

## Jurisprudence participates in the Feast of the Clowns

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The Feast of the Clowns has been part of the City of Tshwane's calendar since 2000. What started out as a small street festival, has now established itself as the only annual festival in the inner city combining celebration and social justice.

The feast is organised by Tshwane Leadership Foundation (TLF), an organisation created in 2003 to strengthen the unfolding inner city movement in the city of Tshwane. This year the feast took place in August and also incorporated three parallel social justice workshops on 'Homelessness', 'The Rights of Women and Children' and 'Greening the City'. Members of the Department of Jurisprudence were involved in presenting sessions during the workshops which engaged with these issues in a practical way.

In the workshop titled 'The Rights of Women and Children' first year students from the course RVD 120 performed a play called 'Four Seasons of the Law'. This play tells the story of four different women affected by the law in different ways. One is a homeless woman who asks why there isn't a law saying that no women should sleep on the street, seeing that the law is supposed to be made for the people and by the people. The second woman, from a rural background, laments the fact that she must raise her child alone and could not find recourse in the legal system when her husband was killed. The third woman is a powerful corporate lawyer who cannot see how these two women could experience the law as something negative. In her view it is due to their own devices that they are in the situations they are in. The fourth woman endeavours to bring perspective and asks a few discomfoting questions about the legal system. She refers to it as a Mona Lisa from afar, but having studied it more closely she has realised its flaws.

Hereafter Yvonne Oyieke continued with the sessions stressing the importance of including women's narratives in the law, Lorette Arendse presented an illuminating talk on the right to education and how it relates to the rights of Women and Children. The presentations were well received and there were so many questions that the organisers arranged follow-up sessions.

As part of the 'Greening the City' workshop, Louise de Bruin and Thorne Godinho presented a session that defined the meaning of 'greening the city' and interrogated the notion of green and emphasised that green is for everyone and illustrated the many benefits to green spaces in the city. They effectively linked the issue of greening the city with law by referring to sections 24 and 27 of the Constitution and highlighting how policies on commercial farming could be detrimental to the right to food and other green rights.

Their session emphasised the need for a revival in the pride for our country. They encouraged the audience to embark on small scale urban farming projects and practiced what they preached on the last day of the social justice workshops by starting a vegetable and herb garden at a nearby safe house of TLF on Lillian Ngoyi Street. Exchange students from the Netherlands assisted the members of the Department with the planting project at the safe house.

What made the event particularly meaningful was the fact that after Joel Mayephu from TLF addressed the team of planters they took a few moments to reflect on how this garden could be made sustainable. The involvement of the community in the safe house was the most important thing that came up. During Joel's address and the deliberations of the green team there were children playing about. The team then decided to involve the children in the planting process to give them a sense of ownership over the garden – resulting in lots of fun for all around.

The metaphor of the clown is a powerful image. One of the interpretations that can relate thereto is the olden day jester who would communicate social ills in front of the royal court. His position as entertainer saved him from prosecution as was the case with any other citizen opposing the monarchy. Another view on clowning is that of Augusto Boal's clown, who is the facilitator and interpreter in legislative theatre. In this role the clown steps in between the system and the community (audience) to explain exactly what is going on to enable participation from the community.

The clowning around of the members of the Department of Jurisprudence at the TLF Feast of the Clowns is consistent with the values, vision and mission the Department. The Department is committed to stressing the importance of the impact of law on society and to encourage students and lecturers to engage with the community that the legal system is

designed to serve and protect. The social justice workshops provided the ideal opportunity to embed community involvement in teaching and research and brought the participants in contact with the important narratives that are often overlooked or ignored in the legal system.



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*Image source of clown: City of Tshwane webpage*

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