

**SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE NAMIBIAN BAR ASSOCIATION HELD AT WINDHOEK
ON 2 DECEMBER 2024**

1. We are presenters of cases in the combat to resolve disputes by court litigation.
2. Our weapon of choice is the sword of the word. Depending on what the occasion requires, the thrust of a rapier or the cut of a broadsword.
3. A small adjustment in a word can turn it into a weapon. Add an s to word and it becomes a sword.
4. I share three examples of hammer blow words on occasion used in court:
 - 4.1. “My Lord, like Gratiano in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, the applicant’s founding affidavit speaks an awful lot of nothing. His reasons are as two grains of wheat hidden in a bushel of chaff: you seek all day to find them, and when you have them, they are not worth the search.”
 - 4.2. “My Lord, the plaintiff is presented to you as the Lamb of Innocence, but his tracks in this case are those of a jackal.”
 - 4.3. “My Lord, this point is the fork in the road in this case. From here you can fork off in the right direction or fork off in the wrong direction”. (By Jeremy Gauntlett).
5. We arrive in life *tabula rasa* — a clean slate — without the ability to read, write or reason, but with the ability to learn.

6. As we journey through life, we acquire skills to survive and thrive. The drivers of this learning are fundamentally the fear for pain and death that threats to life, limb and family bring, however, also the desire to wear the crown of pride that victory inspires.
7. During your life you will, in general and as an advocate, be constantly measured and tested against what you can do. In other words, do you have what it takes to conquer in the cut and thrust of legal combat?
8. But death is not the end of life. We live on after death in what we pass on by our DNA to our children, and by our skills of how to prosper, which we during our life transfer on to family, friends and others impacted by us.
9. So in the end you will be measured by the extent to which you out live yourself by what you leave behind in others.
10. May this encourage you to share your knowledge, skills and experiences at the Bar with your friends and colleges, turning it into an institution of constant learning, skills development and training in the pursuit of excellence.
11. And when you sometimes feel that you always swim against the current, stay calm and carry on. Adversity is the best university. In any event, only dead fish swim along the current.
12. I thank you. Godspeed, Big Boy (Mooi loop, Ou Grote).

Herman Steyn

Chambers, Swakopmund
2 December 2024