

Christof and the Integrated Bar Project

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The pioneering years of young lawyer empowerment

The Integrated Bar Project (IBP) was conceived by Professor Michael Reisman of the Policy Sciences Center, Yale Law School, USA. This was in answer to the glaring inequalities in legal opportunities for ‘non-white’ law students. Prof Reisman had come to South Africa in the late 1980s to teach a course at the University of Pretoria. While here, after visiting many law schools, law firms and engaging with judges, lawyers and advocates, the idea of the Integrated Bar Project was born. This conception was born together with the late Prof Christof Heyns of the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria. At the time, there were only about 500 qualified black attorneys and less than 50 black advocates; Nelson Mandela was still on Robben Island and South African politics seemed to have frozen.

At this time, education in South Africa, including access to higher education was significantly still divided on racial lines, with the majority of black law students compelled by the policies of the white apartheid government to study law at poorly resourced black universities, such as Fort Hare, Turfloop (officially the North), Zululand, Western Cape, Durban-Westville, and Venda, Transkei and Bophuthatswana (universities based in ‘independent’ homelands, pejoratively known as ‘bush colleges’). Consequently, many law graduates from these institutions could not get articles of clerkship (or, apprenticeship) for training to become attorneys at law. At the time, Professor Bongani Majola, was a professor of law and dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of the North (now Limpopo). At some stage he was also President of the Society of South African University Teachers of Law. In all three capacities, he was very aware of this problem and had indeed tried his earnest to find a solution.

At that time, those law graduates admitted to articles of clerkship, did so mainly in law firms in general legal practice. As a result, many qualified only to gravitate towards then low-paying criminal law practice, servicing mostly indigent clients. They had virtually no

access to well-paying commercial practice. Part of the reason was that law graduates from the historically black institutions were seen as of inferior grade. Some law firms complained that it took longer to train them as the training itself had to even include the basics of the law expected to be known when they left law school. These were the days when affirmative action or employment equity were foreign concepts in South Africa.

By the end of 1992, the administrative base for the IBP was moved from the USA to the Centre for Human Rights as Prof Reisman no longer saw any justification to conduct an essentially South African programme from abroad. This is when the University of the North became a partner in the programme, in association with the Ministry of Justice and the Law Society of South Africa.

By this time, almost all of the top law firms in all major commercial centres of South Africa were participating in the project. Senior law students from all South African universities were invited to apply for a 3-week internship during the July university holidays. The internship was aimed at providing students with a chance to supplement their theoretical knowledge with practical experience and served as exposure to the opportunities within the legal profession, particularly in commercial legal practice. Simultaneously, the project availed for consideration to the firms involved, at no cost to them, the cream of the crop of the country's law faculties in a working environment, with a view to possible future employment.

In this first phase, the students were given an orientation on the manner of operation of large law firms. Thereafter the students were placed with a partner, professional assistant or candidate attorney at their respective firms, for involvement in the day to day matters of a sophisticated legal practice.

From 1994, a second phase was added to the programme. Up to 20 students from the first phase were given the opportunity to serve further internships with the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court of Appeal or other High Courts, senior advocates or the legal departments of the country's largest commercial banks. In 1997, a third phase was introduced whereby 6 students from the 20 participants in the second phase, were selected to do 2-3 month internships with some of the largest law firms in the world, or with legal departments of international organisations, such as the African Union (then the Organization of African Unity). Each year almost 500 applications would be received. Selection of the students was done by a panel of representatives from a number of organisations. Among others, Christof Heyns and the Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of the North played a critical role in the selection process.

At the same time and for a number of years, Christof travelled to more cities in the country to meet commercial law firms eager to be part of the IBP including those who were hesitant. With his usual and enduring zeal, he tirelessly explained the benefits of the project, not only to the law firms but also to law graduates themselves. He wasn't deterred by the fact that a law firm appeared to be or was indeed conservative. That is where he unleashed his persuasive talent and passionately convinced many to participate. The success of the IBP depended, on the one hand, on the availability of law students and their willingness to participate. On the other, it depended on the recruitment of an increased number of commercial law firms and convincing them to accommodate the students over a period of 3 weeks each year. It is at the convergence of these two elements that Christof played a pivotal role.

