

BIOGRAPHY OF ZAKIRA MOHAMED

My name is Zakira Mohamed. I am an Admitted Attorney and Conveyancer with 18 years of Post admission experience. I currently hold the position of Magistrate with the Department of Justice. I have a B Proc. and an LLB Post Graduate Degree obtained from the University of the Western Cape. In addition to this, I have various diplomas in diverse areas of law including that of Comparative Human Rights, Commercial Law and International Business Law obtained via the Howard University (Washington DC), a certificate in Notarial and Conveyancing Practice and Administrative Law.

Having seen the sought requirements for the Commissioner for Children in the Western Cape post, I wish to outline my extensive experience and successful track record as an Admitted Attorney, Conveyancer and Magistrate in the Children`s Court, Criminal Court and Family Court. I believe I possess the skills, qualifications and vital experience necessary to make a very significant contribution to this role.

I have 19 years progressive experience in various legal roles. These include the position of Candidate Attorney, Regional Court Professional Assistant and Principal Attorney, Attorney and Conveyancer in private practice as well as Legal Advisor at the South African Revenue Service. Whilst serving my articles of clerkship, I dealt with family law and divorce matters on a daily basis. Most matters involved issues of custody and access. This impressed on me the significance of the rights of children which are paramount and that the High Court in particular as the upper guardian of all children has the duty to intervene and decide what would be in the best interest of the child. It further highlighted the devastating impact which divorce had on not only the home and living conditions of each spouse but also the rights of the minor children. As a Regional Court Professional Assistant, I dealt exclusively with sexual offences matters involving child complainants on a daily basis. It was alarming that the perpetrators were mostly known to the victims and in most instances held a position of trust either within the family unit or within the immediate environment. The statistics and the prevalence of this kind of offence has increased tremendously to the extent that it has become a daily occurrence. It bares testimony to the fact that urgent measures and interventions are required in order to address these issues and to educate the parents as well as the children on the potential dangers and consequences of misplaced trust.

As a Principal Attorney, I have managed a staff compliment of approximately forty people. My daily routine involved the management of all staff, mentoring, training and recruitment. Demonstrating strong leadership capabilities, I coached and mentored staff. In addition to this, I was required to complete monthly reports for statistics purposes. I have further completed various management courses. Whilst employed at SARS as a Legal Advisor, my management skills proved useful and resulted in me being awarded with an Amakwezi

Achievement Award for innovation in respect of a management system which I had devised and implemented in the legal section.

Currently, I hold the position of Magistrate where I have gained significant experience adjudicating over a range of matters, including Criminal Court, Family Court and Children's Court matters. I have adjudicated over a number of high profile cases which appeared in the online and print media. I have further dealt extensively with Children's Court Applications in respect of Foster Care placements, adoptions and all other forms of relief dealt with in the Act. Each facet of my career thus far has centred on the rights of women and children.

Leveraging my robust academic background and extensive experience, I successfully apply advanced analytical skills in drafting judgements whilst maintaining impartiality throughout the proceedings. In addition to this, I observe the strict timelines associated with Appeals and Reviews whilst keeping accurate record of same. To ensure the efficient proceedings of all court matters, prevent delay and denial of legal rights, I expertly manage and coordinate my caseloads to sustain the adjudication of all cases. Additionally, I stringently observe and adhere to all regulations and process and critically evaluate all judicial work to ensure compliance with quality assurance standards.

I am greatly attracted by the role of Western Cape Commissioner for Children and I am eager to advance my career in a challenging and essential role such as this. My key qualities include prioritising and effectively managing multiple assignments. Supported by advanced qualifications, I assimilate new ideas and concepts with ease while demonstrating a logical and analytical approach to solving complex problems and issues. I adopt a composed, diplomatic and professional approach in high-pressured environments and have the necessary interest and passion for the rights of children to make a significant contribution to this role.

In the immortal word of our Former President, Mr Nelson Mandela:

`` There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than in the way in which it treats its children ``

I trust that this position will breathe life into his dream and legacy.