

August 2025

Issue 104

In this issue

- Visit from the Mandela School, NYC
- Reflections
 - Two academic journeys*
 - A volunteer perspective*
- Guest slot - Beyond Mediation
- Refugee Matters
 - Refugee Rights Training*
 - Refugee Day Event, Durban*
- Mandela Day Activities
- Staff News

A visit from the Mandela School, NYC

Grateful thanks to the students from the Mandela School in New York who presented us with a donation on their visit to ProBono.Org on 4 August 2025.



REFLECTIONS

Two academic journeys

From “Human Wrongs” to Human Rights: The Legal Journey of Daphne Makombe

**By Daphne Makombe,
Legal Consultant**

As my director, Mr Mohamed Shafie Ameermia often says, “There is nothing extraordinary about human rights, it is about human wrongs.” Those words, though tinged with irony, have always reminded me that behind every human rights case lies a story of injustice, resilience, and the need for determined legal advocacy.

My legal journey began when I graduated with my LLB from the University of South Africa in 2016. In 2017, eager to put my knowledge into practice, I volunteered at the Divorce Help Desk for ProBono.Org at the Johannesburg Family Court, while simultaneously attending the School for Legal Practice. This was my first hands-on exposure to the deeply personal challenges faced by individuals navigating the justice system. The work was not only about law, it was about dignity, empathy, and finding solutions where hope seemed faint.

That same year, I joined ProBono.Org as an intern in the OCAY (One Child a Year) project, under the mentorship of the highly experienced Advocate Steenhuisen. She not only taught me the law, she taught me resilience, precision, and the art of standing firm in the face of adversity. Her guidance shaped my work ethic and sharpened my advocacy skills, especially in sensitive child protection and refugee matters.

While working, I successfully passed all my Attorney Admission exams. Soon after, I moved to Coetzee Attorneys, where I began my two-year articles of clerkship. Starting this chapter of my career at an older age, and as a non-national, came with its share of challenges, from navigating cultural nuances to proving myself in a fast-paced legal environment. But these challenges became my greatest teachers. At Coetzee Attorneys, I gained invaluable experience in litigation strategy, client consultation, drafting court pleadings, managing property transfers, and negotiating settlements. I learned that meticulous preparation, clear communication, and persistence often make the difference between success and failure in legal practice.



In 2021, I further expanded my professional capabilities by successfully completing the Conveyancing and Notary Public examinations. My attention to detail and commitment to accuracy saw me retained at Coetzee Attorneys beyond my articles. During this time, I honed my skills in property law, contractual drafting, commercial transactions, and compliance matters, an experience that would later prove indispensable.

In 2024, I returned to ProBono.Org, this time as a Legal Consultant, better equipped with both technical legal expertise and the professional maturity gained from years in practice. My work now blends my passion for access to justice with the ability to deliver practical, high-quality legal services to those who need them most.

As a Consultant at ProBono.Org, my work has played a pivotal role in ensuring undocumented children and children in need of care and protection access justice and legal identity. Between March 2024 and April 2025, our project successfully assisted 507 children, many from the poorest and most vulnerable background, to navigate complex administrative and legal barriers. Through strategic case management, mediation, collaboration with key stakeholders, and dedicated advocacy, we enabled these children to secure recognition, protection, and the opportunity to live in dignity, freedom, and equality. This impact reflects ProBono.Org's profound commitment to restoring hope and empowering communities.

In the same year, I concluded my Master's degree in Corporate Law, which deepened my understanding of corporate governance, mergers and acquisitions, financial compliance, and the regulatory frameworks that shape the business world. This advanced study enhanced my ability to navigate complex commercial matters and strengthened my analytical and advisory skills, a significant complement to my litigation and human rights work.

Recently, with the encouragement and support of many key players on my journey, I was officially admitted as an attorney. This milestone is not just a professional achievement, it is a testament to the belief that giving up is never an option, that age is never a barrier, and that one's origin should never be an excuse to abandon one's passion.

I am deeply grateful to Advocate Elsabe Steenhuisen, Mr Mohamed Shafie Ameerma, Mr Jaco Coetzee, Ms Annerie Coetzee, and the entire ProBono.Org family. Each of you has played a part in shaping my professional path, and I carry forward the lessons, encouragement, and opportunities you have given me.

