

ASIA

Meet the Manager: Hanifah Hashim

January 02, 2020



Hanifah Hashim
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As a child, Malaysian-born Hanifah Hashim probably didn't picture herself living in one of the coldest places in the United States—the state of Wisconsin. Yet, fate brought her there when she won a coveted government scholarship to a US college, where she got to experience a country with all four seasons. When she returned to Malaysia years later, she leveraged her experience abroad, eventually becoming the head of fixed income in Franklin Templeton's Malaysia office. Through travel and respecting other cultures, she is hopeful that her 14-year-old twin boys will learn to become global citizens.



My family having ice cream in Hokkaido, Japan.

How did you decide to pursue the career you are in today?

I got a degree in economics and international relations at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in the United States on a government scholarship. I thought my future would be in the public sector, potentially in international relations.

However, when I returned to Malaysia in 1991, I was encouraged to join the private sector. The government waived my bond, which I had to sign for the scholarship, as the economy then was weak and there weren't many open government roles on offer. I served on the sell side of the bank for 12 years before deciding to further my career on the buy side. I then joined the asset management business there. While working at that company, I realized I wanted to grow and build my experience in the asset management world.



The Malaysian office during Eid Mubarak celebrations, June 2019.

What was a turning point in your career?

I can trace it to the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997–1998. During that time, Malaysia decided to develop the local corporate bond market as an alternative source of funding instead of over-relying on bank loans. I was involved in the first few corporate bonds issued in Malaysia, which contributed to the growth of the local market. Taking part in that strengthened my passion for fixed income.

Since then, Malaysia’s local currency bond market has seen enormous growth—around US\$353 billion—making it the fourth-largest bond market in emerging East Asia after China, South Korea and Thailand and remaining the largest sukuk market globally.¹

I am excited to continue to lend my voice to the local bond scene by participating in industry dialogues, as well as contributing to the Shariah-compliant space, where Malaysia has been the market leader.

Do you have any lessons from growing up that have made you stronger?

Growing up, my family was not financially well off. I didn’t start school until the age of nine. I did not know how to read or write at that age, and soon realized that I lacked skills that my peers had.

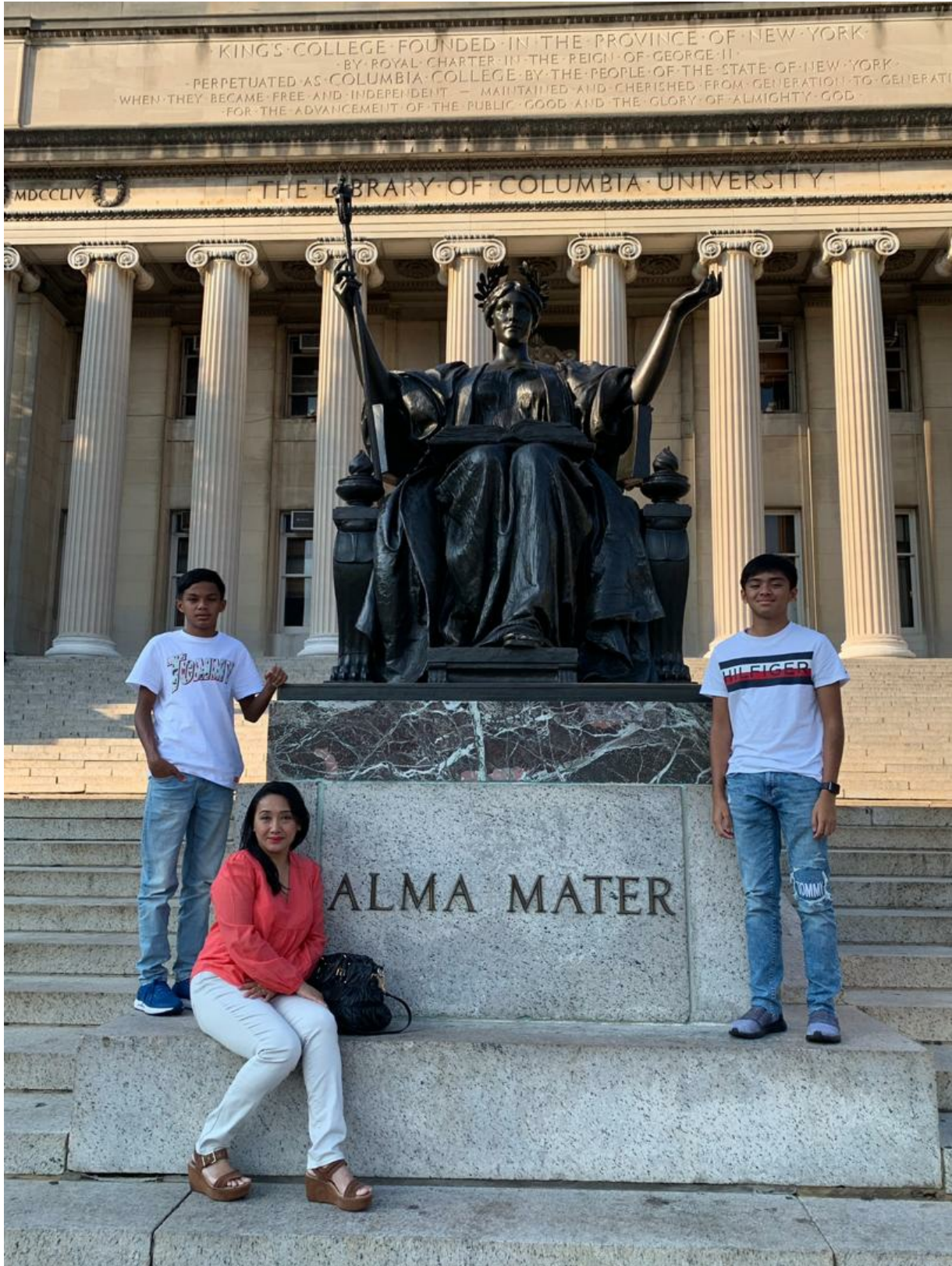
It drove me to become more determined and to work harder than others. I would wake up extra early to study before school because I wanted to catch up. My tenacity paid off. In a few years, I was at the top of my class and was selected to join a boarding school. The government sponsors children from low-income households who excel in their studies, which is considered a prestigious opportunity in Malaysia.



With my family at the Nordkette mountain range in Innsbruck, Austria, August 2018.

What are your interests outside of work?

As a mother of 14-year-old twin boys, and as a typical Asian parent, I tutor my sons at home in my spare time to monitor their progress. I believe that education and knowledge help children reach their full potential in life.



A visit to Columbia University in New York, August 2019. I hope it inspires my twins to study for an Ivy League college.

My sons attend an international school to help them broaden their minds and become global citizens, and I budget for overseas holidays at least twice a year. Our most recent travels include Europe, Japan, Australia and New York.

I also love cats and have eight indoor cats at home. They are my stress relievers and bring a lot of joy to my family.



Bloomy, one of my eight cats.

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1. Source: Bank Negara Malaysia, Annual Report, 2018.