North-West Bar

Contributed by **Thabile Sebitlo**

NORTH-WEST BAR Annual Bar Dinner

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The North West Bar Association held its annual bar dinner on 18 November 2023 at the Protea Hotel Mahikeng. The atmosphere and setting was warm, welcoming and harmonious. Members had an opportunity to relax, reflect, socialise and network beyond the courtroom.

The master of ceremonies, Danielle Smit, a member of our bar, began with announcements and introduced the speakers. Her jovial nature and humour kept everyone focused and entertained. She attended to her role with smooth execution.

The honorary guests comprised of members from the bench in the North West Division of the High Court in Mahikeng: Judge President R D Hendricks, Deputy Judge President J T Djadje, A H Petersen J, F Reid J, O Y Dibetso-Bodibe AJ, S M Moagi AJ, J L Khan AJ, and A Reddy AJ. In our presence was also the chairperson of the General Council of the Bar of South Africa, Myron Alvin Dewrance SC.

Critical to this event was the address by the judge president, which elicited deep introspection. He articulated on the principle of judicial independence and the corollary responsibility on legal practitioners to protect the dignity of the courts and judicial independence. This flowed from past and recent challenges affecting the judiciary, which impeded on the proper administration of justice.

Dewrance SC spoke in general about the advocates' profession and with specific emphasis on the "rights and interests of referral advocates who are admitted and enrolled and who practice as such in terms of section 34(2)(a)(i) of the Legal Practice Act". This was as a consequence of the intention of the state to establish a panel of legal practitioners consisting of advocates and attorneys.

On a celebratory note, it was announced that the 2023 pupil candidates (Cherryl Ann Wessels, Jahn De Bruin, Oreratile Mosiane, Nick Kaphuma, Poloko Manyetsa and Tumisang

Mogoiwa) of our bar had successfully passed the GCB bar exam. Kgalalelo Moiloa attained a complete pass without the need for an oral.

Ms. Makgatho, a junior member who recently joined our bar, shared her experience of pupilage and her first appearance in court. This affirmed the message of the Judge President in his address, to invest time and resources towards the development of advocacy training for our pupils, which will invaluably equip them with skills for practice at the bar.

Towards the end of the occasion, the closing and gifting ceremony was performed by Thabiso Masike and Brandon Riley. We are grateful to the members of our bar for attending the bar dinner and to the North West Bar Council, (Chairperson: Thabiso Masike; Deputy Chairperson: Sinah Morongwa Moagi; Secretary: Omphemetse Ntsamai; Treasurer: Brandon Riley; Member: Okgabile Yvonne Dibetso-Bodibe; Member: Thabile Sebitlo) for the commitment, time and effort made towards this successful event.

THE BAR AFTER COVID-19

A BABY JUNIOR'S PERSPECTIVE AS A VIRTUAL GLADIATOR

by **Tshiamo Kwape**

I was fortunate enough to form part of the North West Bar Association's 2022 pupillage group. Training for that year commenced on 17 January, at a time when the country was placed under Level 1, of the Covid-19 National State of Disaster.

When I received the news that I had been accepted into the programme, I was immediately curious and nervous. The pandemic had forced all industries, workplaces and training facilities to rethink and adapt their traditional ways of doing business. Was I also going to have to attend the Mabula Lodge advocacy training, virtually? I hoped not.

The Bar did an excellent job at adapting. The delivery of scheduled classes was made seamless via *Zoom* or *Microsoft Teams* especially in instances where an assigned member was unable to be physically present at the arranged time. The use of electronic material and provision of electronic briefs, has now seemingly become the standard way of doing things. Sigh. Gone are the days when instructing clients used to enclose our briefs using cute ribbons.

My mentor happened to practise in more than one division at the time and this meant that I could not always be present during a consultation or a hearing. Thankfully, this was not an issue either as most of the consultations took place virtually, and the few urgent applications I was involved in were all heard using Teams.

This also provided a great opportunity for us as pupils to be involved in and to observe matters that senior members were working on without always being restricted by the challenges of having to travel and tire yourself out sorting through heaps of bundles.

I myself have adopted these new "ways of working" and taken advantage of them as a baby junior who still has on his training wheels.

In fact, my first opposed matter when I started my practice was heard virtually and that went a long way in calming my nerves, considering that open court is a bit nerve-wracking.

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Although I may not have much experience as to what life at the Bar was like before Covid, I can firmly share that life after Covid has allowed practitioners to go about their business in a lean fashion without losing the front facing engagement that our profession is based on.

Life at the Bar post Covid has brought about various forced changes and improvements and surely it is up to us to embrace them. Even it means waking up and wearing your robe to be a gladiator in front of your laptop's camera. A