Dr Gildenhuys said the Pretoria Bar also exempts expecting mothers from paying Bar fees, for about four months if you apply, adding that this makes it a little bit easier to retain your chambers and to return to your practice after having taken maternity leave.

Dr Gildenhuys concluded by saying that although progress is being made in the advocate’s profession, there were levels that are lagging behind, such as the appointing of senior status. ‘According to the statistics I have, as of the end of last year, only 5% of all silks in the country are women. I think it is also low because of the low number of women on the Bench. The minute women got awarded silk, they are usually called to the Bench,’ she said.

**Bram Fischer lecture**

The Legal Resource Centre (LRC) held the ninth Bram Fischer Lecture at the University of Johannesburg on 4 September. These lectures have taken place since 1995, with the first speaker being former President Nelson Mandela, to commemorate the life of Bram Fischer.

Bram Fischer (Abram Louis Fischer) was a key figure in the anti-Apartheid movement. One of the key actions he is remembered for is defending former President Nelson Mandela at the Rivonia Trial of 1963 and 1964, shortly after which he was arrested. Mr Fischer then went into hiding but was re-arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment and was released when sick and died in 1975 at his brother, Dr Paul Fishers’, house in Bloemfontein. In 1967 Mr Fischer was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize, in 2003 the High Court of South Africa posthumously readmitted him to the roll of advocates, and in 2004 Stellenbosch University awarded him a posthumous honorary degree.

The ninth lecture to commemorate Mr Fischer was delivered by Beatrice Mtetwa. Ms Mtetwa is an internationally recognised Zimbabwean lawyer, being labelled by the New York Times as ‘Zimbabwe’s top human rights lawyer’. She is known for defending journalists and activists must persistent - er, said Ms Mtetwa.

Ms Mtetwa started off her lecture by stating that it was not going to be a lecture but rather a speech about her experiences in Zimbabwe, ‘with a view to encouraging South Africans not to fall into the same trap that we fell into in Zimbabwe and the theme really is that we have to be constantly vigilant in the observance of the law and that we have to keep our eye on the ball.’

Ms Mtetwa made reference to the Magna Carta and said its theme had not changed in 800 years, people did not want others to lord their rule over them. However, from everyday experiences it is evident that the journey to that reality is still very long. She was adamant that people should constantly be vigilant in ensuring that the rights in the Constitution are enforced and not abused or neglected.

According to Ms Mtetwa, there was no colour to the people who fought against Apartheid, when human rights are violated there should not be an obsession with who is trying to enforce the rights. Ms Mtetwa added that: ‘Apartheid was fought from all angles by all manner of people, including of course, the likes of Bram Fischer.’ She went on to mention that when Zimbabwe gained its independence the white community in the country retracted from participating in public life. This was when it became easy to label people. Ms Mtetwa, however, reiterated that the battles against Apartheid, independence and democracy was fought by many different people from many different angles.

Ms Mtetwa said leaders of South Africa should look back at the African National Congress’s ‘Ready to Govern’ document and realise that when litigation is taking place in South Africa it is not to fight for the rights of an American or British citizen, but a South African, one who is being denied a right. The document states: ‘The Bill of Rights will be enforced by the courts, headed by a separate newly created Constitutional Court, which will have the task of upholding the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens against the state or anybody or person seeking to deny those rights. The judges will be independent, and will consist of men and women drawn from all sections of the community on the basis of their integrity, skills, life experience and wisdom.’ This means that what a court decides is final, if the outcome is not liked then there are ways of appealing. There should not be interdependence between the executive and the judiciary, the two are not supposed to influence each other, said Ms Mtetwa.

Ms Mtetwa said lawyers, human rights defenders and activists must persistently and without apology work towards attaining more transparency and accountability in life. She added: ‘In Africa, corruption has become the bane of the entire continent.’ She also said that economic growth has been stunted by cor-

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Legal practice of the future discussed at practice management conference

The Law Society of South Africa (LSSA) and Legal Education and Development (LEAD) held its first annual Practice Management Conference on 19 and 20 August at the Bytes Conference Centre in Midrand. The conference dealt with matters of everyday practice in regard to human resource management, financial management and marketing.

The opening address was given by Brendan Hughes, director of Infology. Mr Hughes said it was an opportunity to think about practice rather than work in practice. ‘Futureproofing your legal practice is an important topic for lawyers to focus on in a time where change is accelerating, complexity is increasing and it is difficult to predict the future, five, ten or even 15 years down the line. It does not mean that we should stop trying to build strategies that see the profession trying to deliver the important role that it plays in society and at the same time remaining profitable and sustainable. The two need to work hand in hand,’ he said.

Richard Scott, Co-chairperson of the LSSA welcomed delegates to the conference. Mr Scott said the programme dealt with many aspects of practice management in legal firms and that lawyers have to concern themselves with management and the problems associated with it. Mr Scott highlighted two aspects that stood out for him with regard to practice management. The first was information technology (IT) namely websites, e-mails, the paperless office and the iCloud. The second critical change was the way clients dealt with law firms. ‘Gone are the days where lawyers’ fees were unchallenged. … Clients are shopping around to get the best deal or services, and that requires lawyers to change the way they are delivered. … We need to focus on their needs,’ he said.

Mr Scott referred to the marketing of services in a law firm and how the speed of delivering services is the number one priority, as well as the ‘big’ issue of fees. He said lawyers need to explain fees to their clients, so that their clients can understand them. He also added that lawyers needed to manage the people they work with as there was a need for the legal profession to have a more ‘human face’. ‘If staff and professionals work well together, the clients will see and return with further instructions,’ he said.

Mr Scott added that lawyers needed to learn to manage themselves, however, they were not good with it as there had been a number of articles written about the rising misery in the legal profession. ‘The way of life of many lawyers is toxic leaving them depressed, unhealthy and unhappy. There are law care helplines in the United Kingdom helping with stress … Some of the stress triggers include failure to prioritising and delegating work, managing interruptions and procrastination. … We need to figure out how to manage our time so that overwhelming times do not become the norm, but rather isolated situations. I think that we need, as lawyers, to achieve a balance in our life.’

What will the legal practice of the future look like?

The keynote address was delivered by ENSafrica Chief Executive Officer, Piet Faber. He said it was not an easy task speaking about what the future of legal practice will look like, as nobody knew