

# Righting Wrongs

The LLM in Human Rights &  
Democratisation in Africa  
Alumni Association Newsletter  
Issue No 9 - June 2014

DEFENDING  
with **Excellence**,  
ADVOCATING  
with **Ubuntu**



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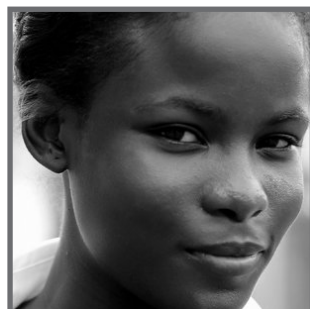


UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
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Faculty of Law



Centre for  
Human Rights  
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## Editorial

### Do that Little

Romola Adeola (Nigeria, 2012) (Alumni Coordinator)

Sometime last year, there was a story of a 'standing man' in Turkey; a man whose lone protest not only inspired many but also kindled worldwide curiosity and became a symbol of defiance to repressive rule. When the police detained a number of others who joined in for literally doing nothing, this act served to show some of the excesses in the use of state power.

One significant lesson which the story of the standing man teaches is that doing something in protest against an unpleasant situation, no matter how insignificant it may appear, can make an impact. Staring at the image of the founding father of Turkey did not unseat the government in Istanbul but it was enough to draw the eyes of the world, through the media, to a situation that required attention.

Sometimes it is that little thing that counts; that lone stand against oppression, that little advocacy on righting human wrongs, that little decision to bring about the change we desire to see in the world. The little which seems insignificant may be just about sufficient to withstand one of those wrongs on our continent.

However, the big question is: are we ready to do that little?

Answering this question is not about crooning the truth solely to our thoughts but about devising means of speaking truth to power!

Do that little!



Erdem Gündez, 'standing man', Turkey



## The Centre's Word

Kweku Antwi

Project Manager: Advanced Human Rights Courses

As Masters graduates of the Centre for Human Rights, I am certain that you are aware of the short courses offered by the Centre. While it started as the Good Governance Programme, the short courses have, over the years, developed into Advanced Human Rights Courses targeted at managers, staff of non-governmental organisations, academics, human rights activists and individuals committed to creating a change on the African continent. Personally speaking, it is a pleasure to see people passionate about making a change on the continent through sharing their human rights expertise and revealing key problems on our continent.

As you may be aware, the short courses are now part of the academic make-up of the LLM/MPhil programme. They have become a rich contribution to the diverse knowledge resource which the Masters programme offers.

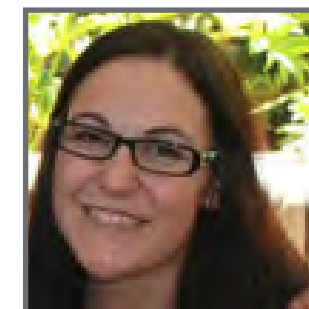
The short courses have become dynamic and diverse. While the course on International Law seeks to provide a platform for engaging with an established international legal order, Disability Rights, Police Oversight and Accountability, Intellectual Property and Public Interest offers the opportunity for engaging with issues pertinent to the realisation of human rights in Africa.

Over the years, the Advanced Human Rights Short Courses have significantly featured alumni as presenters and it always give me great pleasure to see many of you who have contributed in this regard. Permit me to use this medium to thank you all.

However, permit me to also say that I know that there are many more of you who can participate as presenters by sharing your experiences on topical issues which the short courses seek to engage. I kindly invite you to be part of these courses as teachers, trainers and mentors. I would also like to ask you to encourage participation from the various organisations and institutions you represent.

Please do send your applications to me at: [ggp@up.ac.za](mailto:ggp@up.ac.za)

Thank you.



## Baie Geluk!

### Baie, baie geluk Yolanda!

It gives me great pleasure to inform you all that on 3 December 2013, our dear Yolanda gave birth to a handsome baby boy – Francis by name.

Francis was born at Willows Hospital, Pretoria and I must say with positive hopes that in just a little over two decades from now, he would become an alumnus!

All those in favour say Aye!

The Ayes have it!  
Congratulations YOLANDA!

May Francis always put smiles on your face!



