

SVRI Forum 2009

Sexual violence is a global issue that requires coordinated evidence-based responses

Keynote Speaker: Adv. Thoko Majokweni

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<http://www.npa.gov.za>

Adv Thoko Majokweni is a female, married with two daughters. She matriculated in 1979 and completed B Juris Degree in 1985 at the University of Transkei as well as her LLB Degree in February of 1987. Adv Majokweni has appeared on behalf of the state in criminal matters in the Umtata Magistrates Court, regional division and the High Court throughout Transkei, appeared before and arguing appeals in the High Court and Supreme Court of Appeal, appeared for and argued on behalf of the state in Review Proceedings. In respect of her employment history she has occupied the following ranks within the Department of Justice: Legal Assistant and Secretary to the Legal Board (1984); Magistrate (1985 – 1986); State Advocate (1987 – 1993); Senior State Advocate (1993 – 1996); Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions (1996 – 1999) and was the first African female to be appointed to this position (Deputy Attorney-General).

She was then appointed by the President of South Africa, as the first female, Special Director of Public Prosecutions on the 1st of October 1999 in the Office of the National Director of Public Prosecutions. She was appointed to set up and head a unit that would specialise in violent, sexual and other offences against women and children. She set up and heads the directorate on violence against women and children known as the Sexual Offences and Community Affairs (SOCA) Unit. She is at the forefront of setting up Sexual Offences Courts in all the provinces, the institutionalisation of prosecutor led investigations in cases of violence against women and children as well as the coordination of services for an efficient and responsive Criminal Justice Systems in Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Crimes. She has led the design and development of a one-stop service model for focused and efficient rape management called the Thuthuzela Care Centre. This is coupled with a specialist Sexual Offences Court and the combination results in the most efficient and holistic response system in the country. This Model has improved the conviction rate from an average of 42% to an average of 85%. It has improved the turn around time to an impressive average of 8 months from the date of reporting the case. This new management style has reduced secondary victimisation to minimum levels and has dealt a serious blow to corruption through the theft and sale of dockets. There are currently 9 centres and the roll out process continues to have no less than 80 centres by the end of 2010.

Adv. Majokweni has designed and ensures the production of a regular Sexual Offences Bulletin that serves as a desk reference and accessible training tool for prosecutors in the prosecution of sexual offences. By popular demand this is now being circulated to institutions of higher learning, magistrates and other service providers in the field. In the quest for increased reporting of sexual abuse among children at school she has been instrumental in the development of an industrial theatre play for primary schools in South Africa captioned "Speak Out" together with pocket sized child friendly and age appropriate booklets that ensures that the lessons from the play acting remain indelibly etched in the children's minds. This play has been seen by children in excess of 240 000 and in over 300 schools in South Africa. She is the Chairperson of an interdepartmental team of experts who are currently sculpting a National Interdepartmental Anti Rape Strategy for the effective prevention, efficient response and successful support of victims and survivors of rape and other sexual offences of the South African Cabinet Committees. She has championed and developed a corps of maintenance prosecutors to ensure the right of access of children and other deserving persons to maintenance or child support across the country. She has also facilitated the diversion of over 160 000 child offenders away from the criminal justice system and into rehabilitative programmes across the country.

She has won two prestigious awards for the efficient management of sexual offences in the Thuthuzela Model. The first is the Impumelelo Gold Award for service delivery innovation and the second is the Standard Bank CPSI Award run in collaboration with the Department of Public Service Administration. These awards bear testimony to the pioneering work that she has successfully undertaken as ambassador for innovation in the public service.

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