

# PRO BONO & HUMAN RIGHTS ALERT

*SECTION27 is a public interest law centre that seeks to achieve substantive equality and social justice in South Africa.*

## CDH HOSTS SECTION27'S ANNUAL CORPORATE COCKTAIL EVENT

It is often said that the ultimate price of greatness is responsibility, and one could argue that this also applies to corporations and organisations. The best corporations don't walk away from their social responsibilities: they embrace them and invest in local communities by, amongst other things, collaborating with and supporting organisations and NGOs whose essential service to our society ensure that authorities act in the public's best interests. This is one of the many reasons why hosting the SECTION27 Annual Fundraising Cocktail Evening which took place at our Sandton office on 27 June was important.

For the benefit of those who may not know, SECTION27 is a public interest law centre that seeks to achieve substantive equality and social justice in South Africa. Guided by the principles and values in the Constitution, SECTION27 uses law, advocacy, legal literacy, research and community mobilisation to achieve access to healthcare services and basic education – it aims to achieve structural change and accountability to ensure the dignity and equality of everyone.

The evening comprised of a panel discussion moderated by SECTION27 board member as well as TV and radio presenter, author, activist, production company owner and columnist Redi Tlhabi. The panellists gave insightful accounts of the significant work that SECTION27 does to advance, in particular, the right to access to quality education, health care services, equality and human dignity. It was humbling to get a first-hand account of the challenging but incredible work that SECTION27 does in advancing the fundamental human rights of vulnerable members of our society many of whom live in the forgotten parts of South Africa.

One of the panellists, in articulating the nature of the work SECTION27 does spoke about the case they brought on behalf of the late Michael Komape's family and their ground-breaking work in fighting to ensure adequate sanitation at schools in the Limpopo province. On 20 January 2014, Michael Komape stepped out of his Grade 1 classroom to use the outside pit toilet at Mahlodumela Primary School, near Polokwane, Limpopo. His body was later found in the pit after he fell into the dilapidated, collapsed school toilet. He suffocated and drowned in other humans' waste with all his dignity stripped. Michael was only five-years-old. SECTION27's support for the Komape family encapsulates the essence of the invaluable assistance it provides to countless poor and marginalised people.

SECTION27 Executive Director, Umunyana Rugege, spoke on the difficulties faced by civil society organisations in securing funding and explained how the lack of funding from South African corporations hinders the NGO sector's development and that it was both a pity and a shame that civil society organisations have to rely on foreign funding in advancing human rights in the country.

*A special thank you to the firm's CEO, Brent Williams, for his ongoing commitment to supporting SECTION27.*

## CDH HOSTS SECTION27'S ANNUAL CORPORATE COCKTAIL EVENT...continued

NGOs play a vital role in ensuring democracy and the rule of law and are the voice of the voiceless. They also provide an important check against the abuse of governmental power. It is therefore important that firms like ours not only support civil society's incredible efforts in advancing human rights but are also seen to be doing so. This is another of the many reasons why hosting this event was important. After all, despite our corporate nature firms like CDH will always be measured by their contribution to promoting the fundamental rights of our society's most vulnerable members. A special thank you to the firm's CEO, Brent Williams, for his ongoing commitment to supporting SECTION27, and for his inspiring opening remarks in which he reminded us that we all bear a collective responsibility to ensure social justice. His words set the tone for the evening. Thank you also to all those who attended and supported this event.

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Gift Xaba



*Just Grace is an NGO committed to meaningful, long-lasting and sustainable change and upliftment in the Langa community in Cape Town.*

## YOUTH EMPOWERING YOUTH – OUR VISIT TO JUST GRACE

In honour of youth month, the Cape Town Pro Bono & Human Rights Practice (Pro Bono Practice) partnered with Just Grace to roll out two meaningful initiatives aimed at supporting and empowering the youth.

Just Grace is an NGO committed to meaningful, long-lasting and sustainable change and upliftment in the Langa community in Cape Town. Its programmes are designed to uplift members of the Langa community so that they are empowered to be active citizens in their community. Just Grace engages in people-centred community empowerment initiatives that contribute to meaningful and sustainable change in Langa and envisions Langa as a community where residents feel safe and have access to quality education and meaningful employment.

Just Grace has a special focus on supporting and empowering the youth of Langa. It currently supports between 200 to 250 primary and secondary school students and their families by providing access to social work, legal and socio-economic support. During June 2019, Just Grace ran its holiday club programme, creating a safe, stimulating and positive space for the students to spend their school vacation.

It was during this holiday club programme that the Pro Bono Practice arranged for ten young lawyers from CDH to visit Just Grace to run a workshop themed "Youth Empowering Youth". The CDHers shared some of the challenges they faced in their journeys to becoming successful young lawyers and the tools they used in overcoming these challenges. The students were invited to share their own challenges, and together with our young lawyers created empowerment posters that shared messages of hope, positivity and encouragement. The posters remain on display at Just Grace as a motivational reminder to the students.

In the same week and in collaboration with the CSR team and the first year CAs, the Pro Bono Practice also arranged a Friday afternoon cooking session with the Just Grace students. The CSR team, supported by the first years CAs, ran a very successful Winter Drive in which the Cape Town office donated a substantial amount of food and soft drinks to Just Grace. The Pro Bono Practice and some first-year CAs delivered the food collected under the Drive to Just Grace and helped the Just Grace team prepare and serve some of the food collected for the students. The session ended with the students sharing with us the valuable lessons they'd learned from the two youth month events and how inspired and excited they were to be working with and to be supported by a group of young lawyers.

The Pro Bono Practice will continue to collaborate with Just Grace on various youth empowerment and community upliftment initiatives in which members of the Cape Town office can get involved.

**Brigitta Mangale**





Youth Empowering Youth workshop



Winter Drive donation delivery and cooking session



Received from Just Grace

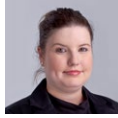
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