Francis du Plessis





## Campaign

### Each One, Bring One Campaign

Like the ANC prisoners on Robben Island did with their 'Each One Teach One' initiative developed as a means of fostering education during the apartheid, our 'Each One Bring One Campaign' can serve as a means of fostering human rights education on our continent.



Perhaps you ask: how?

Each year our Alma Mata (the Centre for Human Rights) gets different applications from people who wish to study for the Master's in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa. As you may imagine, the process of selection can sometimes not be easy as actually knowing who wants to make a change and who just needs the degree cannot be easily determined merely by looking at the content of the application. But then imagine if each one of us 'brings one.' 'One' that has the passion and drive to see Africa arise; one that has the drive for advocacy and can articulate reason to the minds of others on the need to protect the rights of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and children; one that has the audacity of hope for a greater Africa.

If each one of us brings this 'one,' then we will be sure that collectively we have 'ones' that not only want the certificate but also seek to create the Africa we need.

The step to bringing one is to lend support by giving that one a recommendation letter in application for the masters' programme.



## Highlight

### Of mafias and human rights advocates

*Patrick Eba (Côte d'Ivoire, 2004)*

*Human Rights and Law Adviser, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Geneva, Switzerland*

A few weeks ago, while travelling for work in Nigeria, I had the honour to meet with the head of that country's human rights commission. Interestingly, in the meeting was another alumnus of the LLM in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa – Christian Garuka, not to name him. Upon discovering, during the discussion, that we both (Christian and I) graduated from the University of Pretoria's LLM in Human Rights Programme, our host, jokingly, sighed "ah, the Pretoria mafia". This was not the first time I had heard the expression being used to refer to the network of alumni of the University of Pretoria's world renowned LLM (now also MPhil) in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa. I remember to have first heard the expression during a session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights a few years ago and many other times afterwards – but always with different expressions in the eyes of the speaker ranging from positive to a scent of exclusion.

I have always been uncomfortable with the expression, particularly as it has become to be used by some of the alumni themselves. The main reason to my discomfort is that language and names matter. The Oxford Advance Learners dictionary – the reference to is not pedantic but rather betrays the fact that I am a late English learner – has two definitions for the word mafia, namely (i) a secret organisation of criminals that is active especially in Sicily, Italy and the United State; and (ii) a group of people within an organisation or a community who use their power to get advantage for themselves. Of these two meanings, I would take it that the latter is closer to what people put into the expression mafia when referring to Pretoria alumni network as I doubt that anyone would liken us to Don Corleone. Even so, to refer to us or ourselves as a mafia (albeit in the second

## Master's in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa



meaning of the world) is bad enough. Are we a group of people using our "power" (not sure which one) to seek advantage for ourselves? I doubt it. One thing is certain though – since its inception in 2000, the LLM programme has become a transformative human rights education programme that has inculcated the principles of human rights and (hopefully) the values of Ubuntu to some 400 graduates from some 37 countries. In their roles and functions across Africa and elsewhere, these graduates are making critical contributions to the advancement of the knowledge and practice of human rights. Those in Pretoria who conceived, established and are running the programmes can certainly be proud of what they have contributed to accomplish. And understandably, each alumnus can take great pride in being part of a community that has generated in the less than two decades the youngest vice Chair in the history of the Committee of the Right of the Child, excellent academics, courageous frontline human rights defenders, leading human rights advocates, committed international civil servants and respected members of the judiciary. Reflecting on my own case, I would have most probably never been offered the opportunity to work with the Parliament of Malawi as a parliamentary legal assistant (a position that generated my interest and later expertise on HIV and the law) if I had not benefited from the scholarship to leave my native Côte d'Ivoire to complete the Pretoria Master Programme a decade ago.

The Pretoria master and its graduates are a brand. One that is recognised for excellence, rigor and dedication to human rights. The flip side to this is that the success of the programme and its alumni, may also create negative perceptions of dominance and exclusion among those not part of the network. The use of mafia in relation to the alumni network could be an illustration of growing discomfort towards attitude of ascendancy, arrogance, zeal, or perceptions of the like. There may be something

empowering and comforting in being part of a mafia. This sense that one is protected, and has "privileges" and opportunities not available to others. That some graduates use the expression "Pretoria mafia" may betray this fascination.

