

# Senator David Coltart

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## Summary

Since returning to Zimbabwe in 1983 David Coltart has been one of Zimbabwe's preeminent human rights lawyers. In the 1980s and 1990s he represented or advised many leading opposition politicians from Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU party and Zimbabwe's first back Chief Justice Enock Dumbutshena's Forum party. In 1999 Morgan Tsvangirai asked him to become the founding legal secretary of the MDC. Since then he has been an MP and then Senator until July 2013 when he narrowly lost his seat in the highly controversial Zimbabwean general election held on the 31st July 2013. Since 2009 he has been Zimbabwe's Minister of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture.

## Work Experience **Minister of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture** February 2009 to August 2013

Responsible for running the largest Ministry in Zimbabwe with 109000 employees and an annual budget of US\$ 750 million.

## **Shadow Minister of Justice** June 2000 to February 2009

MDC Shadow Minister of Justice in the Zimbabwean Parliament.

## **Partner of Webb, Low and Barry , Legal Practitioners** January 1983 to present

Lawyer with a focus on human rights and constitutional law.

## **Senior/Managing Partner of Webb, Low and Barry** July 1997 to February 2009

Responsible for managing one of Zimbabwe's oldest law firms established in 1897.

## **Director Bulawayo Legal Projects Centre** January 1987 to June 1997

Coltart established the Bulawayo Legal Projects Centre, a public interest law firm, and was its first Director. The BLPC set up legal advice centers throughout the South West of Zimbabwe. Between 1990 and 1996 it spearheaded an investigation into the genocide perpetrated in the region between 1982 and 1987. This investigation culminated in the production of the leading human rights report entitled "Breaking the Silence - Building true peace" in March 1997.

## **Trustee of the Legal Resources Foundation of Zimbabwe** July 1987 to February 2008

Responsible for collective management and policy formulation for Zimbabwe's leading human rights organisation.

**Skills** Transformed Zimbabwe's education sector which was in a state of extreme crisis when Coltart took office in February 2009. Nearly all 8500 schools were closed, 90000 teachers were on strike, public examinations written the previous year had not even been marked and the textbook/pupil ratio was at 1:15. After 4 years in office all schools are open, there has not been a strike for 2 years, 15000 teachers have been attracted back into the service, public ex,animations are now written, marked and results released on time and the textbook/pupil ratio in core subjects is now 1:1.

Mobilized substantial international funding for Zimbabwe's education sector. In September 2009 Coltart established the Education Transition Fund with UNICEF which has since raised over a quarter of a billion US\$ . Between November 2011 and June 2012 Coltart negotiated Zimbabwe's admission to the Global Partnership for Education which has since resulted in a grant of US\$ 23,6 million being secured for teacher retraining in Zimbabwe.

Negotiated with Zimbabwe's Teacher Trade Unions to get teachers back to work. Through a process of negotiation, including bringing Union leaders on to an Advisory Board and the declaration of an amnesty Coltart secured the return to work of 90000 teachers and attracted an additional 15000 teachers back into service.

Negotiated a new Constitution for Zimbabwe. As a member of a management committee of Parliament set up to negotiate a new constitution for Zimbabwe Coltart played a role in delicate negotiations with protagonists resulting in agreement being reached and a successful referendum held approving a new constitution in March 2013.

Coltart is an accomplished public speaker and has delivered speeches and papers throughout the world at Universities, Parliaments and elsewhere on a wide range of topics during the last 30 years of professional and public office.

**Education** **BA Law** 1978 to 1980  
University of Cape Town

**LLB** 1981 to 1982  
University of Cape Town

**References** Furnished on request

**Further information** Web site: [www.davidcoltart.com](http://www.davidcoltart.com)