBC, as well as charity work against domestic violence, for the reuniting of children separated from their families, and the overseas mission of the Catholic Church. She was until earlier this year also Chancellor of the University of Greenwich.

Such diverse achievement and dedication have not gone unrecognised. By my count she has honorary doctorates from five universities. She has honorary fellowships from the University of Cardiff, the Society of Advanced Legal Studies and Wolfson College Cambridge.

Among many distinctions she has a Lifetime Achievement Award from European Women in Business. The Guardian named her Most Powerful Black Female Briton; The Spectator and the Political Studies Association have both made her Parliamentarian of the Year; Channel 4 and House magazine declared her Peer of the Year.

This is an extraordinary record of achievement and contribution to public life in this country and overseas, and UCL is privileged and delighted to recognise it by the conferment of Honorary Doctorate (LLD). Vice-Provost, I present Baroness Scotland of Asthal.