

Jennifer Yvonne Mokgoro
LLD (honoris causa)

Yvonne Mokgoro graduated from the University of Bophuthatswana with a BJuris (1982), LLB (1984) and LLM (1987) and from the University of Pennsylvania with a second LLM in 1990.

Justice Mokgoro started her legal career as an academic in 1984, becoming a noted scholar on constitutional law, human rights and gender equality.

Justice Mokgoro was appointed to the Constitutional Court, serving from its inception in 1994 until the end of her 15-year term in 2009. The first black woman on the bench of the Constitutional Court, she is regarded a distinguished member of an illustrious bench. She showed excellent jurisprudence and a deep understanding of vernacular law and its relationship with the Constitution. She participated in writing pioneering legal opinions on the rights embodied in the South African Constitution. Four rulings in particular stand out: that the regulation precluding foreign citizens from being employed as teachers was unfair (1998) ; that the right to social security in the Constitution vests in everybody and that it was unreasonable and discriminatory to exclude permanent residents from social grants (2004); that it is not permissible for a bank to seize the property of defaulting debtors without a court order (2000); and that the sale in execution of a judgement debt of a person's home without judicial oversight is unconstitutional (2005). These judgments show her unwavering commitment to an imaginative and inclusive human rights jurisprudence.

She was chairperson of the SA Law Reform Commission from 1995 until the end of her third term in 2011.

Throughout her life she has made significant contributions also in civil society organisations. She has been president of Africa Legal Aid, (AFLA) an organisation which provides legal aid and human rights education throughout Africa; served as chairperson of the selection committee of the Press Council of South Africa; chairs the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, and serves on the Mandela-Rhodes Trust, the South African Institute, and the African Centre for Justice Innovation.

The University honours Justice Mokgoro for her commitment to transformation and social justice, her contributions towards racial and gender equality, the pursuit of human rights and dignity.