This does not mean that things were easy for him, his colleagues, the students or the commercial law firms. It must be remembered that in 1992, most law firms were very male, very white and, in Pretoria especially, very Afrikaans institutions. So, receiving a 'non-white' intern, who was often a woman as well, was not always something that these firms could be convinced was a good idea. Bringing some of them on board was therefore a challenge but one that gave Christof the energy to press on.

There were many other challenges. Carole Viljoen started at the Centre for Human Rights in 1992 and one of the first roles she had was to help manage the IBP. This was before the time of cell phones, internet and email. The first step was to send posters advertising the project to all the universities in South Africa, requesting the Dean's office to put them up.

The majority of the students chosen to participate lived in rural areas across South Africa. Letters had to be sent by post (today referred to as snail mail) to each student as well as to each firm, often not arriving at the provided address. We had to follow up telephonically. Many of the students had no access to landlines at the time. So often a neighbour's number was given and when we called to make arrangements with each student, they had to first rush across to the house next door and hopefully the student was home.

There were instances where the parents of the student did not understand English, so communication could be very difficult. Carole recalls sitting in the evenings writing out cheques in the name of each student and then sending those off by snail mail before the internships started, because this was the only way the students could cover the costs of transport and accommodation during the internships. There were no magical EFTs for sending the money within a day or two. This meant receiving the cheque, taking that cheque with your Identity

Document to the nearest bank and cashing it, also no mean feat in the rural townships and villages of South Africa.

None of the hardships put Christof off the ideals that he wanted to achieve. No matter how hard it was to arrange logistically, he was determined that this was going to be a success. Before long, all the major law firms in the country were fully on board and in many cases offered articles of clerkship to the students who had spent their 3-week IBP internships with them.

Christof was a true strategist. He was not content only with roping in more commercial law firms to support the IBP. Especially at the start of the IBP, there was real anxiety about whether the project would be a success. So, Christof insisted on getting regular feedback both from commercial law firms and, more importantly, from the students placed with those firms. He made it easy for the students to approach him and even insisted that they call him 'Christof' instead of 'Professor'. This enabled him to know of challenges early and to take corrective steps. Fortunately, the attractiveness of the IBP was sufficient motivation to the placed students to learn and to succeed. He also spent time calling partners in the law firms to find out how the students were doing, making it clear that the IBP was just a phone call away should the law firm need its assistance. His philosophy was to make it as 'easy' as possible on the law firm to take a law student for the period of three weeks.

Reflecting on the time she worked with Christof Heyns in the IBP, Tshidi Mayimele, then Deputy Director of the Centre, stated:

My personal recollections was that Christof was passionate and persuasive about this project. His enthusiasm was infectious and he managed to convince even the sceptical and hesitant firms that this was a good project to get involved in. The reasons that you post ... are all true as to why he started the project. Exposure for both the students and the firms. Changing minds about the 'quality and competence' of black graduates to the extent as you say that paths to articles and employment opened up. This of course proved that all that was needed was opportunity, the students once in there proved their 'merit' and got offers on their own. The project was conceived even before the Employment Equity Act of 1998, and therefore before there was a legal inducement for law firms to take in black graduates, and this programme surely prepared the ground for that eventuality. Changing the profile of staff in the big successful law firms was a goal of the project.

