

Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng – visionary striving for an independent and transformed judiciary

Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng received an honorary doctorate from the NWU's Mafikeng Campus in recognition of his vision of an independent, empowered, adequately resourced and transformed judiciary.

In so doing, the NWU recognises Chief Justice Mogoeng's sterling efforts to improve and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the judicial system. In this way, he is promoting access to justice, especially for rural and indigent communities, and is saluted for his outstanding commitment to strengthening judicial independence in Africa.

The Office of the Chief Justice, as a department of state separate from the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, has been established under his leadership. The Office is responsible for judicial court administration and places the independence of the judiciary on a firm footing by embedding it in operationally.

Chief Justice Mogoeng is from Goo-Mokgatlha village in the Zeerust district. He holds the degrees of B Juris (University of Zululand), LLB (University of Natal) and LLM (UNISA). He specialised in labour law and the law of property, insurance, evidence and criminal procedure.

Under his chairpersonship, the South African Judicial Education Institute, which trains aspirant judges, is now focusing primarily on increasing the number of female candidates eligible for appointment to the Bench. This is a key aspect of his pledge to transform the judiciary.

As part of the Chief Justice's commitment to streamlining the structure of the courts so as to enhance efficiency and effectiveness, the Superior Courts Bill and the Constitution 17th Amendment Bill were passed by the National Assembly late in 2012. This legislation will rationalise the structure of the courts and declare the Constitutional Court as the Apex Court in the country, with jurisdiction in all cases and not only constitutional matters.

Under the leadership of Chief Justice Mogoeng, the Constitutional Court has delivered robust judgments against the State, without fear or favour, in highly politically sensitive cases. Examples are the matter involving Judge President Mandlakayise John Hlophe and the Premier of the Western Cape Province and others [2012] ZACC 4, and the matter of the Democratic Alliance versus the President of the Republic of South Africa [2012] ZACC 24.

The Faculty of Law at the Mafikeng Campus has been associated with Chief Justice Mogoeng since 1992 when he was a part-time senior lecturer in the faculty.

As a Judge and Judge President of the North West Province, Justice Mogoeng maintained ties with the faculty as a guest speaker, mentor and presiding judge of the NWU's Moot Court and Mock Trial competitions. He was also a regular guest of honour at the annual law conferences, dinners and graduation ceremonies.

Chief Justice Mogoeng has repeatedly emphasised the importance of good work ethics, professional conduct and conscientiousness on the part of the NWU's students. In this respect he is himself an exemplary role model.