Johannesburg Bar

Contributed by **Sibongile Mathe**

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE JOHANNESBURG SOCIETY OF ADVOCATES AT THE CEREMONIAL COURT SITTING

IN MEMORY OF JUDGE LEWIS GOLDBLATT

by **Don Mahon SC**

Judges President, Acting Judge President and Deputy Judges President, My Lords and My Ladies, colleagues at the Bar, members of the profession, and members of the Goldblatt family.

It is a solemn privilege to rise today on behalf of the Johannesburg Society of Advocates to pay tribute to the life and work of the late Judge Lewis Goldblatt.

Moments such as these serve an important purpose within the traditions of our courts. They invite us not merely to remember a person, but to reflect upon the ideals that shaped their professional life.

In doing so, we are reminded that the institutions of law are sustained not by buildings, rules, or procedures alone, but by the character of the men and women who dedicate themselves to them.

Lewis Goldblatt belonged to that tradition.

He was born in Johannesburg on 30 May 1935 and grew up in Yeoville, a community whose friendships and social ties remained important to him throughout his life. His academic journey took him to the University of the Witwatersrand, where he completed a BCom and LLB, graduating cum laude and receiving the Millin Prize for Mercantile Law.

From those early achievements it was already evident that the profession had acquired a mind of formidable ability.

Yet what distinguished him was that his intellect was never worn as an ornament. It was placed, consistently and quietly, in the service of the law.

Judge Goldblatt began his career as an attorney before joining the Johannesburg Bar in 1971. There he developed a successful commercial practice and quickly earned the respect

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of his peers. In 1984 he took silk, a recognition of the standing he had achieved among those who practised alongside him.

His contribution to the organised Bar was considerable. He served for eight years on the Johannesburg Bar Council and in 1989 he was elected its chair. Those who have served in that office know well that the role demands more than legal knowledge. It requires judgment, patience, diplomacy and a capacity to place the interests of the profession above one's own.

Judge Goldblatt possessed those qualities in abundance.

The records of the Bar show that he also served on a number of committees, including the domestic committee and the professional committee. These may appear modest entries in the historical record, but anyone familiar with the internal life of the Bar understands their significance.

The profession is sustained not only by courtroom advocacy but by the quiet labour of those willing to attend meetings, resolve disputes, mentor younger practitioners and preserve the standards upon which the Bar depends. It is in that quieter work that the character of a profession is revealed.

Lewis Goldblatt understood this deeply. He did not treat leadership as a platform for prominence. He treated it as a responsibility.

In 1992 he was elevated to the Bench of the High Court in Johannesburg, where he served for 15 years. Those who appeared before him will recall a judge who combined intellectual depth with an unmistakable sense of fairness.

His courtroom was marked by courtesy and discipline in equal measure. For young advocates appearing before him for the first time, that atmosphere could be daunting. Yet it was also instructive. Many of us encountered him early in our careers. I was among those who appeared before him when I was still learning the craft of advocacy.

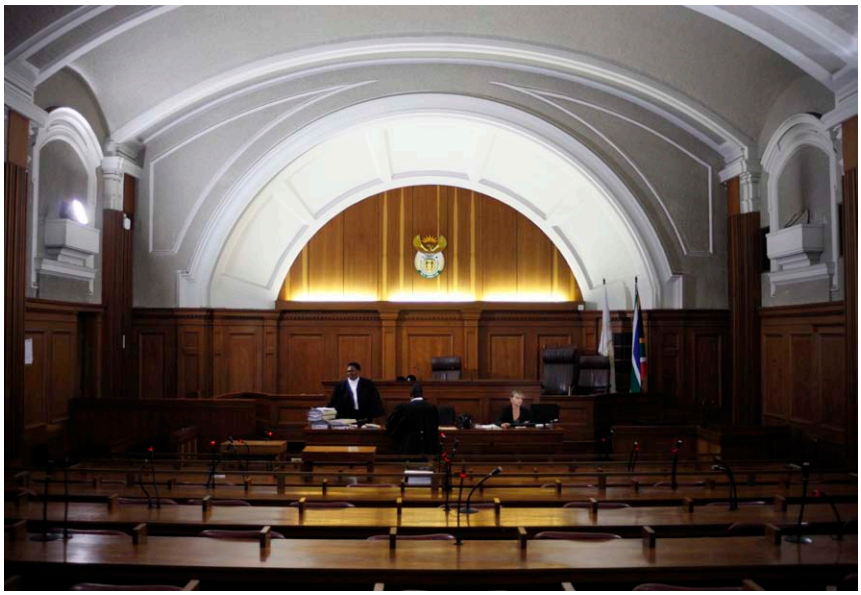
What one remembers is not merely the questions he asked, but the manner in which he asked them. There was always a sense that the judge was not seeking to defeat counsel, but to illuminate the issue before the court. That, if I may say so, is the mark of a true judicial temperament.

