ZIMBABWE LAWYERS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
Fostering a culture of human rights

The Legal Monitor

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12 March 2018

A newsletter published by Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights for members & human rights defenders

COST: FREE

Special IWD Edition

Distributed without any inserts

Honouring legal eagles

...despite challenges, women celebrate achievements

HARARE-Women working in the legal profession have come together to celebrate their own heroes and used the International Women's Day commemorations to honour several female lawyers for excelling in the various sectors.

Women In Law Connect, a group of women in the legal profession, named as Legal Eagles directors of non-governmental organisations, senior officials in the public sector, judges, politicians, academics and those in the private sector.

Precious Chakasikwa, the co-ordinator of WomenIn Law Connect said women in the legal profession had made huge strides, defying an environment prohibitive for women's advancement.

"Whilst the playing field remains uneven and in some cases prohibitive, our women in the legal profession have taken some territory, crushed the glass ceiling and have demonstrated that #yeswecan. We salute and celebrate them and will profile and honour them particularly those who achieved great feats in 2017. They have given us hope and continue to inspire us," said Chakasikwa.

Chakasikwa explained the idea behind name Legal Eagles.
"Eagles have very interesting character traits; - They have vision and are very attentive; - They are fearless; - An eagle will never surrender to the size or strength of its prey; - Eagles are tenacious; - An eagle flies into the storm and soars above it; - Eagles are high fliers; - An eagle flies above 10 000 feet in altitude," she said.

Supreme Court and Constitutional Court Judge Justice Elizabeth Gwaunza, who was the guest of honour, commended WomenInLaw Connect for organising the event, noting that there are very few instances in which the professional achievements of women lawyers are deliberately recognised and celebrated.

"I am particularly excited about the fact that women lawyers in Zimbabwe have together with a few of my judicial counterparts, come together to celebrate an International Women's Day which is designed to, not only renew our commitment to the global campaign for women's rights, equality and justice, but also celebrate the achievements of women lawyers and judges who have made great strides in the profession, on the bench and in the wider society.

Women lawyers in Zimbabwe have been at the forefront of establishing, running and heading law firms, non-governmental organisations and enterprises, which promote and enhance the rights of women and children in Zimbabwe," she said.

Honoured...legal eagles

Judge urges women to aim higher

Aim higher... Justice Elizabeth Gwaunza

HARARE-A top judge says women in the legal profession should not shy away from challenging for positions previously viewed as the domain for males.

"I would encourage more women lawyers to consider running for municipal and national elections.'

- Gwanzura

Constitutional Court Supreme Court Judge, Justice Elizabeth Gwaunza said women should challenge in greater numbers for positions in the judiciary and in the political sphere.

She was speaking at an event organised by WomenInLaw Connect in Harare to commemorate International Women's Day and honour women in the legal profession.

"I would encourage more women lawyers to consider running for election to municipal government and the national legislature. Whilst women lawyers have not been reticent in putting their name forward for consideration for appointment to the Superior Courts, the number vying for seats in local government and the national assembly has been negligible," said Justice

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Profiles of Legal Eagles

HON. MRS JUSTICE ELIZABETH GWAUNZA

Constitutional Court and Judge of Appeal, Supreme Court of Zimbabwe. Current President of the Zimbabwe Women Judges' Association. Has sat on the boards of many women's NGO's, including Musasa Project, a research and counselling trust for women victims of domestic and other violence, and the Women's Leadership and Governance Institute. Founding member of the Women's University in Africa board of Trustees. Founding member and past President of the Zimbabwe Association of Women Lawyers and current Patron of the association.

ITAI VALERIE PASI

Co- founding partner of Mushoriwa Pasi Corporate Attorney's. Acting Board Chairperson of CFI Holdings Limited. In 2017, she was warded the Outstanding Advocate and Legal Leader of the Year award at the Megafest Women's Awards 2017.

BLESSING GOREJENA

Currently the acting Executive Director of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum. Blessing is passionate about human rights, devoted to standing up for the rights of indigent often-marginalized members of society including women. With over 10 years experience in human rights advocacy and public interest litigation at both municipal and international level, she has extensively engaged with the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, the African Court on Human and Peoples Rights and the United Nations human rights systems. Blessing is a member of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA), Southern African Human Rights Defenders Network and the Coalition for an Effective African Court on human and Peoples Rights.

NQOBILE MUNZARA

Nqobile was appointed to the position of Group Company Secretary of Old Mutual Zimbabwe Limited (OMZIL) in November 2017. Nqobile is also an HIV Activist with a focus on HIV-prevention for young people aged 13 to 24. She does her work through an NGO she founded in 2008, Culture Shock Trust. She assists in developing young people's life skills so as to positively influence their behavior thereby building a generation of responsible, risk-aware yet dynamic individuals who will not fall prey to the devastating effects of pre-marital sexual intercourse, under-age alcohol use and uncontrolled social media interaction. Nqobile has authored a high school textbook, approved by the Ministry of Education for the subject Guidance and Counselling.v

ROPAFADZAI MAJAJA

Recently appointed Board Secretary for the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority and is also in charge of Corporate Communications and International Affairs. A member of the Institute of Directors Zimbabwe, Law Society of Zimbabwe and Toastmasters International.

ROSELYN HANZI

Rose is the Executive Director of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR). She has researched on a number of publications for ZLHR on elections as well as a number of research and position papers on transitional justice, institutional reforms, (particularly justice sector related) and human rights generally amongst other research areas.

GLORIA NYAMAYI- GANDA

Is a Partner at Honey & Blanckenberg Legal Practitioners. She is a registered legal practitioner in Zimbabwe and a qualified Solicitor in England and Wales. Prior to joining Honey & Blanckenberg, Gloria worked as an immigration Solicitor in Manchester.

