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**THREE YOUNG SOUTH AFRICAN ATTORNEYS HEAD FOR NEW YORK TO
JOIN MAJOR COMMERCIAL FIRMS FOR ONE-YEAR EXCHANGE
PROGRAMME**

Three young South African attorneys are leaving for New York within the next few weeks to hone their legal skills at top commercial law firms for a year. Johannesburg attorneys Zanele Moloj, Ndumiso Dyantyi and Amit Parekh were selected earlier this year to participate in the South African Visiting Lawyer Programme (SAVLP), which is presented annually by the Law Society of South Africa and the Cyrus Vance Center for International Justice at the New York Bar.

All three attorneys were selected for the programme after a rigorous and competitive selection process. Hard work, determination and continuing education have been hallmarks of the careers which have brought them to their current positions at major Sandton commercial law firms where Zanele is one of the few black women attorneys in the specialist area of project finance, and Ndumiso and Amit both focus on commercial law.

Zanele worked as a teller at a department store in Johannesburg during her holidays to contribute towards her education; Ndumiso worked as a petrol attendant in Queenstown in the Eastern Cape. Amit volunteered at a Pretoria restaurant. Besides their determination and drive, the three young attorneys stress education, a focus on social responsibility and a need to promote transformation and change.

Zanele wants to see the demographic changing in her field of law: 'There are very few black role models in the project finance field, let alone black women. Currently, I am the only black woman senior associate in the Project Finance and Infrastructure team at my firm,' she says. Finalising her dissertation for her LLM in corporate law before she leaves for the US at the end of this year, Zanele notes: 'I seek to embrace challenges proactively not only to empower myself, but the community as a whole. I believe one must always be the change they want to see.' As part of her firm's *pro bono* initiative, she has advised and assisted small, start-up companies in Soweto to start and run their businesses.

Ndumiso, who is an associate at his firm and has focused on major commercial transactions and litigation on behalf of listed companies, is doing a Postgraduate

Certificate in Advanced Company Law. He attributes his achievements to a solid education and very strong role models in the legal profession in the Eastern Cape. He is so convinced about the importance of education, that he is currently sponsoring a high school learner from his Eastern Cape village to attend his former high school in Queenstown. He hopes to assist her to further her studies and that she, in turn, will help someone else with their education. 'It's all about giving back,' he says.

As a second-year associate in the corporate department of his firm, Amit has focused on general commercial and corporate tax matters. Having graduated with 27 distinctions in his law degree, he now also lectures final-year law students in human rights law and legal philosophy. He carries his commitment to socio-economic rights into his everyday legal work, and successfully coordinated the Sonke Gender Justice Network's case against Julius Malema in which the Equality Court found Mr Malema guilty of hate speech and harassment regarding his comments about rape survivors. His firm did the matter *pro bono* (for free). 'Working in such cases allows me, through my clients, to lobby the government for changes in the legislation dealing with sexual violence against women and children. It also reminds politicians that they are socially and legally accountable for comments that may run contrary to the spirit of our Constitution,' he says.

Zanele, Ndumiso and Amit say they are looking forward to joining their New York colleagues at the firms and to tackling the challenges head-on. Ndumiso joins Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom in mid-September and Amit will be at Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton from October. In December Zanele leaves to join Orrick. Although they all look forward to what they will learn, Amit says: 'We will also be ambassadors for our country and our profession. New York is a fertile ground for multiculturalism, and as South Africans we have learnt to embrace each other's differences. We will play a positive role.'

'The LSSA wishes Zanele, Ndumiso and Amit well. We will keep touch with them throughout their year abroad and hope to receive regular updates on how they are doing. We look forward to welcoming them back and to their input on how to improve and expand the Programme,' say LSSA Co-Chairpersons Nano Matlala and Praveen Sham.

More about the South African Visiting Lawyer Programme

The South African Visiting Lawyer Programme offers corporate lawyers from disadvantaged backgrounds in South Africa the opportunity to work at law firms and corporate legal departments in New York City for one-year terms. Programme participants enhance their corporate and international commercial practice skills while in New York. As at mid-2011 37 South African lawyers had participated in the Visiting Lawyers Programme since its inception in 2001. Thirteen New York law firms and the legal departments of six financial institutions have hosted South African lawyers in New York.

Information about the application process is made available by the Vance Center and the Law Society of South Africa (LSSA) in January or February of each year for placements that begin in the following year. The LSSA coordinates the applications, shortlists the candidates and arranges the interviews for short-listed candidates. The interviewing panel includes nominees by the LSSA, the Vance Center and the New York Bar and participants are selected on basis of a rigorous and competitive process.

On returning to South Africa, alumni of the SAVLP have returned to their firms or have assumed high positions in government and financial institutions in South Africa. They have also become active in their communities by, for example, mentoring black high school students seeking to become lawyers and by taking on *pro bono* assignments individually or through the SAVLP Alumni Association.



Johannesburg attorneys Zanele Moloji, Ndumiso Dyantyi and Amit Parekh have been selected to work at top New York law firms for a year through the South African Visiting Lawyer Programme presented jointly by the Law Society of South Africa and the Cyrus Vance Center for International Justice at the New York Bar.

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE CO-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA, PRAVEEN SHAM AND NANO MATLALA

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Editor's note:

The Law Society of South Africa is a member of the SADC Lawyers Association.

The Law Society of South Africa brings together its six constituent members – the Cape Law Society, the KwaZulu-Natal Law Society, the Law Society of the Free State, the Law Society of the Northern Provinces, the Black Lawyers Association and the National Association of Democratic Lawyers – in representing South Africa's 20 000 attorneys and 5 000 candidate attorneys.

In Afrikaans items, please refer to the 'Prokureursorde van Suid-Afrika'.