She continued and wrote:

He was also good at ensuring that the internship became meaningful, and the exposure real, and for this he engaged constantly with the firms. For a couple of years I did the orientation for the students in order to prepare them for their placement, and kept a channel open for them to report back about how they were received and to report if intervention was needed with the firm. Christof would run interference if needed, luckily this was not common. I think somehow he managed to convince the firms he dealt

with that this project was important to their firm, their image and their reputation, and this augured well for the students, mostly. The fact that black law firms predominantly only accessed criminal, labour, motor vehicle accident claims and political cases, was a major driver for Christof. Access to a wider spectrum of work and specializations for black graduates, and the opening up of the profession was a critical driver in our discussions. Talking about it was one thing, but this kind of demonstration through this project was a better exercise, driving awareness, opening up options, and demonstrating that capability and talent existed everywhere and needed to be given a chance.

Indeed, Christof's passion was boundless. There was nothing that he would not try and achieve as long as his vision told him that the initiative would be for the greater good. The running of the IBP required a lot of money to sustain the students placed with various commercial law firms. Many, if not most of those students, came from very poor backgrounds and could not spend three weeks, for example, doing the internship in a major city like Johannesburg or Cape Town without substantial financial assistance. In order to achieve this, Christof employed his fundraising skills to great success. The Project was quite well supported financially by entities like the Ford Foundation. As a result an increasing number of law students were accepted by big commercial law firms for the three weeks internships. Two or three requirements were critical with donors. First, donors wanted to know that their financial resources had been deployed for the agreed purposes. Second, that there was proper accounting for such resources. Third and most important, that their financial intervention was producing a change in the *status quo*. The IBP under the leadership of Christof passed or met all three requirements with flying colours. On the impact, more black law graduates were being absorbed in commercial law firms as articled clerks – a significant change to the previously existing situation. Bongani recalls that by 1994/95, there was so much interest that some *commercial law firms would phone him at the University of the North and ask him to 'book' them some of our top law students for either the three weeks or articles of clerkship.* The gloom that he had found as the first Black dean of the law school suddenly changed as more opportunities for articles of clerkship opened for law graduates.

Talking about Christof as a leader, Grace Goedhart (Teixeira) SC, who worked with Christof at the Centre for Human Rights, describes him as follows:

He did indeed have a profound influence on me and on my life. In fact, the Centre as whole did. He had ceaseless energy (he would've been a good advertisement for Duracel!), nothing was ever impossible for him and he had a passion for life, justice, our continent and human rights which was not only inspirational but infectious. I can't remember a single occasion

that he lost his temper. You couldn't ever present Christof with a problem. You had to present him with the solution about the problem.

We had a joke about the work done at the Centre which was 'jy kan eendag in die hemel rus' [literally, you will one day rest in heaven]. This joke was made at 2am in the morning when we were faxing the US for funding. There was no time on this earth to rest. There was way too much to do!

The tributes to him from all over the world said it all. He lived Ghandi's famous quote: 'My life is my message'.

There is no doubt that in the 13 or so years that the IBP ran, it proved to be an unmitigated success. The number of students placed with commercial law firms grew from just 20 law graduates in 1989 to 153 by 2001. Certainly, by the end of the project, the vision, foresight and time that Christof had invested in the project had more than paid good dividends to all participants, especially the law graduates. This was further evidenced by more commercial law firms opening up to taking law graduates as the project grew each year. Some law firms were even asking why they were being excluded from participating. Lethargy or skepticism soon became a thing of the past.

By the time of his untimely death, there were many black or black-owned commercial and mixed law firms practising in both commercial, criminal or other types of law. This is to a very large extent thanks to the IBP and men and women who worked selflessly and tirelessly to make it a success, to the students who participated in it and to the partners in commercial law firms who opened their doors to Black law students. Judging from the narratives of IBP participants, below, these students grabbed the opportunities presented to them by the IBP with both hands, thereby justifying the investment involved, and dispelling the myth that law graduates from historically black law schools were of an inferior quality. Also the IBP should be credited for exposing white commercial law firms to the then hidden but rich black talent and diversifying the commercial legal practice. The IBP can therefore be credited with bringing about a seismic shift in the legal practice landscape in this country.

