

## HONORARY GRADUATE

### JULIAN BROWDE

Julian Browde, known to all as Jules, was born on 21 May 1919. He was educated at King Edward VII School, Johannesburg, and graduated BA from this university in 1939. When the Second World War broke out, he joined the South African Artillery, and during service in East and North Africa, Madagascar and Italy rose from the rank of gunner to being a Forward Observation Officer in the Italian campaign. After the war, he returned to Wits to study law, obtaining the degree of LLB in 1947.

Browde's classmate, Nelson Mandela, became a lifelong friend. In both professional commitment and in personal sympathy, Browde was never far from Mandelas's ideals. When Mandela's political associate and partner-to-be, Oliver Tambo, passed his law examinations, it was Browde he selected to move the application for his admission as an attorney. When the justly famous law firm of Mandela & Tambo was established, the practice was evicted from its premises and its partners were threatened with having their location and operations confined to unsuitable premises in the townships. The young advocate Browde argued their case, and won it, with the result that the attorneys were able to continue to practise in the city.

Browde's practice at the Bar grew apace, and in 1969 he was appointed a Senior Counsel. He appeared as counsel in many significant cases of a political nature, among which were *The State v Adams*, which played an important role in the ultimate repeal of the iniquitous Group Areas Act, and the celebrated *Magmoed* case, which was generally referred to as the *Trojan Horse* case, a courageous but abortive attempt to bring to book police in the western Cape who had shot at children in the streets of Athlone, killing some and wounding others.

Jules Browde was chairman of the Johannesburg Bar Council in 1983 and 1985, and he has been an acting judge on several occasions. He has been a member of the Board of the Faculty of Law of this university since 1988. He has also given valuable service to the University when called upon. For example, he chaired a commission of inquiry, together with George Bizos and Edwin Cameron, into violence on the campus. And recently he chaired the Independent Truth Commission run by the Faculty of Health Sciences. His report, in the writing of which he was assisted by Professor P Makgoba and Dr E Jassat, is a searing indictment of the discriminatory practices against black students in the period from 1940 to 1990. In 1990 he was appointed a judge of the Court of Appeal of Lesotho and in 1992 a judge of the Court of Appeal of Swaziland. During 1995, he chaired a presidential commission to investigate corruption in the public service. More recently, it was his appointment by then President Mandela to investigate the South African Rugby Football Union became a scene of battle in the courts.

But Jules Browde has never been a lawyer alone: he is a bold-hearted campaigner against injustice, and has remained deeply committed to securing basic equity for all South Africans. When Lawyers for Human Rights was established in 1980, Browde was a founder member of the council, and when its first chairman, Justice Johann Kriegler, was appointed to the Bench

in 1984, Browde became national chairman, a position he held for ten years. In the mid-1980s, Browde was asked to chair the National Convention Movement, and it was in this capacity that he and his wife undertook one of the earliest trips to Lusaka to meet with ANC leaders. A warm-hearted reunion with Tambo followed. Browde's stature and presence, as well as his practical commitment to securing human rights through the legal system, inevitably played a part in the ultimately crucial decision by the ANC to endorse the path of constitutionalism and human rights for South Africa.

The Chief Justice, Ismail Mahomed, himself a graduate of this university, described Browde thus:

'A successful junior with energy and drive, a distinguished Silk with both instinctive and attractively cultivated qualities of leadership, a natural trial lawyer..., a lawyers' lawyer with unpretentious scholarship and learning, an arguer with eloquence and persuasion, an arbitrator with an unfailing sense of equity, a judge of appeal in neighbouring countries with inexhaustible patience and mature judgement, and a human rights lawyer with unashamed passion and commitment.'

It is this passion and commitment from Browde and other distinguished legal graduates of Wits, through days of difficulties and disfavour, that helped ensure the maintenance of legal values in South Africa. As Wits honours him, it honours also those values, and the courage and commitment of those who like him him, secured their embodiment in the new Constitution. It is with great pride and pleasure that the University confers upon Julian Browde the degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*.