But, to speak of a "human rights mafia" is a terrible and self-defeating oxymoron that actually routs the whole raison d'être of the Pretoria Programme, one which is anchored in the principles of non-discrimination, transparency, openness and inclusiveness.

Surely, the purpose of this piece is not to portray myself as the "father whipper" of the alumni network but to re-state (if it were necessary) the importance of the network as a tool for inclusion and openness, and of the graduates as ambassadors of humility and ubuntu. May be, it is just me being oversensitive and making a big deal of a non-issue. I might have become the victim of a professional deformation of the HIV worker who loads too much meaning into simple words.

Well, I would still think that it is our mission to seek to debunk myths and perception of the alumni network as a group of the select few. There are many ways we can do that. The simpler of which would be to reject such expressions being use is relation to the network and refrain from using it ourselves. Much more could be done, which I would leave to us all – individually and collectively – to explore.

I have had the chance throughout the past decade to travel and meet alumni in different African countries and setting across the world. And every time, I have been struck by one thing: they all had the spirit – the one that builds up over that one year and bind us together on December 10th. The spirit that they are contributing to transform communities, nations and the world. Such individuals are no *mafiosi*.





## Graduation Highlights

### LLM/MPhil Graduation Ceremony

At the LLM/MPhil (Human Rights and Democratisation) Graduation held on 10 December 2013, 26 students became alumni of the Masters' programme. At the Graduation Ceremony, five students received awards.

- **Ms Precious Eriamiatoe** (Nigeria) and **Mr Adrian Jjuko** (Uganda) were jointly awarded the *Nelson Mandela Prize* for the best overall performance.
- **Ms Daphine Agaba** (Uganda) received the *Kéba M'Baye Prize* for the best dissertation.
- **Mr Adrian Jjuko** (Uganda) received the *Victor Dankwa Prize* for the best performance in the 'Human Rights in Africa' module.
- **Ms Linette Du Toit** (South Africa) received the *Ubuntu Prize* as the one who best embodied the values and spirit of ubuntu.
- **Ms Ruusa Ntinda** (Namibia) received the *Elysée French Prize* from the indefatigable Madam Nicole.

The Alumni Association welcomes the new graduates and wishes them well in their future endeavours. As they go out to defend the values that the programme sought to instill, they should at all times remember what family they henceforth belong to and they must always be aware that the ultimate goal is to bring about tangible change in leadership and human development in Africa.



Precious Eriamiatoe



Adrian Jjuko



Daphine Agaba



Linette du Toit

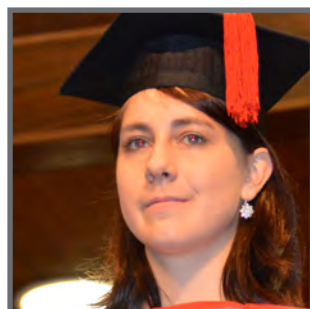


Madam Nicole & Ruusa Ntinda



Lizwe Jamela





## Dean's Essay Prize

**Linette du Toit:**  
**Winner of the LLM/MPhil (HRDA)**  
**Dean's Essay Prize 2013**

Righting Wrongs publishes the winning essay in full

### A YEAR OF COLOUR, SPICE AND JOY

In the year-long process of working towards obtaining an LLM in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa, I have grown used to receiving tasks which are just short of impossible. This one, however, is really pushing it. 'Write an essay in which you reflect on how you have been personally and professionally enriched this year, the essay should not exceed a thousand five hundred words'. A THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED WORDS?? How could I possibly give a concise and honest account of just how much I have lived, laughed and learned this year in a mere two pages of writing? How could I BEGIN to explain how my life has forever been changed in the most unexpected of ways? The richness of this experience will be difficult to express with any number of words.

As with all the other assignments that I tackled this year, I will attempt this impossible one by firstly sketching 'a brief historical background'. I was born in South Africa in the same year that the African National Congress was disbanded and Nelson Mandela was released from prison. Growing up, I found myself deeply troubled by the prevailing injustice and inequality that had infiltrated the very structure of the South African society. My childish fantasies of enforcing a 'Robin Hood' like system of redistribution, along with my love for languages, steered me towards pursuing a career which combines journalism, politics and law. I still have no name for what it is that I wish to do in this world. Although I do not regret my decision to study law, only a few LLB subjects truly interested me. I hope my audacity will be forgiven in saying that the Centre for Human Rights must have had me in mind when they created this programme.

