

Righting Wrongs

The LLM in Human Rights & Democratisation in Africa

Alumni Association Newsletter
Issue No 1 - 2011

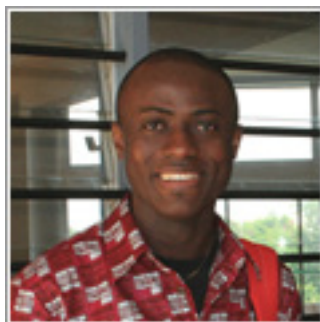
DEFENDING
with Excellence,
ADVOCATING
with Ubuntu



Editorial

What have you done with your LLM?

Horace Adjolohoun (Benin, 2007)
Alumni Coordinator



In the spirit of Ubuntu I greet you all, **Hello, Salut, Olá, Jambo, Salam!** Various reasons stand for taking an LLM: restarting your career, changing area of expertise, deepening your knowledge or improving your earnings. This is not a 'clinical group' on the LLM in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa. Yet, scanning through the thousands of applications for admission on this premier course in Africa since 2000 reveals quite altruist vows. I did the exercise for you and motivations varied from 'curbing corruption' to 'catering for the most vulnerable in Africa'. I even came across some letters pledging to 'set Africa free from rigged elections'. Some of us have held this LLM for more than a decade now, others for shorter. Have you achieved any of your motivation letter vows or just earned money with your degree?

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I humbly suggest that capitalising on our LLM is indivisible from actively supporting its main stand, the Centre for Human Rights, our family home. My first months here, at the Centre in Pretoria, as Alumni Coordinator, have left me with a mitigated feeling as to the omnipresence of us, alumni of the LLM HRDA. I propose that our struggle by the sides of rights holders in Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen starts here, at our headquarters, the Centre. This makes the idea of forming an Alumni Association the right course of action to give a body to our pledge. We may congratulate ourselves for the steps taken thus far but also seriously consider that the lack of active participation could turn down the most ingenious Association.

Our current records could still be improved bearing in mind especially our participation in the Association logo vote or providing our current professional positions and addresses. A next important step is to pay our annual dues as provided in our Constitution. In line with these, some of us deserve appreciation so that we borrow a leaf from these committed alumni. An alumna named Abiola Ayinla (Nigeria, 2005) cast her logo vote within the next five minutes of the posting. Pre-empting forthcoming communication on the payment of annual dues, Lee Stone (South Africa, 2002) came in person to the Coordinator's office to whom she paid R350 being the first and only alumni to have fulfilled that obligation.

I would like to solemnly call upon the pioneers (2000) and seniors (2000-2005) to discharge their duty of community leaders. What have you contributed in teaching in various Centre programmes and in partner universities, in the selection of LLM students, second semester and post-LLM placements? The transitional generation (2006-2010) has a role to play too as the cement of this union in ensuring that the new generation of LLM (2011-2015) upholds the Centre standards and our Organisation faces new and persisting challenges: discrimination, lack of democracy, corruption, conflicts and climate change.

This Newsletter is proposed to be an advocacy tool but also a medium for communicating among us, with Africa and the rest of the world. The editorial team hopes that you will bear the simplicity of this starter as we organise to involve you in further issues through calls for articles. Our special appreciation to Yolanda Booyzen, Administrator of the Centre's website, for her input in our activities.

We all hope this Alumni Newsletter becomes a leading Human Rights Alumni Newsletter in Africa and the world, as well as a strong channel for speaking out on behalf of millions of voiceless.

The Centre's Word

In the pursuit of Excellence and Ubuntu

*Prof Frans Viljoen
Director, Centre for
Human Rights*



It is a source of great pleasure for us at the Centre to witness the publication of this first issue of the LLM (Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa) alumni newsletter. We not only take pride in the quality and meaningful activities of the LLM graduates, but also in the network of excellence that has been established across the continent – and beyond it.

We encourage you all to pursue excellence in your endeavours, but excellence-with-a-heart and towards the goal of realising greater respect for human dignity and protection of vulnerability of all.

We urge you to keep in touch with alumni and the Centre and to support the Alumni Association. The period you spent as students with us at the Centre and our partners is very short, compared to the "lifetime" you spend, thereafter, as alumni. Make use of the Alumni Association as a source of strength, support and as part of your social network.