It took a long time for the legal landscape to change, but the IBP had, in some significant way, made a contribution to that change. A meaningful contribution of both human and financial resources. By the end of its lifetime, the IBP had placed over 1,500 students in law firms and had spawned a number of Black owned commercial and mixed-practice law firms.

Students/participants' experiences

Richard Baloyi, 2003 IBP participant¹

I was placed with Manamela Marobela Incorporated Attorneys (then Manamela Damons Mbanjwa Inc), Mr Manamela having been an intern himself a few years before, now taking interns himself. There I was mentored by a candidate attorney, Mr M Ngobese, with Mr Khashane Manamela taking the managerial seat of my learning.

At times we wish that those responsible for our well-being and for our great learning experiences should live on and on and get to see the fruits we bear, in the hope that they would derive pleasure and gratitude therefrom.

The interrupted life of Professor Heyns would, I reckon, rejoice to see that the journey commenced in 2003 has gone a long way. The commencement thereof at Manamela Attorneys imparted to me the early ability to choose my preferred practice area – bar or side bar. My lessons at Manamela Attorneys commenced with reading of files and discussion of their contents with my mentor. Court attendances for filing of documents, delivery of briefs to Counsel, boardroom meetings wherein the art of practice was taught by Mr Manamela, how to handle files within and outside offices, the importance of legible file notes, the importance of correctly couching court pleadings, for he said these files live for years in court archives and I cannot imagine how embarrassing it may be to learn, later on in life, that what I filed ages ago was not accompanied by the best of me. I learnt how to push to timeously receive all information, from any entity or client by asking the relevant questions and addressing those responsible appropriately. To put this in practice, I was asked to obtain an accident report in one matter. I called the investigating officer involved and although he could not help me immediately, I persisted and subsequently, the accident report was availed to the office. I recorded my first practical success.

Mr Ngobese further taught me that preparation beats everything. He would take me with him on all office related errands, the courts, Master's Office etc. He added that good etiquette and rapport with Court officials can bear great fruits at times.

Today I am practising as an advocate, having undergone pupillage. The IBP went a long way and I am so thankful that Prof Heyns thought it good to have the Project run. I am further thankful that many made themselves available to participate in the Project from the attorneys' profession to make it work.

Many thanks also to Mr Manamela and Mr Ngobese, and the whole team at the firm for their valued support. This legacy will forever live in me, and I will not forget how it all started.

My final note is that the experience imparted was not meant to be personal to Prof Heyns, but for the good of the legal profession and a greater, perhaps best, service to humanity. That is how it has impacted on my life and practice as a lawyer.

Muvhango Lukhaimane, 1993 IBP participant²

When I was invited to say something about the legacy of Prof Heyns through the IBP, my initial instinct was to think that it was so long ago, I might not remember much. Upon reflecting, it dawned on me that in a way, this is the perfect time. Having added a lot more years to my life, I am able to appreciate that the opportunity offered by the IBP was a solid foundation to where I find myself today.

I joined the University of Pretoria (UP) in 1993 as a partial bursary holder of the Centre for Human Rights. Coming from rural Venda, joining UP as an institution was a venture into a whole new world for me. I was part of the last fully Afrikaans LLB intake in 1993. The Centre became my home away from home. They were determined to see us succeed whilst conscious of the difficult environment we were in.

I had the opportunity to be hosted at Couzyn Hertzog and Horak for the IBP. My principal for the three weeks involved me in all matters as if I was there as a full-time employee. I remember sitting in with clients, taking down notes, being asked for my opinion on matters. Of course, this went hand in hand with doing all the other 'runner' work that an intern does – research for your principal, uplifting and copying documents, filing documents in court and lugging documents to court on behalf of the seniors. The experience taught me that clients want reassurance more than anything. They need someone to answer their questions fully and promptly, return their calls and earn their trust. During breaks in meetings and over lunch, there was a genuine attempt at getting to know each other – in fact the reports we had to do afterwards was testament to the gratitude we felt. Above all, the experience demystified the practice of law for me.