As Nelson Mandela once said: "It always seems impossible until it is done." My journey stands as proof that the law is not simply about statutes and cases, it is about people, persistence, and the belief that even amidst "human wrongs," there is always room to work for what is right.



My Journey to Becoming a Community Paralegal

By Aasiyah Paulse



As the administrator of the ProBono.Org Cape Town office, I am no stranger to navigating challenges. I am often seen as the engine of the office as I book consultations for clients, juggle tight deadlines and provide administrative support to the team. However, earlier this year I was presented with a new challenge – to become a community paralegal.

I was first employed at ProBono.Org as a cleaner in 2020, so I am aware that I have come a long way since then. However, being exposed to the legal work at ProBono.Org led me to dream about being a community paralegal - especially since I am passionate about supporting the community.

After seeing the People's Legal Centre call for community paralegal applications, Masi Ncube (the Cape Town Regional Manager) encouraged me to apply for the community paralegal course. I had to send in a written application as well as a five minute video. I was incredibly nervous, but a few weeks after I applied I was pleasantly surprised to discover that I had been selected to be one of the shortlisted applicants. When I went to the interview I didn't think I would be one of the selected few because there were hundreds of applicants, but I was thrilled to hear that I was one of 30 people chosen to take part in the community paralegal course.

The course took place from February to June 2025. We covered the following modules: Labour Law, Debt, Family Law, Wills and Estates, Queer Rights, Refugee Law as well as Community and Constitution. It was a tough balance to work in the daytime and then to attend the paralegal classes every Monday and Wednesday from 17h30 – 20h30. I was used to heading home to relax and spend time with my family, but soon my evenings were filled with classes and assignments. But considering my love to learn, I started to get excited about learning more. Our previous regional manager used to joke by saying that I steal legal knowledge with my eyes and ears, and I felt like I was able to use this skill to absorb knowledge in the best way during the course. My learning experience was made even richer with the community leaders and activists who were learning by my side during the course.

The course facilitators taught us about spheres of government, filling in asylum seeker application forms, drafting letters of demand, researching, and reading case law. The course has come to an end and I will be forever grateful to the People's Law Centre for the time and effort they set aside to teach me and other comrades. They were able to educate with compassion and with a mission to uplift communities. I am proud to have completed the course successfully and look forward to the graduation ceremony near the end of the year.

Reflections on My Time at ProBono.Org

By Zachary Dangor

My time at ProBono.Org was a glimpse into a side of the legal world that I hadn't really seen before. I came in hoping to understand what law looks like in practice, especially in a space dedicated to public interest and access to justice. What I left with was a sense of direction, an appreciation for the everyday work legal professionals do, and moments that pushed me outside of my comfort zone in the best way possible.

A large part of my time was spent on administrative tasks like organising and sorting closed case files, filing new child cases into the file system, and updating case activities. At first, I saw this as sort of just background work, until I began to notice how key these systems are to making justice function. Each file represents someone's story, often a difficult one, and how it's handled has real consequences. In that sense, learning how to work with legal documentation felt more like a responsibility and less of just a random task.

One of the more intellectually challenging parts of my time was working on legal research related to inheritance law. This process taught me a lot. I learned how to sift through dense information, double check sources, and make sure what I was writing was clear and accurate. It helped me develop my research skills, especially in the legal field. This is certainly something I hope to carry with me into future studies and work.

I also drafted case memoranda. This was one of the more technical but satisfying parts of the work. It required me to summarise case details clearly and concisely. It taught me how to write in a legal context where each word and number could change the entire case.



Alongside that, I spent time calling clients to clarify details or retrieve missing information. That was definitely something I found difficult at first. Speaking to strangers about sensitive personal issues over the phone from a legal organisation meant that I needed a balance of confidence, empathy, and professionalism that I was still learning to find. My first call was certainly a rough one as I felt my voice trembling, but with each call I got better. I listened more attentively, I asked more thoughtful questions, and I spoke more clearly.

The standout moment of my time came when I was invited to attend a Family Case Flow Management meeting at the Johannesburg Magistrates Court. I got to see the inside of a courtroom and observe how legal professionals interact with one another. I watched as these professionals interacted efficiently and often under pressure, but with a shared goal. This certainly left a lasting impression on me.

Looking back, I feel grateful for the chance to learn, to be challenged and to contribute in small ways. I hope the work I did was helpful, even in the background. I also want to say a big thank you to Daphne Makombe for her support and guidance. Her attention to my learning and growth never went unnoticed.

