



Eleanor Rathbone Social Justice Public Lecture Series 2023-24

Advancing Social Justice: Children as Agents of Social Change through Protest and Litigation

Professor Ann Skelton

Wednesday 13th March 2024, 5:00pm – 7:00pm

School of Law and Social Justice Events Space – ([Campus Map](#))



The lecture will trace children's activism from school strikes in the UK in 1911 (in protest against school caning), to children's actions against climate change in recent years and it will engage with examples of children's activism around the world. It will explore how the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and other UN entities view children as human rights defenders, and how children's rights to peaceful assembly and to protest should be operationalised, while providing sufficient safeguards. The lecture will consider the appropriate means of managing protests involving children, including guidance recently provided by UNICEF. The final part of the lecture will reflect on children as litigants in strategic litigation before the courts and it will assess the appropriateness of this as an avenue for children to bring about social change and social justice.



Professor Ann Skelton is currently the Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. She is Professor of Law and holds the UNESCO Chair in Education Law at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. She is also a Professor of Law and holds the Chair on Children's Rights in a Sustainable World at the University of Leiden, Netherlands, where she is the Programme Director of the Master of Laws Advanced Studies in International Children's Rights. She has been a human rights lawyer in South Africa for over 25 years, specialising in children's rights and her work is extensively published. She established the strategic litigation work at the Centre for Child Law at the University of Pretoria and has appeared as counsel in numerous landmark cases in the South African Constitutional Court.

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