The guidance did not end with our learning and development but extended to broader socialization. Prof Heyns and the others would sometimes invite us to small lunches and dinners when they hosted speakers / visitors of the Centre for Human Rights, which was part of a broader socialization that engendered confidence and networking.

My involvement in the IBP and the broader work of the Centre were defining moments, especially because they did not have to do this – but did it anyway and invested in it at a time when the country was going through huge transformation challenges. I remain indebted to the IBP and the Centre for planting the seeds of ethical behaviour, service, dedication and commitment to others that remain the driving force in my life today.

The support I was given as a student, including my involvement in IBP ensured that I completed my LLB in the prescribed two years, even though it was the first time I had to undergo tuition in Afrikaans. The ability to do business in Afrikaans really stood me in good stead throughout my career – I was able to commence a career within Sanlam's head office in Cape Town in 1999 where business was mostly run in Afrikaans. We were three black African students in that LLB class and to say it was intimidating, is an understatement. However, with the support, encouragement from the Centre's leadership, we could only succeed. Owing to the manner that we were nurtured as a group, we also learnt to rely on each other. We socialized together and up to today we are still friends, colleagues – we keep up with each other, assist each other in our current spaces and it is all because of a collaborative culture that we learnt at the Centre.

Khashane Manamela, 1992 IBP participant³

In 1991, Musa Masebenza, a friend and fellow student at the University of Venda participated in the IBP. He was placed with a Pretoria firm specialising in intellectual property law. He was full of awe and boastful upon his return to campus. We were all envious of his adventure. This coincided with the launch of a law students' newsletter where I was part of the editorial team. Musa's article was published and it included the following: *'These past holidays I was fortunate enough to have had a holiday job at a firm of attorneys in Pretoria. I was one of the 28 students chosen from 400 applicants throughout the whole country ... I have taken a particular liking to trademarks and now consider it one of my career options ... It is my sincere hope that the programme will continue on a broader basis and would like to commend the organisers for the successful programme.'*

In the winter of 1992 I was placed with Couzyn Hertzog and Horak, an Afrikaans Pretoria law firm. I remember that I was not particularly impressed with this. Not because of the language issue, but due to the size of the firm. It did not seem to be as big as that of Musa in 1991. There was also no sign of the fancy intellectual property law

or trade marks. But I was wrong. At the end of the programme after three weeks I wrote about my experience in a letter published in the *De Rebus* Attorneys Journal of September 1992. My raving included the following: *'When you have had a taste of paradise, back on earth it can feel as cold as ice [from a then popular pop song] ... Although the time was very short for us to grasp a considerable range of legal practice, we gained a lot in those three weeks.'*

Prof Heyns was the one to first spot the published letter in *De Rebus*. He made time to quiz me on my experience at the firm. No-one was unimportant to Christof. I was at the time a bursary holder or 'researcher' at the Centre. We were encouraged to call everyone by first name. But coming from a rural village in Tzaneen I could only muster enough strength to call him Prof. Maybe Christof in his absence.

My time at Couzyn was very interesting indeed. I spent almost the entire three weeks with an energetic junior partner. Always as elegantly dressed as the attention he paid to his work. I remember going with him and a professional assistant to court. The whole route he discussed the matter and how he hoped the advocate could do better this time around. As fate would have it, the matter was settled – to my utter annoyance. I wanted to see the famous advocate at work. But this meant we could have time to spend at the coffee shop. So, the IBP presented not only a commercial opportunity, but a social or socialisation experience.

The IBP was to benefit me indirectly, as well. In 1995 I ceded my articles from a Johannesburg law firm to Couzyn, the same law firm where I did my IBP in 1992. They actually told me that they remembered me from the IBP.