Working at ProBono.Org strengthened my interest in law, particularly in spaces where it merges with social justice. It made the law feel less like an abstract system and more like a living process; a process that is difficult, complex, and human. I'm proud to have been part of that, even just for a short while.

GUEST SLOT

Beyond Mediation: Why Integration Is The Future of Dispute Resolution

By Therèsa Luyt

*Mediator & Restorative Justice Practitioner, Vice Chairperson: SJA,
Mentor & Mediator of the ACR Community NPC/ProBono.Org OCAYI
Social Justice Foundation ADR Children's Court Project*



As a mediator and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) practitioner, I have witnessed a major shift taking root across the legal landscape: a shift toward what many now refer to as an Integrated Approach to ADR. This is not a mere procedural adjustment or the latest trend in legal services, but a transformation in how we conceptualise, deliver, and uphold justice. The recent adoption of the Gauteng High Court Mediation Protocol is one striking example of this cognitive shift.

An Integrated Approach blends various forms of dispute resolution—such as mediation, restorative justice, arbitration, and negotiation—together with insights from social science disciplines, into a seamless, adaptive process. Rather than committing to a single method at the outset, this model allows practitioners to design hybrid processes that reflect the social, economic, and human dynamics at play in each dispute. More than ever, clients are demanding faster, cost-effective, and less adversarial solutions. And it is not only private individuals making this call. Businesses, government departments, and civil society stakeholders increasingly require processes that deliver genuine resolution, not just legal closure.

An Integrated Approach answers this need, offering flexibility, tailored interventions, and restorative engagement that traditional litigation frequently overlooks. For practitioners, embracing this approach requires a shift in professional culture. Legal professionals must move beyond outdated assumptions and rigid silos. Competence across multiple ADR methods is no longer optional—it is an essential component of the modern legal toolkit. Integration reframes ADR not as a “soft” alternative to litigation, but as a central pillar in delivering meaningful justice.

Join the Conversation: Social Justice ADR Conference 2025

Hosted by: Social Justice Association (SJA) of ADR Practitioners in collaboration with the Faculty of Law, Department of Commercial Law, University of Cape Town

Venue: UCT Campus, Cape Town (In-Person and Online Streaming Hybrid Event)

Dates: 10 & 11 September 2025

Highlights include:

- Keynote Address by **Judge Norman Davis** on the latest developments in ADR, including the Gauteng High Court Mediation Protocol.
- Panel Discussion by **SALRC Advisory Committee members:** Prof Debbie Collier-Reed, Prof David Butler, Adv Hendrik Kotze, and Dr Dellene Clark on Paper 168: Progress Made with the Mediation Act.
- Panel on the **Family Dispute Resolution Bill** (Discussion Paper 100A) featuring Prof Wasahl Domingo, Prof Leentjie de Jong, and Ms Karabo Ozah.
- International Speaker **Dr Shaphan Roberts (USA):** From Unrest to Understanding: Navigating ZOPA (Zone of Public Anger) Through a Competing Values Framework.
- **Day 2: Master classes** in Civil & Commercial ADR, Labour & Workplace Mediation, Family Law ADR, and Community Mediation.

Register now & be part of the movement

Spots are limited. Visit www.sjcon.org.za or email conference@socialjustice.co.za to secure your place and view the full programme.

Let's shape the future of dispute resolution—together.

World Refugee Day in Durban

By Pearl Khumalo, Staff Attorney

On 20 June 2025, ProBono.Org Durban attended a commemoration of World Refugee Day at the Denis Hurley Hall, Diakonia Centre. This gathering was held in collaboration with Refugee Pastoral Care, Africa Unite, Lawyers for Human Rights, Refugee Social Services, Afrika Awake, and HIAS South Africa.

The event opened with a welcome from HIAS South Africa country director Alana Pugh-Jones Baranov, who emphasised the significance of World Refugee Day and the power of refugee narratives.



This was followed by a compelling keynote address by Dr Mahoro Semege, Head of Film School at AFDA Durban, who shared an inspiring message celebrating the resilience and courage of refugees. Dr. Ashantewaa Ngidi then delivered a powerful address on African unity and pride, reinforcing the importance of solidarity and shared identity.

Attendees later participated in group discussions, facilitated by ProBono.Org, that fostered dialogue around diversity, culture, and lived experiences. The event included moving performances of music and poetry, celebrating the richness of refugee voices and stories.