The law requires intelligence. But justice requires something more: restraint. Restraint in the exercise of authority, restraint in the expression of opinion, restraint in the recognition that the court exists not for the judge, but for the litigant and for the law.

Judge Goldblatt exemplified that restraint.

In an age increasingly defined by noise, immediacy and the desire for recognition, restraint has become an undervalued virtue. Yet within the legal profession it remains one of the most important.

Oupa Nkosi



The Bar is a profession that prizes eloquence. We train ourselves to speak persuasively, to argue forcefully, and to defend our clients with conviction. These are essential skills. But they must always be tempered by something deeper: humility before the law itself.

Lewis Goldblatt understood that balance.

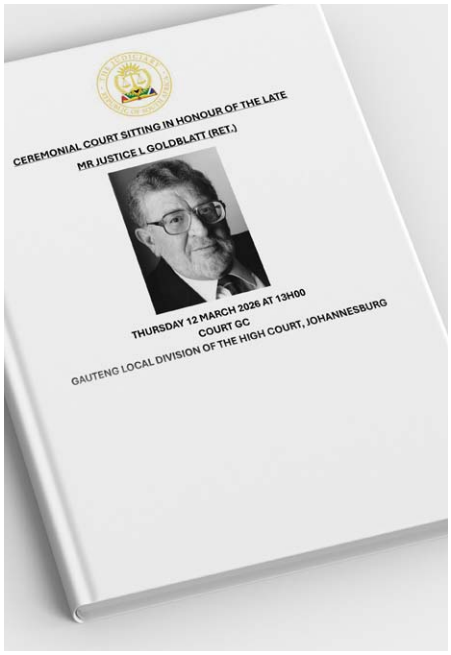
His intellect was sharp, but never sharp-edged. His authority was real, but never theatrical. His leadership was firm, but never self-regarding. Those who knew him speak of a man guided by a strong moral compass, a deep intellect, warmth, generosity and a gentle sense of humour.

Indeed it is said that he possessed an extensive repertoire of jokes and would sometimes begin laughing before reaching the punchline. There is something quietly revealing in that image. It reminds us that even those entrusted with the gravest responsibilities of law remain, at their core, human beings who value friendship, family and the shared joys of life.

Behind the judge's robe stood a devoted husband and father. He married Maureen in 1966 and cared for her with tenderness during her illness in later years. He was a proud father and grandfather, deeply connected to his family and to the community of friends he had gathered throughout his life.

These things matter. They remind us that the character we bring to our professional lives is shaped by the character we cultivate in our personal ones. For members of the Bar, especially the younger members of our profession, there is much to learn from that example.

The practice of law can sometimes create the illusion that success is measured by visibility: the number of cases argued, the prominence of clients, the recognition one receives. Yet the true measure of a professional life lies elsewhere. It lies in the respect of one's peers. In the trust of one's clients. In the integrity with which one exercises influence and authority.



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Lewis Goldblatt's career reminds us that the most enduring reputation is built quietly, over many years, through conduct that is principled, disciplined, and generous. He lived, by all accounts, a long and good life, passing away at the age of 90.

When we reflect upon such a life, it is tempting to focus solely on its achievements. But perhaps the more valuable reflection lies in its example. The Bar is an institution that stretches across generations. Each of us inherits traditions formed by those who came before us. And each of us, whether we realise it or not, helps shape the traditions that will be inherited by those who come after.

Lewis Goldblatt was part of that chain of stewardship. He served the Bar. He served the courts. And through both, he served the rule of law.

In doing so he demonstrated a simple but powerful truth: that leadership within the legal profession is not about prominence, but about service.

