The changing face of the legal profession

THE face of the legal profession in South Africa has changed dramatically since the early nineties. A significant number of blacks and women has been appointed to the Bench. The racial and gender composition of the legal profession is also changing.

In a recent report of the Legal Resources Centre of South Africa the following interesting statistics are quoted:

- The vast majority of legal practitioners are white men. An estimated 15% of private practising attorneys are black (ie African, Coloured or Asian).
- In 1994 there were 194 all-black law firms in the former Transvaal, with 257 partners. The majority were one-person practices.
- There were 9 841 attorneys of all races in South Africa in 1995.

  Of these, 1 442 – ie approximately 15% – were women (of all races). The total number of women attorneys increased by 354 (33%) from 1993 to 1995.
- 289 (37%) of the 784 women attorneys listed by the Law Society of the Transvaal in 1995 were admitted recently – between 1993 and 1995.
- 75 women and 37 blacks were listed among the 534 practising members of the Johannesburg Bar in 1995.
- In 1995 there were 17 black judges (compared with one in 1993). Thirteen were Supreme Court judges, out of a total of 153 permanent judges. Four were Constitutional Court judges out of total of 11. Three Supreme Court and two Constitutional Court judges were women.
- 35% of magistrates were black, and 17% women.
- 70% of the 422 students at the Schools for Legal Practice did not have articles. Roughly half of the enrolled students were blacks and women.

Die dames van die 5de Vloer

ELDERS in hierdie uitgawe word appèlregter Leo van den Heever aangehaal "... Toe ek ...tot die Balie toegetree het, was daar geen vrou wat landdros of aanklaer was nie, nog minder 'n Tswana of Zulu". Die Pretoriase Balie berig dat daar in Maart 1996 'n rekord inname van 45 pupille was – wat 7 dames en 9 swart applikante insluit.

Tye het inderdaad verander. Nie alleen is 'n hele aantal vrouens – wit en swart – sedert die begin van die negentigerjare as regters en waarnemende regters aangestel nie, maar ook verkry vroueadvokate toenemend senior status (vgl bl 25 en 26 van hierdie uitgawe). Hierbenewens sluit daar ook al hoe meer vrouens by die Balie aan. Tekenend hiervan is die 5de vloer van die gebou wat die kamers van die Pretoriase advokate huisves. Nie minder nie as ses praktiserende advokate op die 5de vloer is vrouens.

Wie is hierdie vrouens? En waarom het hulle by die Balie aangesluit? Ons het met vyf van hulle gesels en stel hulle graag aan ons lesers voor.

Isma Delport

Isma Delport is in Odendaalsrus, Vrystaat, gebore. Sy gaan skool aan die Odensia Laerskool en matrikuleer aan die Hoërskool Wessel Maree, Odendaalsrus. Sy begin in Julie 1992 aan die Pretoriase Balie te praktiseer nadat sy die grade BIuris en LLB aan die Universiteit van die Oranje Vrystaat behaal het.

Sy volg 'n loopbaan in die regte "aangesien ek die voordeel het om onafhanklik te praktiseer en sodoende my eie beste 'baas' is." Sy het van kleinsaf geweet dit is wat sy moet doen. Isma is nog ongetroud. Sy hou van reis, sport, forelvisvang en as sy dan nog tyd tot haar beskikking het, lees sy graag.