

Seven Questions for.... Dr Gideon Boas, Senior Lecturer



This is your first position as an academic. What attracted you to academia?

I have always enjoyed researching and writing. As I became more specialised in international criminal law, there were increasing opportunities to write about issues upon which there was not a great body of literature. I started to write and teach a little in the area. Moving into academia on a full time basis became a logical step.

You worked at the ICTY for 8 years. How did you end up there?

I had worked at the Red Cross in Sydney for a couple of years as an International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Officer. At that time, IHL was not widely taught (particularly in Australia), let alone practiced. A friend of mine had gone to work at the ICTY a year earlier and told me they were advertising for a number of legal positions. I applied, survived the gruelling 10 minute interview and was hired.

How did you find the experience of working for the United Nations?

It was an extraordinary experience - for a number of reasons. On the whole, I was surrounded by very intelligent, dedicated lawyers from all over

the world; the subject-matter was incredibly challenging and we were, in many areas of international law, making it up as we went along. The last 4 1/2 years were spent as a senior legal adviser to the trial judges working mainly on the Milosevic trial. That was procedurally and substantively complicated and required as much managerial work as legal work. I am not sure how satisfying working for other UN agencies would be (they vary enormously) but the ICTY was an invaluable professional experience.

You have recently written a book about the ICTY. Tell us about it.

It is a revision of my doctoral thesis, entitled 'The Milosevic Trial: Lessons for the Conduct of Complex International Criminal Proceedings'. It is an analysis of the Milosevic trial and its impact on the development and future of international criminal law. It takes lessons from that trial, and the trials of other senior political and military accused in the international tribunals, and recommends reforms to better enhance the fair and expeditious trial paradigm of these cases.

What is the best thing about being back in Melbourne?

Football.

What has been the highlight of your career?

The Milosevic trial. I doubt I will ever work on anything that exciting and challenging.

If you had to give students one piece of advice, what would it be?

Don't be hemmed in by the expectation of a career path (unless you want to be). Exposing yourself to different issues and interests may take your career in directions you hadn't thought of.

Lauren Scott Castan Centre Local Intern

Why did you do an in-house internship?

Throughout my law degree I have always been impressed by the work the Castan Centre does. As the end of my degree is nearing, I felt an internship would be an important opportunity to offer my assistance to the Castan Centre while gaining invaluable experience.

What inspires you about human rights?

Fostering human rights feels natural and makes sense in a complicated world. I feel that the purpose of the law is to help people coexist in a peaceful way. If people neglect human rights these same laws can become arbitrary. It is for this reason I will always be driven to promote and protect human rights.

What did you do during your in-house internship?

Under the supervision of Associate Professor Moira Paterson, I drafted a submission to Parliament on the Federal Government's proposed 'access card', which will replace a number of cards and will hold personal information that is held in a chip. The main concern is that it will eventually become a national identity card.

I also wrote case summaries for a human rights case law database being constructed by Oxford University Press. The Castan Centre is providing much of the content.

What do you hope to do in the future?

I wish to use my legal skills to assist those in need. I want to work on improving the law by focusing on legal policy issues that concern human rights.