

REMARKABLE WOMEN

Honouring Women From Our Vancouver Communities



photo courtesy Todd Duncan

Jane Gatwiri Rukaria

Jane Gatwiri Rukaria uses her knowledge and expertise of the law to assist those who would not otherwise have a voice in the legal system.

Jane grew up in Thuura, a small village in Kenya. Jane, her two sisters, and her single mother Harriet, in the Kenya of 1970s, had little status. Her uncle Rukaria, the male relative, stepped forward, providing a home and some form of status for her mother. Through this experience, Jane realized that the law did not always help those who needed protection most. She studied law at Nairobi University and was called the bar in 1992.

In 2002, Jane became a permanent resident in Canada. She attended UBC Law School and was called to the bar in 2004. Finding that the concept of “billable hours”—lawyers charging a per hour rate for their services—puts the law out of economic reach for many people, Jane prefers to charge a flat fee to make her services as accessible as possible.

Jane practices real estate, wills and estate law, but her heart is in immigration and refugee law. She gives pro bono legal counsel through the Access Pro Bono Society of BC and the Lawyer Referral Service of BC, two organizations that provide legal services to those of limited means. Jane acts as a resource person for the African community in BC, speaking not only about law, but about the challenges of settling in Canada. She is a co-founder of the Kenyan Community of BC Society (Ken-BC) and is board member of the Cambie Village Business Improvement Association.

Jane and her family continue to help her village. To further their vision of assisting struggling women and girls both here and in Kenya, the family founded My Sister’s Shoulder Society of BC in October 2010.

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