Navigating Refugee Law

By Ofentse Maoto, Johannesburg Intern

On 1 August 2025, ProBono.Org's Johannesburg office, along with representatives from its Gauteng-based Community Advice Offices (CAOs) attended a refugee law training workshop. The session was generously hosted by the Pro Bono and Human Rights Department of Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr (CDH), and facilitated by Senior Associate Ms. Elgene Roos and Director Ms. Jacquie Cassette.

The workshop aimed to strengthen the capacity of ProBono.Org's staff and CAOs in navigating South African refugee law. It covered a comprehensive overview of the legal framework underpinning refugee protection in South Africa, including the processes that asylum seekers follow through the Department of Home Affairs, from arrival in the country to the granting (or rejection) of refugee status.



Participants were also introduced to available legal remedies for rejected claims, recent landmark court judgments that have shaped refugee rights, and received practical guidance on client consultations in refugee related matters.

This training comes at a critical time, as many of our refugee clients continue to face significant legal and procedural hurdles in securing protection and recognition. The session has equipped our team with invaluable knowledge and tools to improve the quality of legal assistance we provide in our refugee law clinics.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the team at CDH's Pro Bono and Human Rights Department for their dedication and for delivering such an insightful and impactful workshop. Their continued support plays a vital role in our mission to promote access to justice for indigent and marginalised communities.

Nelson Mandela Day celebrated with the elderly

By Pearl Khumalo, Staff Attorney, Durban



On 18 July 2025, ProBono.Org Durban commemorated Nelson Mandela Day by hosting a special workshop and tea for the elderly at the Sibongile Senior Citizen's Club in K Section, KwaMashu.

The event began with an informative session introducing the services offered by ProBono.Org. Our intern, Fezile Latha, led a discussion on the importance of mental health and the rights of the elderly. She emphasised the need to safeguard these rights while promoting holistic well-being—mental, emotional, physical, and financial. Attendees were encouraged to stay physically active to maintain independence, and to seek support from psychologists or social workers when facing challenges. Fezile also highlighted the importance of financial literacy and encouraged consulting with financial advisors to avoid scams.

This was followed by a presentation by our staff attorney, Pearl Khumalo, who addressed gender-based violence. She covered the definition of domestic relationships, types of abuse—with a special focus on elder abuse—and the process of applying for a protection order.

Our administrator and paralegal, Gugulethu Makhanya, shared valuable insights on the importance of having a will, encouraging the elderly to make use of ProBono.Org's free will-drafting services.

The workshop concluded with a lively question-and-answer session, after which the Durban team served tea and enjoyed meaningful engagement with the elderly guests.

Johannesburg

Staff of the Joburg office assisted Ashrafu Aid to pack food parcels at Wanderers' Stadium on Mandela Day.



STAFF NEWS

Welcome to Corinne Baron - Cape Town Intern

Corinne is an LLB graduate from the University of the Western Cape, currently enrolled for an LLM. Corinne's Master's degree thesis focuses on advocacy for the human rights of sex workers and the decriminalisation of sex work in South Africa. Corinne's legal path stems from observing the enormous impact socio-economic injustice leaves on the people in her community; injustices which are often left unchallenged and unresolved due to many people being left to navigate a very difficult system without any guidance. Through the legal internship at ProBono.Org, Corinne looks forward to working with real people with real issues and being a part of the larger solution to provide access to justice for all those living in South Africa.



ProBono.Org pays tribute to Deputy Chief Justice Mbuyiseli Madlanga on his retirement and welcomes the appointment of incoming Chief Justice Dunstan Mlambo



VISIT OUR WEBSITE AND
FACEBOOK PAGE WHERE
YOU CAN READ MORE ABOUT
OUR WORK

www.probono.org.za

JOHANNESBURG: 1st Floor West Wing
Women's Jail, 1 Kotze Street, Braamfontein 2017
telephone: 011 339 6080 **fax:** 086 512 2222

DURBAN: Unit 310, 3rd Floor, Cowey Park, 91-123
Problem Mkhize Rd, Morningside, Durban 4001
telephone; 031 301 6178 **fax:** 031 301 6941

CAPE TOWN: JDN House, 26A Shortmarket Street
Cape Town 8001
telephone: 087 470 0721 **fax:** 086 665 6740