

Public Interest Law Gathering

The Public Interest Litigation (PIL) Sector has not been without its transformation challenges. The panel will discuss challenges (stereotypes and barriers) within the PIL Sector, the role of legal NGOs and organised legal structures in supporting women lawyers within the public interest legal sector. Panelists will further explore and identify achievable objectives in increasing the number of black women litigating within the PIL Sector and how to create an enabling environment for black women within the PIL Sector.

Date

Tuesday 25 July 2017

Time:

15:45 – 17:15

Venue:

School of Public Health, University of the Western Cape



GENDER TRANSFORMATION

in the public interest litigation (pil) sector

Discussion

In Justice Vision 2000, it was recognised that the legal profession has to be transformed in order to be able to respond properly to the needs of all the people of South Africa and it was stated that the Department of Justice would be giving attention to the transformation of the legal profession.

When one considers this context and then adds a gender lens, how does the PIL sector in particular tackle the issue of transformation? How do we begin to identify achievable objectives to increase the number of black women litigating within the PIL Sector and create an enabling environment for black women within this sector?

The sector is somewhat unique in the manner in which the law is practiced and the outcomes which are achieved. The unique manner in which PIL institutions functions presents very different challenges to transformation broadly and gender transformation in particular. These challenges are often driven by a lack of funding and resources. It has often been argued that because of limited financial resources PIL institutions struggle to retain black legal professionals.

A report by The National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADEL) explains that in redressing inequity and imbalances within the legal profession, several initiatives have been introduced to create a balance within the profession. The legal profession however is but a microcosm of our society reflecting both the challenges of gender transformation and equality in the legal profession and the country in entirety. The Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) through their research report have found various barriers to gender transformation from race, culture and language differences as well as lack of access to networks.

The Women's Legal Centre has convened a panel at this year's Public Interest Law Gathering 2017 to explore some of these challenges with a panel of distinguished speakers. The aim is to begin a much needed discussion on the current status of black women within PIL Institutions and to devise strategies towards addressing the transformation in the PIL sector

Facilitator: Charlene May – Legal Resources Centre (LRC)

Charlene May is an attorney at the Legal Resources Centre's Cape Town office. She holds an LLB degree from

the University of the Western Cape and is an admitted attorney. She completed her articles of community service at the Legal Resources Centre and works in the focus area dedicated to gender, equality and non-discrimination. Her work has largely focused on women's rights and realizing the right to equality and non-discrimination for women and vulnerable groups within South African society. Ms May has authored a number of publications for the LRC and other civil society organisations on gender and women's rights as well as the law pertaining to non-profit organisations. She is also a member of the Management Board of the Wellness Foundation an organisation geared towards providing psycho-social support and recognition to community care workers. She has participated in panel discussions on women's right to equality at the UN Commission on the Status of Women as well as facilitated panel discussions at the United Nations High Commission for Refugees NGO Dialogue on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Panellists

- **Seehaam Samaai** - Is the director the Women's Legal Centre and holds an LL.M degree in constitutional litigation.
- **Ofentse Motlasedi** - Is from the Black Workers Forum and is a pupil at the Johannesburg Society of advocates. She is doing dual pupillage at SERI and with Adv Michelle Le Roux.
- **Mimi Memka** - Is from the Law Society of South Africa. She obtained her LLB at the University of Durban Westville and she is the Director of Memka & Associates.
- **Nokukhanyiso Gcilitshana** - Is the General Secretary of South African Women's Lawyers Association and is a state attorney in the Northern Cape.
- **Keketso Maema** - Is the CEO of the Commission of Gender Equality.
- **Alison Tilley** - Is an attorney, and the head of advocacy at the Open Democracy Advice Centre.

The panel is convened by the Women's Legal Centre and you can follow this discussion on **#PILG2017** and **#WLCapeTown**

Please visit <http://www.publicinterestlawgathering.com/pilg-2017-registration/> to register for this event.



WOMEN'S LEGAL CENTRE

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