Over the course of this year, I have had the opportunity to be a judge, a field researcher, a journalist, a lawyer, a photographer, a civil society representative, a politician and an actress. I have been lectured by and interacted with so many people whose work I used to admire from a

distance. What is more, almost every topic which was studied was approached from a 'South African perspective' at some point or another. This course is like a precious, tailor-made gift box of all the skills and knowledge that will undoubtedly equip me for my 'unnamed future profession'. Where else would I have learned to think like a human rights lawyer, write like an academic, speak in public and sing in French, all in the space of a few months?

Surpassing the academic value of this year, is the experience gained from living, studying and travelling with 27 of the most remarkable people I now call my friends. It seemed so unlikely that throwing a group of diverse individuals from across the continent together could result in such cohesion and fellowship as we have experienced.

I have seen 'ubuntu' in practice as we celebrated every achievement, grieved the tragedies that struck our respective countries and came up with solutions for every one of the continent's problems. The weight of the pressures of this programme was lifted with cheerful study sessions – I have never before felt that my exams and assignments were burdens and challenges to be borne by the community as a whole. I owe so much to my class mates who were willing to take the time to explain the intricacies of the African Regional and Inter-American systems to me under the least ideal of circumstances. Even up to the night of submitting our dissertations, we could count on supportive messages and calls from the different ends of the continent.

This spirit of community extended to the Glynn Street 545 house, where I stayed with 8 of the other ladies. Here we learned to deal with each others' sleeping patterns, studying methods and religious expressions with, what I believe to be, uncommon respect and patience. We made use of the opportunities to learn lessons in culture, history, language and life before having breakfast in the morning. My favourite time of the week was our Saturday night 'Around Africa' dinner parties. This entailed one of us cooking a traditional local dish from her country, the rest of us building makeshift seats and adding 'ambiance' to our tiniest (and dirtiest!) of kitchens and indulging in colourful conversation, laughter and debate up into the early hours of the morning.

As I look back over the experiences of the past year, I think of bright, printed fabrics and the smell of pineapples and spiced tea. I think of Precious, singing in the kitchen and



Daphine, laughing the most beautiful of laughs. I remember being pulled over by police men who were partially concerned about the number of people crammed into my little Corsa, but mostly just curious as to how such diversity could end up in one car.

I treasure the moments of dancing with Lizwe, dreaming with Nadege, arguing with Adrian, running with Obi, giggling with Celly, turning in with Gatete, 'braai'-ing with Tshepiso and crying all over Okubasu.

My life and the lives of my friends and family have been touched and changed by my classmates. I know what it feels like to be gently reprimanded, kindly guided, graciously forgiven and loved unconditionally. I truly know what it means to be an African. I have learned, unlearned and relearned so many things. I am leaving this programme more awakened to suffering, more aware of my privilege and agency and fully equipped to go and fight the good fight.

During my second semester in Uganda, I often jogged to the top of Makerere Hill, which could very well be the only quiet place in the whole of Kampala. Time and again, I would find a spot to watch the sun rise and thank my Maker for the grace and mercy that He has poured out over my life ... time and again, the words spoken many centuries ago by one of His other servants would resound in my mind: 'Is this Lord, how you usually deal with man?'



HIV/Aids Clinical Group, Hammanskraal





## Vera Chirwa Award

### Winner: Augustin Kounkiné Some

On 7 May 1971 – in the windswept sandstorm region of the Sahel, a male child was born in Southern Burkina Faso in the town of Ouessa to a farmer whose selfless character was to be a notable virtue in his son. Though born to a humble beginning, this child in his early years had the resilience of a baobab. Against the ebbs and flows of the semi-arid region of his birth, he would go with his father to their farm to cultivate crops. One day, as he helped his father with tomato plants, his father told him that whatever you do, do it to the fullest. Though it had seemed like a statement that would pass with the wind, this child took it to heart. Through seasons of drought and moments of rain as this child matured into a man, those words sunk in his heart.

