

Honouring Advocate Paul Pretorius for a lifetime of justice and integrity

Rhodes University will confer an honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD) (*honoris causa*) upon Advocate Paul Pretorius, SC, in recognition of his lifelong dedication to human rights, justice, and social impact in South Africa. A distinguished legal mind, his career has been marked by courage, leadership, and an unwavering commitment to fairness. His contributions, particularly as Evidence Leader for the State Capture Commission, have played a crucial role in shaping South Africa's legal and democratic landscape.

Born in 1949, Advocate Paul Pretorius has a distinguished history of activism and leadership. From an early age, he demonstrated academic excellence, matriculating as dux of Marist Brothers' College in Durban. His leadership journey began during his time at the University of Natal, where he served as President of the Students' Representative Council (SRC) and later led the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS).

His commitment to justice led to significant personal sacrifices. In the 1970s, he was banned under apartheid-era security laws due to his activism. Despite facing persecution, he remained steadfast in his dedication to justice and human rights.

Advocate Pretorius pursued his BA and LLB degrees, initially at the University of Natal and later completing his LLB at the University of South Africa (UNISA) while working and while still under his banning order. He was admitted to the Natal Bar in 1977 and later moved to the Johannesburg Bar, where he has practised as an advocate for decades.

Recognised for his legal expertise, he was appointed Senior Counsel (SC) in 1994. His career has spanned critical roles in arbitration, mediation, and advocacy, including working with the Legal Resources Centre and serving as an acting judge in the High Court and Labour Court.

A testament to his excellence, he holds a United States Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service Certificate of Recognition (1991) and has contributed significantly to legal discourse in South Africa.

Throughout his career, Advocate Pretorius has championed justice, social inclusion, and legal integrity. His work at the Legal Resources Centre was instrumental in providing legal representation to those marginalised under Apartheid.

In modern South Africa, his leadership in the State Capture Commission (2018–2022) was pivotal in uncovering systemic corruption and reinforcing the rule of law. His fearless commitment to truth and accountability, despite political pressures, has left a lasting impact on the country's democratic institutions.

Beyond his legal practice, he has played a vital role in community and labour dispute resolution, serving as an arbitrator and mediator under organisations such as IMSSA, ADRASA, TOKISO and AFSA.

Advocate Pretorius has been deeply involved in shaping dispute resolution frameworks. He has contributed to South Africa's Law Commission working group on Arbitration and Alternate Dispute Resolution and has been a Management Committee Member of the Arbitration Foundation of South Africa (AFSA). He was the first Chairperson of IMSSA.

Additionally, he has served as a Board Trustee of the Community Dispute Resolution Trust (CDRT) and ADRASA, further strengthening legal access and justice mechanisms for South African communities.

His expertise extends to legal education and thought leadership. He is the editor of *Dispute Resolution* (published by Juta in 1993) and has authored several papers on labour law, dispute resolution, mediation, and arbitration.

He has also delivered seminars and lectures locally and internationally, shaping the discourse on legal ethics, arbitration, and justice in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Anecdotes of resilience, leadership, and unwavering commitment to justice define Advocate Pretorius's career. Despite facing Apartheid-era persecution, bans, and threats, he remained steadfast in his pursuit of legal advocacy.

Colleagues and legal scholars commend his intellectual rigour, ethical integrity, and ability to navigate complex legal battles with fairness. His leadership at the State Capture Commission demonstrated his courage in uncovering corruption and his commitment to upholding South Africa's constitutional democracy.

With a career spanning decades of advocacy, leadership, and public service, Advocate Paul Pretorius, SC, embodies the principles of justice, integrity, and democracy. His legacy continues to shape South Africa's legal landscape, and his contributions to human rights and governance are immeasurable.

Rhodes University is honoured to recognise his extraordinary impact with the award of an honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD) degree at its graduation award ceremony on 2 April 2025 at 09:30, where Advocate Pretorius will deliver an address reflecting on his journey, the principles of justice, and the importance of ethical leadership in upholding democracy.