



Becoming an Advocate in just four days

by **Nicholas Kapumha**, pupil at North West Bar Association

When you have four days to become an advocate what do you do?

The weather is sunny in the dry savannah landscapes of the Modimolle plains. A sting of cold wind seems to render the sun ineffective. At the foyer to the conference centre, there are groups of three, maybe four, and some even bigger groups with faces full of curiosity yet trying to make everything look normal and ok. The sight is unique and breathtaking with more than 20 of these people clad in black and white, you just can't help but love it.

The smallest, yet most confident group has just arrived and is known as the North West Bar pupils and that group wastes no time in interacting and interrogating the other people in a bid to establish who is from the Limpopo Society of Advocates. Soon it is clear that our fellow pupils clad in black and white are from the Limpopo Bar (as I am from the small bar association in the platinum province).

Soon after the faculty meeting, the course organisers call everyone into the main conference hall and, without any waste of time, Keabetswe from the GCB (the golden rule was that everyone was on first-name basis), welcomes both the members of the faculty (presenters, facilitators, moderators and tutors) and all the pupils. It is after those motions and having been given the overview of the week that I realised we had four days as pupils to demonstrate all that we have learnt in a practical way.

Day one progresses and is punctuated with a lot of catching up as the programme was running behind time, but the pupils are all bursting with energy and zeal. Every pupil is excited to appear before the group plenaries and argue the bail application as a demonstration of all that has been learnt in criminal proceedings regarding bail. Immediately following the bail proceedings, presentations on witness handling and case analysis in preparation for day two ensue. Then the day comes to an end and it's night-time. Everyone is exhausted but still excited, pupils are exchanging feedback on how they handled the bail application. After dinner there's a game drive, without seeing any animals, which starts as all pupils are ferried by the safari trucks to the other side of Mabula to retire for the night.

Day two starts very early at about 06h00 in the morning with another dose of open-air drive back to the main venue. One can be forgiven for thinking and concluding that this part of the routine was meant to make one wide awake whether we liked it or not. Immediately after breakfast, the ball gets rolling and this day has another twist of its own. If one has ever observed the work of Marlyn Robinson in her history of legal thriller "Whoever tells the best story, wins the case, (1998)", then they will understand the twist. Every pupil presents before the plenary and the presentation is recorded. Thereafter the pupil is sent to a video review room where one sees themselves on the replay and identifies their weaknesses with the help

of the performance coaches. In between these presentations by pupils and video reviews is other training on aspects such as advice on evidence, preparation of heads of arguments and more on witness handling under cross-examination and re-examination. Day two ends with supper at the Boma punctuated with some traditional dance, courtesy of Mabula.

Day three starts with the same and usual dose of wake-up therapy, which sees almost all pupils not keen to get on the open safari tracks but having no choice. Signs of fatigue are starting to be visible on most faces whilst others still look like they have an extra ounce or two of energy to get them through the day. The build up to the final trial is concluded by the presentation of closing arguments and video review. Punctuating the day are presentations on case analysis for an appeal matter and tips on how to survive at the advocates' bar association. The day wraps up with thought provoking and highly engaging issues on ethics. An early night is a good idea for all pupils as the last day is action packed.

Day four is clearly a drudgery for most, if not all, pupils. Others are late for breakfast and the ever time conscious Etienne asks people to leave the dining room and immediately report at their plenaries as that day is short. Pupils start the day by battling it out in an opposed motion matter, followed by the appeal. Thereafter a presentation on what judges expect from counsel is given by a seasoned judge (first name Norman). Lunch is early on this day to allow for final preparations before the trial (the summation of the practical training). The time is 15h00 and court is in session, pupil advocates battle it out in the trial between Connie Fused and Feddie Flower and for a while everyone is lost in these proceedings.

Out of nowhere and after the trial, all these pupils who looked wasted and drained are excited and full of vigour. It's time for the gala dinner and to celebrate the end of an action-packed, compacted practical legal training of a lifetime completed in four days. Judge Norman Davis bring it on with your lovely Scottish kilt. What a lovely week it was and an excellent learning and networking opportunity.