During his years as an undergraduate student at the University of Ouagadougou, he was part of a youth wing of the national movement for human rights. He graduated in 1997 and in 1999 became a public law jurist in the Parliament of Burkina Faso. As a jurist, he was involved in various significant activities, one of which was: monitoring the compliance of draft bills with the government's international obligations. But as a man who knew to do things to the fullest, his perspective was always wider than the enclave of the sand-swept country of his birth. He wanted to do more, to press for change beyond his country. So in 2003, he applied for the Masters in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa.

It is no mean feat for someone from a francophone country with full education in French to aspire unto one of the most demanding Masters Programme. But this man did and with resilience, he shone. Being the first and only student from Burkina Faso, his courage in coming in spite of the challenges ahead of him was remarkable. While everyone else took away with them a degree, he took away twice as much. He took with him fluency in a second language that flung open the doors of his life.



Alumni Coordinator Romola Adeola with the 2013 Vera Chirwa Award winner, Augustin Kounkiné Some

When he graduated in 2004, he was prepared to be a leading voice of change and having been well equipped to do so, he began with resilience. In 2005, he joined the United Nations – an institution often criticised for crooning the tunes of good governance but not doing enough. While it is easy to overlook people working in this system unless they are at the very top, one cannot help but notice this man who through hardship as made a difference. He has shown that he is not just a clog in the wheel but someone determined to make a personal contribution. Someone prepared to make a lasting difference. Someone prepared to do things to the fullest.

From Sierra Leone to Chad, to Cote D'Ivoire to Mali – countries with fragile democracies, this man has made a difference, protecting the rights of vulnerable groups such as women and children. In Sierra Leone, he designed and implemented a capacity-building project for local governments on "Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law". In Chad, he was involved in monitoring, investigating and documenting human rights violations. He chaired inter-agency meetings on child protection and participated in joint government-United Nations visits to military bases to ensure that children are not in the bases as soldiers. In July of 2010, he joined the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire where he was involved in several activities, one of which was ensuring that UN Agencies adopt a rights-based approach in their programmes and

operations. During the post-election violence in Cote d'Ivoire, he was involved in human rights and peace-keeping activities. While the rest of the world slept soundly, he was awake, keeping the peace.

One afternoon in Abidjan, following the bombing of a local market, he was requested to investigate the crisis for a report to the United Nations Security Council. While many other colleagues refused to join him in apprehension, he was not deterred. Although the convoy he was in was shot at and he could have lost his life, he did not quit. This man has sacrificed not only his time but also his resources. With the yearning to do more, in 2010, he established the Citizens Information and Documentation Center in his home country. He was driven by the belief that an informed citizenry is well placed to participate in the orderings of society.

In recognition of his sacrifice, commitment and passion for the advancement of human rights on our continent, the 2013 Vera Chirwa Award was presented to Mr Augustin Kounkiné Some

## Righting Wrongs

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## Centre News

### Vera Chirwa Award: Call for nominations

As you may recall in 2007, the Vera Chirwa Award was instituted for the alumnus or alumna of the programme who best embodied the principles of the programme in his or her subsequent career by "making a difference" to the protection of human rights or the strengthening of democratisation in Africa.

To be considered for this award, subsequent to obtaining the degree (LLM in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa), the candidate must have demonstrated:

- Dedicated human rights activism;
- Leadership in the field of human rights and democratisation affecting Africa and Africans;
- A contribution to a specific human rights cause(s);
- Commitment to improving the lives of people everywhere in Africa

You are kindly requested to nominate an alumna/us for the Vera Chirwa Award. As an alumna/us, you are welcome to nominate yourself. A nomination should be accompanied by a motivation letter, with reference to the nomination criteria, and a recent curriculum vitae of the nominated person.

Kindly ensure that the nomination reaches the alumni coordinator by **30 June 2014** via email. Send your mail to [romola.adeola@up.ac.za](mailto:romola.adeola@up.ac.za)

## Contact Details - Righting Wrongs

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### Alumni Dues:

To pay your dues, please obtain transfer details from: Harold Meintjes ([harold.meintjes@up.ac.za](mailto:harold.meintjes@up.ac.za)) or Romola Adeola ([romola.adeola@up.ac.za](mailto:romola.adeola@up.ac.za))

Centre for Human Rights

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