This newsletter aims to forge stronger links and to provide you with news about alumni. Our aim is that the Alumni Association will become a fully independent entity. For now, its links with the Centre remain close, with Horace, the first Alumni Co-ordinator, based at the Centre.

As always, we ask all graduates to promote the LLM (Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa) among potential applicants. This year, the closing date is 1 August for the intake of 2012. If each alumnus/alumna successfully encourages one applicant, we would have a very rich pool to choose from!

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As you know, this is the year of celebration for the Centre, as we turn 25. We are happy to have you all as part of this family, and we know you celebrate with us in spirit. This year also marks 30 years since the adoption of the African Charter (and 25 years since its entry into force). The Centre, with the Alumni Association, is conducting a research project on the impact of the African Charter (and Protocol thereto on the Rights of Women in Africa).

We require in-country researchers in as many of the African states as possible. Please write to Horace, hrda.alumni@up.ac.za, indicating your willingness to participate. I encourage all who want a bit of a challenge to volunteer! The idea is to present as complete a picture, at the African Commission's 50th session, in October 2011. So, time is short. Consult the preliminary "questionnaire"/template for researchers at <http://www.chr.up.ac.za/index.php/research/impact-of-the-charter-protocol.html>

For now, all the best for the remainder of this year in which I trust you will find much personal cause to celebrate life!

Current year

Challenging yet Inspiring

Ivy Nyanrango
(Kenya, 2011)



It was with great anticipation and a tinge of trepidation that the 30 students from all over Africa made their way to Pretoria in the heavy downpour of mid-January to begin the LLM 2011 programme.

We had heard of the alarming rates of violent crime in South Africa, and that Pretoria, where we would be based for the first six months, was still racially segregated. Still, we kept alive the notion that South Africa was the most developed country in sub-Saharan Africa and that life would be modern, fast-paced and more comfortable for those of us coming from elsewhere on the continent. In addition, we had been told about the intensity of the course we would be undertaking. The horrific description of our course had made it sound like someone was making gross exaggerations either to prepare us for back-breaking work or to scare away jokers. None of us grasped just how these beliefs and stereotypes would come to be confirmed and shattered in equal measure.

The developed world fantasy was quickly shattered when we were shown into college accommodation; the rooms were incredibly tiny. For those who had attended poorly funded universities in Africa and lived in over-crowded and poorly serviced quarters, the similarity was palpable. It was particularly humbling for those who, in the intervening period, had gone on to embark on successful careers and had been living in fairly decent housing. The beds were made to match the size of the rooms; it appeared that turning over without falling or hacking a hole in the wall was going to be quite a task. Our vision of air-conditioned wall-to-wall carpeted rooms, with 24-hour internet connection, equipped with large study desks set beneath French doors overlooking the Pretoria landscape had been misplaced!

The rooms - which were clearly neither build nor furnished for comfort - should have forewarned us of the academic work ahead. We very soon discovered that we would be having classes from 9 am to 4 pm on an exceptionally good day and from 8 am to 7 pm on a normal day. As if the work done during the day was not enough, we were assured that our evenings would be spent doing assignments. It was starting to look like we really did not even need rooms; all we needed was a library carrel with a blanket for the occasional nap.

The lifestyle was something that we, especially those from outside South Africa, had to contend with. Overt expression of alternative sexuality in public places was a shocker. Living and interacting effectively with fellow students would be a case of navigating a minefield of cultural differences. As Gina (Zambia) dramatically puts it "in a group of diverse nationalities, much more than the lectures one has to exercise extreme tolerance and humility to get through the day."

The troubles of everyday interaction notwithstanding, being selected to and attending the programme is a privilege beyond compare. Being taught by and interacting with the best minds and authorities on the continent and beyond is immeasurable. Everyone agrees that the sacrifice is well worth it. Charles (Cameroon) aptly describes it as an amazingly intense yet richly rewarding encounter and as Ella (South Africa) says, "it is challenging yet inspiring".

In the challenge we are stirred, we learn, we grow. It might just be our best year yet!

Alumni for Alumni

A call to assist recent graduates

Ernest Yaw Ako

(Ghana, 2010)



Gaining admission to the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria, to read for a Master's degree in Human Rights Law was a God sent opportunity. The Centre had won the enviable UNESCO award as the best in human rights education in the world in 2006, supposed to attract the best thirty legal minds in Africa each year to its LLM programme, with a plethora of job and internship opportunities for graduates on completion of their studies. Most significantly, the opportunity to study came with a scholarship.