If there is one thought I would leave with the members of our profession today, it is this. The law does not ask us to be extraordinary people. It asks us to be steadfast ones. Steadfast in our commitment to justice. Steadfast in our respect for the institutions we serve. And steadfast in the humility required to recognise that the law is always greater than any individual who practises it.

Lewis Goldblatt embodied that steadfastness.

And so, as we honour his memory today, we do more than commemorate a distinguished judge. We reaffirm the values that sustain our profession. Values of integrity. Of humility. Of restraint. And of service.

If we can carry those values forward, even imperfectly, then the legacy of Judge Goldblatt will continue to live not only in the judgments he delivered, but in the conduct of the profession he helped shape.

May his memory remain a blessing to his family, to his colleagues and to the Bar he served with such distinction.

Thank you.

NELSIE SIBOZA-RUHINDA
Lover of truth, justice and integrity

by **Realeboga Tshetlo** and **Sechaba Mohapi**, Group One

On 4 July 2026, we learned with inconsolable sadness of the untimely passing of our beloved colleague and dear friend, Nelsie Siboza-Ruhinda. Nelsie was a valued member of the Johannesburg Society of Advocates and Group One. She was called to the Bar in December 2021, after completing her articles at Werksmans Attorneys in Sandton.

Nelsie hailed from Mbombela, Mpumalanga. She held an LLB from the University of Pretoria. During her time as an undergraduate student, Nelsie had an active campus life and she had a heart for academia. She served as the deputy chief justice of the University of Pretoria student court and also worked in the department of jurisprudence and legal philosophy as a teaching assistant for first year law students. She regularly contributed to law journal articles and she often participated in teaching and speaking engagements – a passion she continued even as a member of the Bar, including at Group One in the Judgment Club, a subcommittee of the group's Practice Development Committee, during which members of the group meet in The Bailey for interesting and practice – building discussions emanating from judgments. As part of the Judgment Club, Nelsie collaborated with Wim Trengove SC to facilitate a discussion on "Remedies for defamation" in March last year during which the decisions *NBC Holdings (Pty) Ltd v Akani Retirement Fund (Pty) Ltd* 2021 ZASCA 136; *EFF v Manuel* 2021 (3) SA 425 (SCA); and *Ndlozi v Media 24 t/a Daily Sun and Others* 2024 (1) SA 215 (GJ) were discussed and debated.

Nelsie taking a selfie with Justice Owen Rogers in the Constitutional Court in 2022.

Nelsie with Acting Justice Dunstan Mlambo (as he then was) in 2022.

Nelsie completed her LLM focusing on administrative law, international law and human rights advocacy and litigation at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Shortly after completing her pupillage at the Johannesburg Bar in 2022, Nelsie clerked at the Constitutional Court of South Africa for Justice Owen Rogers, Acting Justice Dunstan Mlambo (as he then was) and Acting Justice Pule Tlaletsi.

Nelsie thereafter commenced her practice holding chambers at Group One in 2023. She had a soaring practice, appearing in a number of high profile matters in the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court of Appeal and the High Court such as *Systems Applications Consultants (Pty) Ltd t/a Securinfo v SAP SE and Another* [2026] ZACC 13; 2026 (6) BCLR 613 (CC); *SAP SE v Systems Applications Consultants (Pty) Ltd and Another* 2024 (5) SA 514 (SCA) and *Democratic Alliance v Minister of Finance and Others* 2026 (4) SA 232 (WCC).

Nelsie had a shy, quiet and yet cheerful demeanour about her. In her spare time, she was up for upcycling projects. She was a devout Christian. In her own words, she described herself as a "lover of Jesus and a disciple" and a "lover of truth and justice and integrity" in the podcast *The Power of Discipleship with Shamiso*.

Nelsie's tragic and untimely passing comes when she was in her third year of practice. We will miss our dear friend, Nelsie, lover of truth, justice and integrity. The young Bar and Group One is the poorer without her, but so much richer for the life she so generously shared with us.

Wim Trengrove SC and Nelsie after leading a discussion at the Judgment Club.

Left to right Nelsie Siboza-Ruhinda, Mohammed Chohan SC (Group Leader), Deputy Chief Justice Mlambo and Kgabo Senyatsi on the occasion of the Deputy Chief Justice's informal visit to Group One's tea.