A few years after starting a law firm, the IBP contacted me to reciprocate as a host firm. I remember giving an excuse of the size and age of my firm, but I eventually relented. It was such an honour to participate in the great project the IBP had become. Advocate Baloyi (IBP, 2003 group) narrated about his experience at my firm above.

Obviously, Christof was not the only person at the Centre or the IBP. There were very good and laudable other persons. For example, Carole Viljoen, also participating in this task, had for years tirelessly toiled beyond the normal calls of duty to make the IBP a success. But Christof was a very special person to all of us. I remember him hosting us at his house during my first weeks in Pretoria in 1992. It was very special. For me it was actually the first time I visited a house of a white person without looking for a 'piece job'. He also was a mentor and a pillar of support for the Students for Human Rights we established at the university, with the support of both the Centre and Lawyers for Human Rights.

After graduating, I kept in touch with him as I had remained in Pretoria. The experience of the IBP cannot be discounted from my

accomplishments. Apart from my small commercial law practice, I have been a member of the Companies Tribunal since 2012 and acting judge – on an *ad hoc basis* – since 2013. Christof would not take credit for these even when I told him about same. Always humble and never one to dwell on his own accomplishments. Perhaps he dwelled more on challenges. I saw him last in person when he had invited me to a ceremony to mark the receipt by the Centre of the 2006 UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education.

Thabo Kwinana, 1991 IBP participant⁴

In 1991 as an intermediary LLB student at Rhodes University, I came across an advertisement for participation in the IBP administered jointly by the University of Pretoria and Yale Law School. It indicated that there would be some form of stipend payment. Full of youthful exuberance, I applied. In my zeal, I must have failed to realise that the invitation was for final year LLB students. The students were to be placed for vacation training with established law firms and I chose Johannesburg. I followed it up with a telephone call and the person on the other side was Prof Heyns who politely advised me that the programme was for final year students, so I did not qualify that year and I should apply the following year.

About a week later, I received a message at the Law Library (there were no cellular phones then, so my contact details were those of the Law Library in which I moonlighted) to call Prof Heyns. He mentioned that one of the final year students had withdrawn and because I had made a follow up, he is offering the opportunity to me. In June 1991 I was placed at Moss Morris Mendelow Browdie Attorneys in Johannesburg. True to the objective of the programme, I was offered articles from 1993 by the same firm on completion of my studies. I was trained mainly in commercial law and went on to be a commercial lawyer. The programme changed my life. I went on to have a full and amazing commercial law practice in Johannesburg.

After completing my articles, I could not be admitted as an attorney. I had not passed Afrikaans at University. Being from the former Transkei we never studied Afrikaans. So I approached Prof Heyns who lobbied the Association of Law Societies of South Africa. He assisted me in writing to then Minister of Justice, the late Honourable Dullah Omar. I still have a copy of the Minister's response and I am pleased to share the following extract from it:

By direction of Mr AM Omar, MP Minister of Justice, receipt of your letter of 7 February 1995 is acknowledged. Mr Omar has noted the contents

and has requested me to confirm that the amending legislation to abolish Afrikaans and English as requirements for admission to the Attorney's profession is in the process of being drafted. It is expected to be finalised soon after which the draft legislation will be published for public comment. Only thereafter would the Minister be able to introduce the legislation. This however depends on the nature of the comments and the approval of the Bill by the Cabinet.

Needless to say the Attorneys Act was amended to exclude Afrikaans as a compulsory qualification requirement. I was duly admitted as an attorney in 1996, instead of a year earlier in 1995.

The IBP became very successful. It even included qualified lawyers placed at various law firms in the USA for a period of at least (one) year. Prof Heyns and the Yale University Programme Director Ms Cheryl DeFilippo appointed me to the short-listing committee for the exchange lawyers. Some of the shortlisted candidates I can recall are the current Competition Commissioner Mr Thembinkosi Bonakele, Ms Ursula Fikelephi (Transnet Director), Adv Malesela Phukubje, Mr Mcebese Maguga (lawyer), Ms Xolisa Beja (lawyer). The shortlisted candidates were interviewed by a panel headed by former Deputy Chief Justice, the Honourable Dikgang Moseneke.

