

Editor
Franny Rabkin
franny.rabkin@gcbisa.co.za

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Correspondence and enquiries relating to contents, contributions and advertising:
The Editor, Advocate,
PO Box 786878,
Sandton 2146
082 927 5536
franny.rabkin@gcbisa.co.za

Street address: Grindrod Tower,
2nd Floor, 8A Protea Place,
Sandown,
Sandton 2146

Subscriptions
Annual subscriptions R450 (VAT incl.)
Advocate, PO Box 786878,
SANDTON 2146
Tel: +27 (011) 784 0175
E-mail: christine.baek@gcbisa.co.za

Website: <https://www.gcbisa.co.za>

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Die Suid-Afrikaanse Balietydskrif ■ The South African Bar Journal
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FROM THE EDITOR

It is devastating to be writing yet another *From the Editor* like this. Today the news broke that lawyer Chinette Gallichan was killed in what appeared to be a targeted act, outside the CCMA in Johannesburg.

We at *Advocate* offer our sincere condolences to Ms Gallichan's family, loved ones and colleagues. We join our voices with those calling for a swift investigation and for accountability for this terrible crime.

In a statement, the Johannesburg Bar said the tragedy could not be viewed in isolation: "It forms part of a deeply troubling and increasingly

discernible pattern in which members of the legal profession are subjected to threats, intimidation, and, in the most egregious cases, acts of lethal violence arising from the proper discharge of their professional obligations. Such conduct strikes not merely at individuals, but at the institutional integrity of the administration of justice itself."

Last year we asked for submissions to *Advocate* on this issue. In this edition Jolanda Pretorius argues that while advocates fight for their clients, they do so in court rooms and within the law. The profession owes protection and solidarity to those members who continue to do what is right even while they are at risk, she argues.

The Johannesburg Bar said: "Violence of this nature does not, and will not, achieve its intended ends. It does not silence the law, nor does it derail the course of justice. On the contrary, it galvanises the resolve of the profession and strengthens the collective commitment to the rule of law. Those who resort to such brutality must be made to understand that their actions will neither intimidate nor impede the administration of justice but will instead attract the full weight of the law's response."

Hear, hear.

This edition also pays tribute to a life well lived in service to the rule of law: Justice Leonora van den Heever – the first woman judge, the first woman silk, the first woman to be an appeal court judge – died late last year, at the age of 99.

That is a lot of firsts. Our cover is the photo of Justice van den Heever that hangs at the Supreme Court of Appeal. I first saw it when I interviewed Chief Justice Maya at her SCA chambers in 2024. Along the walls of the SCA's corridors are photographs of all its judges dating back to its early days and, I think, progressing chronologically.

If my memory serves, I think I even saw a wig (the long, judges' kind), but this could have been my imagination, which was overstimulated by all that panelled wood, carpet and heavy, learned, silence; it was like stepping into a different time and place.

However, what I distinctly do remember was just how many photos there were of white men on those walls – one white man after another white man, after another, in seemingly endless progression. Until we got to Justice van den Heever. What a welcome disruption she was to my eye. Then, further along, was Justice Ismail Mahomed's photo. Phew.

We paused in front of Justice van den Heever's photo, Justice Maya and I. I should have taken notes of what the first woman chief justice said in homage to the first woman judge of appeal, but alas I did not. However, Justice Nolwazi Mabindla-Boqwana (as she then was) was in chambers and came bouncing out to greet "sis Mandi". They hugged and chatted and laughed and the oppressive atmosphere dissolved; all the while Van den Heever's photo portrait gazed benignly over them.

Justice Kriegler's written portrait – my favourite piece in this edition – tells us about Van den Heever J, Van den Heever JA and "Leo" the person. After reading it, I like all three Leo van den Heevers. I want to read her judgments, I want to read her children's books.

Justice Kriegler says he is giving us "just the facts". This is what she would have wanted, he says. But I am moved by some of these "facts". I am moved by the fact that she raised three kids as an effective single mother, ran a household and ran a practice, yet someone told her that her advocacy was "a hobby"; that she took silk to prove that it wasn't a hobby; and that, despite being hugely successful as a silk, her appointment as a judge was nonetheless described as "an experiment" by the justice minister. These facts enrage me. They are also depressingly familiar – too many women lawyers have similar facts.

I have written about two women and two deaths. The circumstances are obviously very different. But I suggest that the best way to honour the lives of both is to continue to serve justice and the rule of law: Build the profession (I'm loving all the bar news), build excellence (another 30 years of Wallenberg, please) transform the profession, build the judiciary. **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.