

Pretoria Bar

TRIBUTES TO SIMMY LEBALA SC

by **Jannet Gildenhuys SC**, *Chairperson of the Pretoria Society of Advocates*

Simmy Lebala SC was a proud member of the Pretoria Society of Advocates for 26 years. He was granted senior status on 20 December 2008 and selflessly served on the Society's Bar Council for eight years.

Lebala SC was a true advocate. He had an innate sense of what was equitable and championed the cause of the most vulnerable amongst us. The Society and the profession are indebted to him for his commitment to transformation at the Bar.

What I remember best is the respect with which he treated his colleagues, whether they were opposing him or not, and his impatience with those who treated their opponents with disrespect.

He was held in high regard by his colleagues who describe him as having been a gentleman, soft spoken, kind, compassionate, passionate, ethical and honest.

His passing is truly a loss to his colleagues at the Pretoria Society of Advocates and the profession at large.

Our deepest condolences go out to his family and friends.

by **Matlhaba Manala**

Whenever a person passes, especially one who is well within normal life expectancy, we usually express our shock with the expression that it was an "untimely death", as though there is ever a point when the news of someone's death is accepted as timely.

Colleagues, our esteemed friend and polite brother Simmy has passed. He has succumbed after a long battle with colon cancer. He wrestled cancer for a formidable 16 years. He not only mounted a fierce battle, but he also lived a life that many of us should aspire and endeavour to emulate. His was a remarkable life, full of character and stature.

A particular trait of his that must be singled out, as we draw lessons from his life, was his inclination to compliment and to commend people, of all creeds. In his presence, no effort, especially on the part of those who needed cheering up and validation, would go unnoticed. He would burst out with "excellent, excellent, excellent!" and would stop just shy of ululating. In such small yet profound ways, he would encourage the weak and the marginalised never to fear making their voices heard.

Another attribute of his that comes especially to mind was his tolerance of different views. Indeed, he also encouraged the airing of differences,



such that you might think his aim was to have all views on the floor only to assail or rubbish them – but that was never the case. He was a man adept at objective reasoning and was a master of effortless persuasion, regardless of the identity of his opponent. Simmy was also a very affectionate man, who was never shy to display his emotions publicly.

Thinking of him now gives one pleasure, so much that one must repeatedly remember him. His command of language and his ability to express almost every thought in words lightened even the most difficult days. Our AFT branch meetings were very colourful whenever he was in attendance. He marshalled the young troops with a clear sense of vision, as he would say, "I see a forest where you see just trees".

He believed in advocacy, he encouraged selflessness and hard work. Most of all, he inspired fortitude and believed in each one's destiny to reach the stars. May Simmy's passionate interest in the lives of his colleagues spark us into caring about, and loving, each other. Farewell, our dear brother, you will forever be in our thoughts. **A**