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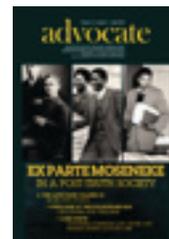
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Iphaphabhuku labameli basemajajini baseNingizimu Afrika
Dzhenala ya dzangano la vhaadivokati vha Afrika Tshipembe
Die Suid-Afrikaanse Balietydskrif ■ The South African Bar Journal
Kgatisobaka ya boadifokata ya Africa-Borwa
Jenali ya magwetha ya vaavanyisi van Afrika-Dzonga



FROM THE EDITOR

Is it really only April? So much has happened since the last issue of *Advocate* that we journalist types are feeling simultaneously exhausted and whip-lashed.

After 37 years as president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe was prised from power – a monumental end of an era for Zimbabweans and all of us in Southern Africa. The two week-period that it took for Mugabe to leave was like torture. Would he? Wouldn't he?

Immediately after that was the all-important ANC national elective conference at Nasrec near Soweto, another nail-biting week, when the conference was on a knife's edge on rumours of vote rigging and possible court challenges.

Then, just when we thought we'd have a week of Christmas holiday with family, the Constitutional Court decided it would be a good time to hand down its judgment in the Economic Freedom Fighter's impeachment case – a judgment that needed much unpacking and debate.

Then the Gupta edifice began to crumble as the Asset Forfeiture Unit and the Hawks seemingly awoke from a deep slumber.

Then there was the recall. Would he go? Wouldn't he? Like Mugabe, former president Jacob Zuma also kept us guessing until the very last minute. Then there was the cabinet reshuffle.

And now we are looking at what could be a seismic, defining moment in the history of our constitutional democracy: if section 25 is to be amended to provide for expropriation of property without compensation it would be the first amendment of the bill of rights.

Not to mention the small matter that, 13 years after he was first charged, Zuma may stand in the dock to face corruption charges.

So much has changed. Yet nothing has changed.

Last year we listened in horror to the testimony, the painful detailing of suffering, of the family of 5-year old Michael Komape, who fell into a pit latrine at school. He drowned, choked to death, in faeces. As I write, the tiny body of another child – five year old Lumka Mketwa – has been recovered from a school pit latrine.

For this to have happened again is unconscionable.

As our society both rushes forward and stands still, we should not forget the role played by lawyers and courts.

Unlike with previous ANC elective conferences, this time (in some provinces) it was court decisions that determined who got to attend. When political accountability failed, it was a legal process that sought to hold accountable those responsible for Komape's death.

And it will be lawyers, away from the noise, who will have to craft the legal route to the kind of land reform that will right one of SA's enduring injustices.

I am told there is a big fight going on at the bar. The GCB and some of the constituent bars are at loggerheads in a way that could see the end of the bar as we know it, I am told.

I won't enter into it for now. But from an outsider's point of view, I hope that, as you fight it out, you consider what your profession means to the constitutional democracy we are trying to build. **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.