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## POSTCARD FROM NEW YORK

By Mahisha Rupan

The journalist Mignon MacLauglin once said that “a car is useless in New York, essential everywhere else, the same with good manners”.

Having lived in Manhattan for nearly nine months, I often found this to be an accurate depiction of New York. There is nowhere else in the world where strangers are so comfortable telling you exactly what they think. Yet despite this uncompromising honesty, New Yorkers always show a genuine concern and warmth towards those who share their city. A fact evidenced when I lost my phone somewhere on the island and it was returned to me via a Good Samaritan who took the time to dial the last number after finding it in the back of a taxi. She told me that whenever she loses something in Manhattan it somehow finds its way back to her.

I moved to New York earlier this year to assist Mayer Brown’s New York office with Google and YouTube’s defence of a copyright infringement claim brought by various media content holders relating to videos posted on YouTube’s online service. Moving between two different offices of the same law firm was an easy transition as the internal systems and working culture are relatively consistent between offices. As to be expected, the working day is long but as New York is the city that never sleeps, late nights in the office

never felt that bad. Regardless of the hour I left the office, I could always find an open restaurant, a manicurist and a bookshop.

To adjust to working within the US litigation system, I had to learn to adapt to the American style of drafting. To practice, I would email friends using American spellings and expressions. My favourite American expression that is in frequent use around the office is “drink the kool-aid”. When I first heard this expression from a colleague, I remember staring in confusion at my glass of water and wondering where the kool-aid was. As it happens, “drink the kool-aid” means to blindly follow a cause and originates from the Jonestown massacre where the leader of a cult ordered his followers to drink poisoned kool-aid as part of a suicide pact.

There is no such thing as a typical day in New York; each day is what you make of it. Culture and high society abound in the Upper East Side where you feel as if you’ve just stepped into the pages of an Edith Wharton novel (or onto the set of *Gossip Girl*, depending on your cultural touchstones!). If you like life with a little more sweat and grit, there’s the East Village with its diners and dive bars. More often than not, a day in New York encompasses all of these extremes; starting in the Met and ending in a smoky jazz bar via the Vietnamese sandwich stall in Columbus Park.



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My most quintessentially American moment occurred a few months after moving to Manhattan. I went to a prom. It was a ball held by The New York Intellectual Property Law Association that has over the years been dubbed The Patent Prom. In the ballroom of the Waldorf Astoria, IP lawyers from across New York gathered in their finest attire carrying their firm's corsage to mingle with friends, colleagues and clients. Most firms had hired suites where they hosted either a pre-party or post-party celebration and just as in high school, there were the popular firms whose parties everyone wanted to attend and those firms' parties where no one wanted to be seen at.

I will always remember the vibrant energy of New York that forces you to operate at an almost inhuman pace. The city celebrates its diversity and acknowledges that it was founded on the struggles of immigrants. Regardless of where you originate, the moment you land in New York, you are a New Yorker. While this may leave you open to being scolded by irate taxi drivers, you'll soon learn that you're a New Yorker when you start shouting back.