

UNIVERSITY GOLD MEDAL: CAROLE HÉLÈNE LEWIS

The Gold Medal was instituted by the Council of the University to honour persons of outstanding distinction who have been important to the life of Wits University. It is difficult to think of a candidate more worthy of this award than Justice Carole Lewis, who contributed richly to the life of the University while she was on its academic staff and who has continued to serve the institution during her subsequent and most distinguished judicial career.

Carole Hélène Lewis (née Dyzenhaus) was born in Johannesburg on 26 October 1953. She matriculated at Hyde Park High School before entering Wits as a student. She graduated with a BA in 1973 and an LLB *cum laude* in 1975. She received the Society of Advocates Prize for winning the Moot competition in the final year of her LLB. She served a two-year period of articles and was admitted as an attorney in 1978, but the pull of the academy was strong and she joined the Wits School of Law as a Lecturer in that same year. She was awarded an LLM *cum laude* in 1985.

As a young academic Carole Lewis published extensively in the laws of contract, property, unjustified enrichment and mining. She was soon recognised for the excellence of her scholarship, particularly in contract law, and for her punctilious supervision. She was a brilliant teacher who won the Law Students' Council award for Best Lecturer in 1982, 1989 and 1992. She was also a gifted administrator who served on the Governing Body of the School of Law and chaired key committees at various stages, including the Admissions Committee, the Library Committee and the Higher Degrees Committee. Carole Lewis was elected as Senate Member on Council for five years in 1995 and re-elected two years later to the newly constituted Council for a further five-year term. She was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1981, to Associate Professor in 1987 and became a full Professor the following year. She headed the School of Law from 1989 to 1990 and served as Dean of the Faculty of Law for five years, from 1993 to 1998.

During this period she was the Editor-in-Chief of a law journal founded and edited by the Wits School of Law, the *Annual Survey of South African Law*, and was also Chair of the Editorial Board of the journal. She performed both roles superbly for nine years, from 1990 to 1998. In spite of the heavy administrative burden she carried at the time, she also managed to continue writing the *Annual Survey* contribution on 'General Principles of Contract' throughout the 1990s.

Throughout her time at Wits as a law student and academic, Carole Lewis was active in anti-apartheid organisations. She joined the Black Sash in 1970 and served on its Justice Committee from 1980 to 1982. When Lawyers for Human Rights was founded in 1979, she signed up in the same year. She was a supportive Dean to the Centre for Applied Legal Studies as it engaged in legal struggles against apartheid and became deeply involved in negotiations around the new Constitution. She advised the Democratic Party in those same negotiations, and was appointed by the new Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Professor Kader Asmal, to evaluate legal research on the reform of Water Law in South Africa.

The South African judiciary was in need of excellent women candidates after 1994, and it was almost inevitable that someone of her stature would be persuaded to leave the academy for a position on the Bench. Carole Lewis acted as a judge for periods in 1998 and 1999 before being appointed to the High Court in Johannesburg on 1 November 1999. In 2000 she took over the editorship of the *South African Law Journal*, South Africa's premier generalist law journal, but to the dismay of the publishers and the editors working under her, she relinquished the position at the end of the year in order to avoid a possible conflict of interest.

Carole Lewis did not remain a High Court judge for long. During 2002 she acted on the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA), then one of the country's two highest courts, and was appointed permanently to that court on 1 January 2003. She has served the SCA with great distinction ever since and is currently one of South Africa's most senior judges of appeal.

During her time on the SCA Carole Lewis has written many significant judgments in areas ranging from contract and property to administrative law, and has earned the respect of her colleagues and indeed of all in the legal profession for her penetrating intellect, her incisive reasoning and the clarity, brevity and elegance of her writing.

Justice Lewis has maintained a close association with the University since becoming a judge. She first became a member of the Wits Council and of its executive committee in 2000. She was re-elected twice and dedicated a significant period of time to that body. She remained on Council until July 2013, serving as its Deputy Chair from 2008. She was a member of the Humanities Review Committee in 2007 and in 2008 she chaired the Senior Appointments Committee for the selection of a DVC.

Carole Lewis has also held Visiting and Honorary Professorships in the Wits School of Law for many years, and from 2005 she made an extraordinary contribution as Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Wits Law School Endowment Appeal. She has also participated in numerous conferences and symposia organised by the School, often delivering the opening address.

In short, Wits University in general and the Wits School of Law in particular have had the benefit of Justice Carole Lewis' clear and principled thinking, wise administration and good judgment for nearly forty years. In light of these achievements it is therefore befitting that the University awards the University Gold Medal to Justice Carole Lewis.