



Centre for  
**UNITY IN  
DIVERSITY**

## **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS: LAW AND IDENTITY**

*Ms Zohra Dawood: Director, Centre for Unity in Diversity*

Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening and a warm welcome to the Centre for Unity in Diversity's second roundtable discussion on Law and Identity.

I am very pleased that Professor Penelope Andrews is here with us as our keynote speaker.

Before I introduce our topic for the evening and our keynote speaker, let me thank our partner, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and its Cape Town representative, Christina Teichmann. Your unstinting support to the Foundation and to the CUD is greatly appreciated, thank you.

Onto our topic for discussion. Identity is a complex and ambiguous notion and cannot in my view be crisply identified. Its component parts are varied and range from language, religion, culture, to race, sexual orientation, political orientation, ethnicity and the list goes on. These same markers can be said to also act as key influencers on identity.

Discussion of identity in South Africa is particularly vexing based on the country's history. While history has certainly shaped identities, there exists a whole body of writing and that which is gleaned from our own experience that has demonstrated that identities are not static notions, as is evident 25 years into democracy. The notion of a South African identity is contested, it evolves, it coalesces, it clashes and in more recent times, it has also been deployed as a political tool. We often grapple with if and how, when and whether a collective South African identity will or has emerged. What are its component parts beyond national symbols, sport and Nelson Mandela?

Penny's presentation today will focus on a specific element, i.e. the role of the law in shaping identity. No doubt the Constitution features greatly in this discourse and your discussion Penny. It is a bedrock that promotes and protects equal rights, equal dignity and freedom for all, and it does so in an unambiguous and affirmative tone. The tenet and tone, the values and vision of the Constitution are sacrosanct, and this highest law of the land must inform behaviours and aspirations as South Africans. I look forward to your speech Penny and I know that you will test our levels of comfort, you will propel us toward the necessary conversations and outline what is going right and not so right in our country.

It gives me great pleasure to share with you some of Penny's biography. It is a lush one and I have been selective, so forgive me Penny.

Professor Andrews [(B.A. LL.B. (UKZN) LL.M. (Columbia)], Dean and Professor at the University of Cape Town (UCT Faculty of Law), is a noted human rights scholar and admitted as an Advocate in South Africa. She began her legal career at the Legal Resources Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa's premier public interest law firm.



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Prior to becoming the Dean at UCT, Dean Andrews served as President and Dean at Albany Law School in New York, the first female President and Dean for the school which was founded in 1851. She was previously the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the City University of New York School of Law (CUNY). Prior to joining CUNY, she was a Professor and Director of international studies at Valparaiso Law School.

In addition to her scholarship on the appointment of the Judiciary in South Africa, Dean Andrews is actively involved as a trainer for the Judicial Institute for Africa at the UCT Law Faculty, focusing on opinion writing and communication skills. She has also served as an arbitrator in hearings on racial discrimination.

She has published four books and over 50 articles that focus on the Judiciary, comparative constitutional law, gender and racial equality, human rights, and legal education. Her last book, *From Cape Town to Kabul: Rethinking Strategies for Pursuing Women's Human Rights*, was published in 2012. She also publishes regularly in the popular and social media, focusing on issues of race, poverty, legal education and contemporary South African issues.

Penny, it gives me great pleasure to hand over the microphone to you.