Interactions among students during the first few weeks showed that everyone had high expectations during and on completion of the course. This expectation was heightened by no less a person than a former judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, Justice Yvonne Moghoro. She stated at the opening ceremony of the LLM 2010 class, that it was a lifetime opportunity to be part of a group of people who will change the destiny of Africa, and who may also gain financial rewards for working hard, for themselves and their families.

It is an understatement to say the LLM programme is extremely extensive, especially in the first semester at Pretoria. While the first semester at Pretoria can boast of many tutors and academic advisers to assist students, same cannot be said of nearly all the second semester partner universities. The situation can be improved if the situation in Pretoria is replicated in the partner universities. Where necessary, Alumni of the programme who are available could assist the partner universities. Special mention is made of Dr. JamilMujuzi who assisted the University of Western Cape students during the second semester (2010) in diverse ways.

Soon, the second semester is over, and graduation bells begin to ring. Reality dawns on would be graduates. Some resigned from their jobs to take up the course, others were fresh from school, with only a few people with jobs waiting for them. Where is the plethora of job and internship opportunities, many kept asking? For some, the default plan was to go home into private legal practice or to non human rights jobs, and do little or nothing with their human rights knowledge.

Perhaps the Alumni structures in the various regions and sub regions may forge partnerships to assist graduates to settle comfortably into their 'new' environments without stress by assisting with useful advice on job and internship opportunities. The Centre for Human Rights could also organize a special closing ceremony, reminiscent of the opening ceremony, where prospective human rights employers could meet with graduates, and/or opportunities unveiled to new graduates.

A trained mind, especially a human rights mind, is a terrible thing to waste, and no efforts should be spared to assist graduates to gain a foothold in the world of human rights work, in order to bring about the change we all envisage in Africa and the world.

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In search of a job

Allying Determination with Dedication

Sena Noukpo

(Benin, 2000)



Few decades ago it was quite easy to get a good job after completing an advanced university degree. But nowadays, it has become tedious to get an acceptable job with a Masters degree. It even appears to be a matter of luck. However determination and dedication are key in a search for job.

Two generations ago, people were enrolled in professional categories immediately after their training. Today, employment dynamics make it difficult to directly enroll in such categories without prior work experience.

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Therefore, internships become a compulsory step in the search for job. It is advisable to start searching for internships ahead of completing the study/training. The search for an internship could be guided by the dissertation topic (in case an internship is part of the training) but, importantly, it should be guided by the intended career profile as most vacancy announcements require "relevant work experience". It is recommended to demonstrate dedication during internships as they might offer access to a job. The internal rules of some institutions may allow a transition from internship to a regular post; but that might not be the case in other institutions where a certain break might be required. In any case, the dedication, including socio-professional qualities, shown during an internship may open the door to a good job.

Looking for tips in the search for job? It is important to carefully read the vacancy announcement or to know the profile of the job one is applying for. The covering letter must demonstrate firstly that the applicant meets the requirements in terms of qualifications and secondly highlight, in the work experience of the applicant, key competencies required in line with the tasks to be performed by the incumbent. In short, one must demonstrate why one thinks he/she fits the job. No work experience is too small to be neglected. Languages must be given serious consideration.

Job and internship opportunities are available in most of the regional institutions, including the African Union, as well as the United Nations (UN) system. However, for the UN Secretariat, one has to first register in the Inspira (Galaxy is about fading out). One may also consider applying for the United Nations Volunteers (UNV). Consulting NGOs' and humanitarian actors' websites might also be helpful. Students of LLM HRDA can confidently apply for posts of protection, human rights, and humanitarian or civil affairs officers for instance. Good luck!

