



PROF. CHRISTOF HEYNS

10 January 1959 to 28 March 2021

We thank him for his years of contributions to the Moot Society. He has touched many lives and will be missed greatly.

Prof. Christof Heyns was a giant in law, academia and his personal life. His enormous impact runs deep in the moot society's veins. Professor Heyns was instrumental in the creation and sustained success of Landmark events, including the African Human Rights Moot Court Competition; the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition; and the National Schools Moot Competition. Most recently, Professor Heyns contributed fundamentally to the Monroe E. Price Media Law Moot through his work on General Comment 37 and intimate support of the UP Team. Notably, Professor Heyns championed the national upliftment and involvement in the largest moot court competition: the Philip C. Jessup Moot. This moot held a special place in his heart with all of UP's Jessup alumni owing him a debt of gratitude for his personal role in their individual journeys.

His loss is felt by many mooters who share their grief and gratitude in their own words.

KEKETSO KGOMOSOTHO

I first met Christof in 2009 when I competed in the Schools Moot Court Competition. He was the Dean of the Law Faculty then, and I shook his hand in front of a camera at some point. But we didn't have a working relationship until much later in my undergrad, when moot brought us together once again. We started working together to consciously develop and coordinate the University's Jessup effort - another one of his big ideas. His gift was the ability to dream up these really big and ambitious ideas that had the potential to touch so many lives, and plant the seeds to bring them to life. But, as you know, Christof has birthed moots way before then - the African Human Rights, the Mandela World Moot, the SA National Moot and more recently a number of pilot schools moots in various African jurisdictions.

Prof Heyns fundamentally believed that human rights offer the best prospect of maintaining world peace, and achieving global justice. He knew more than many that the continuation of human rights as the global normative framework will depend on whether future generations will see it as a useful paradigm, and in many ways, moot was an important part of that mission. He invested in moots as a way to capture the imagination of the next generation, and excite them about the future of human rights and global justice. Christof used moots to plant seeds that would and have continued to be revolutionary in terms of its impact. For Prof Heyns moot can bring new life to the human rights tree in a way that will enable it to grow into a renewed and resilient force for good. His commitment to the development of students remains unmatched. He often opened his office, his home and his wallet for the benefit of moots.

He had a selfless and kind spirit. He was deeply committed to values of anti-racism, equality and transformation. On a more personal level, I experienced Christof as a deeply compassionate, authentic, accessible and generous person. For me, Christof's death is a painful and tragic experience for which there is no consolation. However, in the days following his death, I am comforted to read all about all the ways Christof has touched people's lives across the globe. Without descending too much into religious territory, his life touched so many of us for the better. To those grieving his death, may the pain we feel now be a confirmation of the impact he had on our lives. May we find comfort, and, in time, healing, in knowing that Christof spent his life enriching and bettering other people's lives.

SOHÊLA SURAJPAL

Only when I read his obituary did I fully realise how many of the experiences that shaped me I owed to Prof Heyns. He was behind everything from my first international moot and the journal I was first published in, to my LLM programme and my first paycheck. His legacy will be more than his achievements. It will be the many many young lives like mine that he changed completely. I will always be grateful.

THOMAS WHITE

Let's get one thing straight. There is no "UP moot" without Christof Heyns. From Kovesies, right up to the Jessup, Prof Heyns put UP moot on the map - and no law school has been able to dislodge us. But for all his achievements, Heyns didn't have a whiff of self-importance about him, which is far more than I can say for the mooters he trained and supported!

Prof Heyns built UP moot from the ground up. I owe him a huge personal debt for that labour.

KYLE CLOETE

Professor Heyns is someone I look up to greatly. His passion and dedication, along with his sincere kindness when speaking about anything from AI or the beard he was growing out during his holiday made me feel simultaneously inspired and comfortable. It is only fitting that he was the eminent voice on dignity and integrity as no greater example of humanity can be found.

KIRANTEBA

As much as Professor Heyns supported the entire moot cosmos I felt his support personally too. I recall that during my first encounter with Prof I was intimidated by the wealth of his knowledge but at the same time welcomed by the warmth of his tone. Prof Heyns inspired my adventure into international law and I am forever thankful of his part in my life.

SIMON MATEUS

Having known Prof Heyns at multiple different levels, he meant various things to me. He was my benefactor, mentor, professor, moot guardian, boss and at times a friend and father figure. Our first encounter was during the 2015 National Schools Moot Court Competition, and since then, I have not met anyone as equally impressive, passionate, inventive, driven and well grounded as Prof Heyns. While working as his Researcher, I used to think of him as 'a mine with endless ideas'. He always had a research programme we could work on, an idea how we could improve the human rights systems of the world, or better yet, how we could resolve all issues in the world with a model of the National Schools Moot, hence we started expanding the moot in other national jurisdictions under the umbrella of the Global Campus of Human Rights.

LOURENS GROVE

Christof Heyns was the father of mooting at the University of Pretoria, but his impact on the mooting world stretched far further: he played a pivotal role in conceptualizing, founding and promoting several distinguished international moot court competitions. These include the All-Africa Human Rights Moot Competition (started in 1992), the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Competition (started in 2009) and the South African National Schools Moot Competition – where with teams from outside South Africa competing in later years as well (started in 2011).

At the University of Pretoria, Prof Heyns promoted and supported the development of the mooting culture that we have at present, infused by core values of humanity and excellence that he personified. He supported the founding of the UP Moot Society, which not only served to train future coaches and mooters, but also to assist with the arrangement, hosting and running of moot court competitions and the training of scholars, school teachers or others new to mooting.

Under his leadership, the faculty won several national, regional and international mooting competitions, with teams and mooters often winning additional awards for their writing and oral skills.

Professor Heyns was a mentor, an inspiration, a supporter, a giant. Generations of law students benefitted from the tradition that he has established, and his influence will resonate with many more over the years to come – not only in the moot court, but especially where those take their skills outside of the moot court to make the world a better place. It was an honour to know him, learn from him and work with him, and we will miss him sorely."

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to one of the key architects of the UP Moot Society. The loss is felt greatly by all and we extend our thoughts and prayers to his friends and family left behind. While we say farewell, Professor Heyns' impact throughout the society will live on forever.