NELLIE TIYAGO JINJIKA

I deliberately embarked on a complete renovation of myself. I began to read more, volunteer more and interact more with different people from different backgrounds. I had to also off load a lot of time wasting activities so that I could achieve the goals that I had set for myself. My parents worked hard to provide for us. I was never a head girl or a prefect.

FADZAYI MAHERE

Is an aspiring Member of Parliament for Mt Pleasant constituency, where she will contest as an independent candidate in the 2018 election. Fadzayi recently received the Hubert H. Humphrey Distinguished Leader Award. Fadzayi practices as an advocate/barrister at the Harare Bar.

KUZIVAKWASHE NGODZA

CYNTHIA TENDAI MUGWIRA

Cynthia is the Group Legal Advisor and Board Secretarial Services Executive for the National Social Security Authority (NSSA). Cynthia was an initiator of the drafting of the National Corporate Governance Code for Zimbabwe. She has sat on several boards including her current

VIMBAI NYEMBA

Chairperson of the Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe. A big surprise as I least expected to be retained in that board let alone to be the chairperson. A member of SADC LA EXCO and council member of the Anglican University. Chancellor of Harare Diocese Anglican Church. Past President of the Law Society of Zimbabwe.

DR MAKANATSA MAKONESE

Current Executive Secretary of Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission and has
worked as Executive Secretary of the SADC Lawyers Association.

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'We are our own liberators'- Chakasikwa

HARARE-Gone are the days for women to sit and complain about an uneven environment that narrows their opportunities. Now is the time to act.

This is the bold message from Precious Chakasikwa, the coordinator of WomenInLaw Connect, an organisation that facilitates for networking among women in the legal profession.

She was speaking at an event where her organisation commemorated International Women's Day and honoured women who continue to push the boundaries in the public and private sector, as well as in non-governmental organisations, politics and the academia.

"The time to complain and do nothing is over. It is time for action. It is time to claim what is rightly ours. It is time to close the gender gap. We cannot wait for another 168 years," she said.

She was referring to the World Economic Forum Gender Gap report, which noted that the gender gap will take long to close.

Zimbabwe, like much of the world, still lags behind in addressing the gender gap.

This means more than 100 years since the world began observing International Women's Day with the original aim of achieving full gender equality for women, the environment remains unfavourable for women.

"The original aim has still not been realised. Women are not adequately represented in business, in politics and most space," said Chakasikwa.

"Be that as it may, we must acknowledge that some progress has been made insignificant as it might appear, it is still progress which we must celebrate.

We cannot always mourn and complain, we must acknowledge the progress made. Hence the sub theme for today's event 'celebrating our legal eagles' that we have adopted for this year's commemorations," said Chakasikwa, noting that despite the uneven and often prohibitive playing field, women in the legal profession have recorded some significant successes.

That progress should not be reason for complacency though, said Chakasikwa, emphasising the huge challenges that still lie ahead.

"Whilst we have made some progress we cannot be complacent. Now, more than ever, especially with our Constitution now providing for gender equity and balance, and the setting up of the Gender Commission, the launch by the women in politics caucus of 50:50 Gender Parity Campaign and Women's Manifesto, we must indeed act now to press for progress," she said.

Precious Chakasikwa

Judge urges women to aim higher

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Gwaunza.Justice Gwaunza lauded the initiative to honour women in the legal field and noted the increase in women leaders in various sectors, saying this called for celebration.

"Women lawyer activists have not only conducted litigation on matters impacting women's rights but participated in the constitution making processes of 2009 -2013.

"Women lawyer activists have worked not just with civil society but have engaged the Parliament of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Women Parliamentary Caucus in particular to sensitise them on gaps in legislation and policies that impede the progress of women," said Justice Gwaunza.

Organisations such as Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) are populated by women lawyers who are committed activists working in both rural and urban communities across Zimbabwe to raise awareness of gender equality and to advocate for laws and policies that actualise women's constitutional rights to equal opportunities in the political, economic and social spheres, she said.

"There have been numerous awards for women rights activists in civil society and the profession, but few opportunities to celebrate the successes of women lawyers who have been appointed to the bench, to commercial boards, to parastatal boards and to university councils, let alone those women judges and lawyers who head constitutional commissions in Zimbabwe, councils that oversee the quality of legal education in Zimbabwe and superintend the practice of law in Zimbabwe as well as head academic institutions dedicated to women's law and development," said Justice Gwaunza.

However, much more needs to be done to ensure gender parity, she said."The number of women who admitted to study law at our country's law schools and who graduate from our universities needs to be matched by a proportional increase of women lawyers numbers in all spheres of our society," she said.

She identified sexual harassment in the workplace, unequal pay for equal work, unequal representation in state institutions and agencies, unequal representation in political parties and private organisations, political violence against women and girls, child marriages, domestic violence and sexual abuse as some of the issues that hamper the advancement of women at all levels of society.

High Court Judges Justice Makoni and Justice Charehwa, Constitutional Court Judge Justice Elizabeth Gwaunza and Zimbabwe Electoral Commission Chairperson Justice Priscilla Chigumba

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IWD in pictures

WomenInLaw Connect Bulawayo chapter also held commemorations to mark International Women's Day

Women lawyers at the WomenInLaw Connect organised International Women's Day commemorations in Harare

ZEC Chairperson Justice Priscilla Chigumba

Aim higher... Justice Elizabeth Gwaunza

Justice Gwaunza, Justice Charehwa and Precious Chakasikwa, one of the founders of WomenInLaw Connect

High Court Judges Justice Makoni and Justice Charehwa, Constitutional Court Judge Justice Elizabeth Gwaunza and Zimbabwe Electoral Commission Chairperson Justice Priscilla Chigumba