Visit these pages on the Centre's website for various opportunities:

Vacancies & Internships

<http://www.chr.up.ac.za/index.php/vacancies-internships.html>

Conferences & Call for Papers

<http://www.chr.up.ac.za/index.php/conferences-call-for-papers.html>

Funding & Programmes

<http://www.chr.up.ac.za/index.php/funding-programmes.html>

Or submit an opportunity that might be of interest to others in your field

<http://www.chr.up.ac.za/index.php/submit-opportunity.html>

Alumni News

Launching of Alumni Association's annual plan of activities, 9 February

The aim is a full alumni adherence through:

- Alumni Constitution and Logo
- Main Alumni Database
- Alumni Online Profile
- Alumni Newsletter

MOU enters into force, 11 March

The Memorandum of Understanding for the LLM HRDA Alumni Association is an agreement between alumni on the one hand and, on the other hand, the Centre for Human Rights which provides its overall support and supervision in the realisation of this important project. The process of arriving at this Constitution has been both exciting and rewarding. The drafting history started in December 2009, when alumni held a conference during the celebration of the LLM HRDA 10 years. The MOU provides for a General Assembly, a six-member Coordinating Committee, a Coordinator and national focal persons for its management. The MOU is posted on the Centre's website.

Alumni vote for Association logo, 16 March

Review of main alumni database and launching of online profile, 30 March

More than 150 alumni have now signed up.

Alumni register as doctoral candidates in 2011

- Ololade Shyllon (Nigeria, 2007)
- Horace Adjolohoun (Benin, 2007)
- Mehlik Bekele (Ethiopia, 2010)

Doctoral degrees

Alumnus Takele Bulto (Ethiopia, 2003) is awarded a 'publishable with no changes' PhD at Melbourne University, Australia.

**Is your personal alumni profile on the web?
If not, visit**

**<http://www.chr.up.ac.za/index.php/alumni.html>
and scroll down to capture your details.**

LLM (HRDA) Alumni Profiles

Ummy Ally Mwalimu

(Tanzania, 2000)

Deputy Minister for Community Development, Gender and Children, and Member of Parliament. LLB (Dar Es Salaam), LLM HRDA (Centre for Human Rights, Pretoria).



Previously, held senior human rights positions with DANIDA, Legal Human Rights Centre and Law Reform Commission of Tanzania - Civil society membership in Tanzania Women Lawyers Association and Tanzania Youth Team for Campaign Against AIDS.

Nana Oye Lithur

(Ghana, 2001)

Coordinator, Africa Regional Office of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative - Executive Member of the International Freedom of Information Advocates Network - Executive Member of the International Consortium on Medical Abortion. LLB (Accra), LLM HRDA (Centre for Human Rights, Pretoria).



Currently involved in police accountability, freedom of information and access to justice - Outstanding advocacy and activism in women's political rights, reproductive and sexual rights, and HIV/AIDS - Addressed Beijing + 5, the Commonwealth and World Bank - Led several fact finding missions and human rights campaigns in Ghana - Recently suffered police brutality during human rights reform rally at Parliament - Previously, Director, Governing Body of the Ghana Internal Revenue Service and Member, Disciplinary Committee of the Ghana Bar Association.

Gabriel Shumba

(Zimbabwe, 2002)

Executive Director, Zimbabwe Exiles Forum. LLB (Zimbabwe), LLM HRDA (Centre for Human Rights, Pretoria).

Frontline activist and rights advocate - Severally arrested and tortured for activism against police brutality in Zimbabwe - Exiled to South Africa following death threats - Human rights litigation in African Commission and SADC Tribunal - Ad-



ressed top political forums such as the US Congress and European Parliament - Several human rights awards including Centre for Human Rights Vera Chirwa Prize and Amnesty International Defender Award.

Benyam Dawit Mezmur

(Ethiopia, 2005)

2nd Vice Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (July 2010 - July 2015). LLB (Addis Ababa), LLM HRDA (Centre for Human Rights, Pretoria), LLD (Western Cape). Closely involved in the work of the Committee since 2002. Currently a Mellon-Research Fellow, Community Law Centre, University of the Western Cape (UWC), South Africa - Lecturer, LLM module on Children's Rights and the Law at UWC - Previously, Legal Officer, African Child Policy Forum - Guest Lecturer in academic institutions in Africa and Europe - Research Fellow, Universities of Utrecht and Groningen (Netherlands) and Abo Akademi (Finland).



Contact details

Email: hrda.alumni@up.ac.za

Website: www.chr.up.ac.za/hrda

Editorial Team: Horace Adjolohoun (Benin, 2007), Benson Olugbuo (Nigeria, 2003), Ismene Zarifis (USA, 2009), Christopher Mbazira (Uganda, 2003).

Advisory and Review Team: Prof Frans Viljoen, Norman Taku, Martin Nsibirwa, Yolanda Boozyen.