

Returning Home

Asino went back to Namibia, Africa to put legal training in practice.

By Angela Lutz

When **Matti Asino, '91**, first moved to Omaha, Nebraska, from his home country of Namibia, Africa, in 1981, it was the middle of summer. His family was pleased to find the weather warm and the landscape lush and green, which reminded them of the rainy season back home. A few months later, though, Asino's first Midwestern winter came as a surprise.

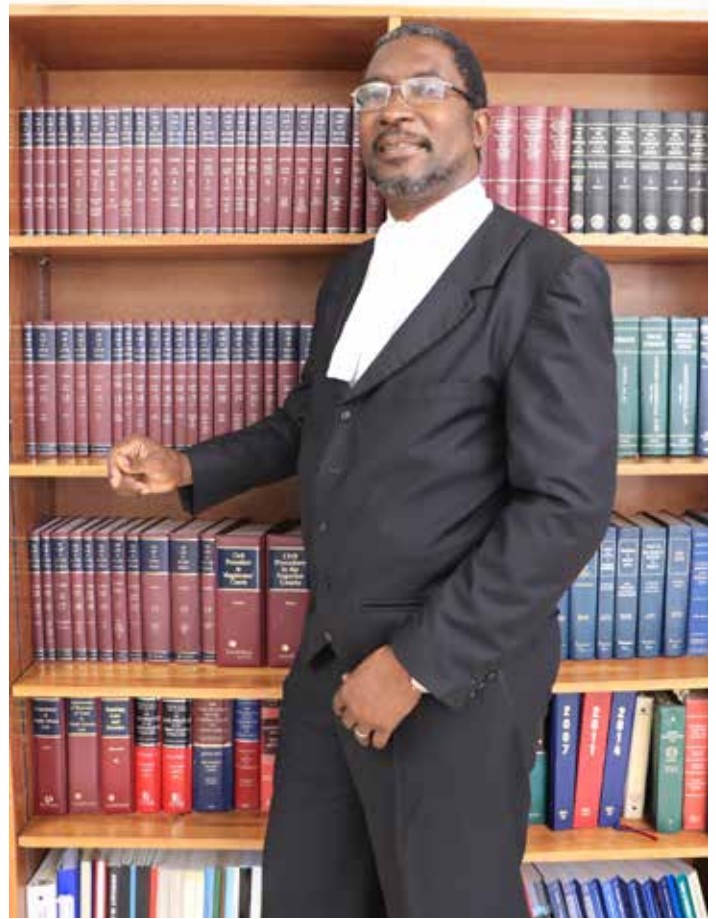
"When we saw our first snow, it was a shock – we couldn't believe it," Asino said. "Our home country is very dry, but here it was raining snow! In Namibia we don't really have frost or snow – only maybe once in a while."

Over time, Asino and his siblings grew accustomed to Midwestern weather and American culture – including that when in Nebraska, the only acceptable football team to root for is the Cornhuskers, a memory that still makes Asino laugh. In 1982, another move took the family to Greenville, Pennsylvania, where Asino attended high school and college before starting at Washburn University School of Law in 1989. Because Namibia was still involved in the South African Border War and was not considered an independent nation at that time, Asino's legal education was sponsored by the United Nations.

"At that time our country did not even have a law school," Asino said. "It was thought that those who attended law school would be able to help with implementation of laws and establishing legal institutions to ensure the country is properly managed and ruled."

After graduating from Washburn, Asino was "overwhelmed with high emotion" upon returning home to Namibia, where the war had finally ended in 1990. When he began working as a legal officer, he was able to put his law school training into practice – particularly constitutional law, which was essential in a country where people were beginning to recognize their rights. He also married his wife, Johanna Elina Ndapanda, in 1992, and they went on to have two children.

Eventually Asino began working for the Office of the Attorney General in Namibia, and today he is head of the Directorate of Civil Litigation, a role that entails leading the Ministry of Justice and representing the Namibian government in all forms of litigation.



Matti Asino, '91. Photo submitted

"When I came home most people were very skeptical, but Washburn really prepared me well and gave me a good foundation to build my career upon," Asino said. "Of course there are differences between America and Namibia, but the basic principles of law remain the same. I felt that I was very well educated by Washburn and given the tools to succeed."

While Namibia continues to struggle with COVID-19 – particularly maintaining adequate vaccine supply and overcoming vaccine hesitancy – Asino is looking toward the future. He is eager to reconnect with fellow Washburn alumni, and he hopes one day he can come back to the Washburn University campus to visit and check out what's new.

"It would be great if I got an opportunity to return to Washburn," he said. "I want to see the new faces and the new buildings. I have a lot of really fun memories there."