Professor Majola also invited me to make motivational speeches to the recruits and encourage them. There would be over 100 candidates compared to just 10 or so in our days.

Writing this note about Prof Heyns, I realise that he had made such a big contribution in my life, yet I never physically met him. More importantly and something I greatly regret is that I never said thank you to him for his contribution to my career. I wonder whether Prof Majola's insistence on this essay is meant to be a Damascus call to errant and ungrateful recipients of Prof Heyns generosity like me. More than a memoir, this essay is a life lesson to me. A lesson to be grateful and not run to the sunset once one is literally okay.

Till we meet (again).....

1993 IBP participant: *Initially I thought that the mere fact that I obtained several distinctions at university meant that I would have it easy at the firm. Unfortunately I was proved wrong. Theory without practice is insufficient. I think I was really privileged to have had the opportunity to participate in the project.*

1997 IBP participant: *The IBP is a pathfinder for all participants. It serves as an in-service training academy and a marketing agency – the gains are*

enormous. Participating in the IBP presented me with an opportunity to discover the lawyer within me

1998 IBP participant: *The IBP provided the most valuable programme in my legal career yet I feel deeply indebted to the IBP, as it has deeply rooted a very refreshing perspective of the legal field, especially during this gradual period of transformation.*

2001 IBP participant: *The IBP has been one of the most inspiring experiences I have had. It opened a new door that I never knew existed. The theory of law is one thing, but practising it is a whole different ball game and for me, the best part of it.*

2004 IBP participant: *What I learnt in three weeks was more valuable than my entire university career and for this I am eternally grateful. Thank you for the opportunity of a lifetime.*

Webber Wentzel Bowens, IBP Host Firm, 1998: *The student showed keenness; arrive early, left late. Provided regular feedback on progress, was given research work which was completed impressively well, in that it was thorough and he used his initiative to find similar cases.*

MacRobert, De Villiers, Lunnon & Tindall, IBP Host Firm, 1993: *As the Supreme Court was in recess during the time of his visit, the student was unable to gain first-hand experience of trials in the Supreme Court. I have however arranged with him to contact me later in the year so that he can call at our offices at a time convenient for him to gain some experience in this field as well.*

ABSA Bank: *For our part, we were honoured to be able to participate in the project and we gained a useful insight into the level of expertise of completing law students. We would be delighted to participate again next year.*

Conclusion

All of the biggest law firms in major cities across the country eventually participated in the IBP, some of them even taking up to three interns. None of this would ever have been possible without the vision, passion and persistence of Christof Heyns. Christof never gave up on an idea once it was with him. He would wake at all hours of the night, make notes on serviettes, small pieces of scrap paper and arrive the next day at the office with so much enthusiasm, it was hard not to be caught up in his vision. His commitment to the causes he chose was unwavering

and even contagious. All these were critical ingredients to sustain a project as daunting as the IBP.

The IBP has touched so many lives and influenced the careers of those who participated. The narrations above are only but a fraction of the number of participants in the project. But yet they lay bare the varying experiences of those who took part. It was not only the interns whose lives were changed forever, but those of the host firms too. Notably some of these experiences consummated into more firm and longer relationships, when the interns were later offered articles by the host law firms.

But the legacy left by Christof, including through the IBP, would require multi-fold reams of paper if it was to be told in its full breadth and magnanimity. So this chapter represents only a modest attempt to place a milestone to mark this achievement in his life. For one cannot pretend to have the capacity to crisscross every contour of a life – although cut very cruelly short – but yet meaningfully and graciously lived, as Christof's. He will remain forever the real pioneer and champion of young lawyer empowerment, but we all know he would graciously refuse that tag.

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