

## **Minister Masutha: Gender imbalances in the judiciary system still a challenge**

Key to the transformation of the legal profession and the Judiciary is the need to address the racial and gender imbalances with a view to establishing a justice system suited to the democratic order. This is according to the Honourable Michael Masutha, Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, when delivering the 10th Dullah Omar Memorial Lecture this afternoon at the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

"The statistics provided by the General Council of the Bar of South Africa indicate that there are 645 women out of a pool of 2571 practicing advocates," he stated. Less than one percent of African women have been conferred with Senior Counsel (silk) status. Furthermore, according to records kept by the Law Society of South Africa, women attorneys constitute 8 601 out of a total of 23 217 attorneys country-wide.

While the Minister acknowledged the challenges still facing the judiciary system, he noted that the late Adv Dullah Omar made an incredible contribution to the transformation of the State and society, in addition to laying down the foundation for a new justice system in our country.

The Dullah Omar Memorial Lecture Series celebrates the memory of Dullah Omar who worked tirelessly towards, and achieved so much, in realising the goals of human rights and democracy.

"Dullah Omar's work speak volumes of the steps he has taken towards ensuring that access to justice becomes a reality for all people of South Africa. He left behind, not only a better justice system than the one he was born into, but a credible compass that guides us to the destiny envisioned by the National Development Plan, of a prosperous, equal and crime-free society," said Masutha.

Following the conclusion of the 10th Dullah Omar Memorial Lecture, guests were invited to attend the unveiling of the Dullah Omar Institute for Constitutional Law, Governance, and Human Rights. The Minister said, "It is fitting that today, we add, to the milestones that characterise our long road to freedom, the establishment of the Community Law Centre, 25 years ago. It is also fitting that the Community Law Centre's name will be changed in a way

which will properly recognise the tremendous contribution which Comrade Dullah Omar made to the liberation of our country, the development of our constitution and the transformation of our legal and judicial system.”

Reiterating the Minister’s message Professor Jaap de Visser, Director of the Dullah Omar Institute said, “Dullah Omar founded the Community Law Centre in 1990 and the Centre was thrust into the centre of the negotiations for a democratic South Africa. First staff members included Brigitte Mabandla and Bulelani Ngcuka. Together with other UWC staff members such as Albie Sachs and Dr Zola Skweyiya they were the intellectual engine room for the ANC’s negotiating positions. After 1994, the Centre became more academic but never lost its activist orientation. It now works on human rights and democracy in more than 15 African countries and houses staff from over 10 African countries.”

Farieda Omar, the wife of the late Adv Dullah Omar, officially unveiled the Dullah Omar Institute this evening.

The University of the Western Cape is proud of the strides that the Community Law Centre made in the past 25 years with regard to work that it did across the continent. It also looks forward continuing the Centre’s journey of tackling pertinent issues pertaining to governance and human rights as the Dullah Omar Institute.

To watch the Dullah Omar Institute trailer, please click on the link below:

<http://communitylawcentre.org.za/omar-memorial-lecture/tenth-memorial-lecture>