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**FROM THE EDITOR**

Former Constitutional Court Justice Johann Kriegler said something once that has always stayed with me. He said being a high court judge was not the hardest job in the world, but it was one of the loneliest.

He was speaking at Wits University – many years ago – about how, in his view, the Judicial Service Commission had gone wrong in how it was appointing judges. I disagreed with much of what he said but he was very persuasive on how important experience was for a judge.

A judge has to take so many decisions - everyday, and some very quickly - decisions that have an enormous effect on people's lives. And he or she must take these decisions quite, quite alone.

To handle this enormous and lonely responsibility, a judge had to have "been round the block" a few times, he said.

I was persuaded and simultaneously troubled. Troubled because if experience was the most essential tool in a judge's kit, black and women advocates were often going to be on the back foot. Racism – ongoing racism, not just historic disadvantage – would mean that black and women advocates would battle to have the same quantity and quality of experience as white male advocates.

But still, I was persuaded there is no better teacher than experience really. So what did this mean?

I was so troubled that I even wrote to Justice Kriegler, asking: So, what do we do then? He wrote me back a lovely, very sincere, email, the gist of which was to say – if I recall - I don't know.

But advocacy training may be a part of the answer, he said.

So when *Advocate* decided to do an advocacy training-themed edition, I was not surprised when the first picture in my inbox was of Justice Kriegler, sitting with a junior advocate at one of the Wallenberg sessions.

I have never been to advocacy training, nor seen it done. And I wonder whether it really is a substitute for experience. Getting briefs must still be the best way to get experience; and there is little point in an advocate getting training if she does not get briefed.

But even if training cannot wholly replace experience, it seems nonetheless to be very beneficial and empowering – the world over.

I also like the idea of the Bar training its own, thus reinforcing its independence. And it is good to see a space where juniors, seniors and judges hang out socially – these things make a difference.

Another topic that we cover in this edition, which is very close to my heart, is *Saflii*. This is something I really can talk about, being – like many of my journalist colleagues – one of its most grateful users.

When I left the attorneys' profession to be a journalist, I was still writing about law. But I had none of the expensive databases and textbooks that I took for granted when I was at Bowmans. I would have been lost without *Saflii* (and some very kind librarians).

I have always said that access to justice is about so much more than access to courts. Access to justice means clear legislation; it means intelligible judgments in plain English; it means good and affordable legal advice – all of this long before you even have to approach a court.

It means access to law. *Saflii* is totally free and easily accessible law at your fingertips. It is there for everyone. It is a project that everyone who believes in access to justice should get behind. **A**

The editor contributes to *Advocate* as an autonomous author. The views she expresses are entirely her own, and do not purport to represent any view or position of *Advocate* or of the GCB.