

Q&A Time with top Legal Figures raises £21,000 for Norwood

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Over 200 lawyers attended the fourth YN Lawyers Reception last night raising over £21,000 for Norwood, the leading UK charity supporting Jewish children, adults and families with learning disabilities and social disadvantage. Channel Five News reporter and presenter, Matt Barbet, chaired Q&A Time with senior consultant at Mishcon de Reya, Antony Julius and highly-regarded criminal barrister, Henry Grunwald QC. The young lawyers enjoyed drinks and canapés at the offices of Goldman Sachs on Fleet Street to whet their appetite before they put their questions to the panel.

Antony Julius has represented Diana, Princess of Wales, Deborah Lipstadt in the libel case brought against her by Holocaust denier, David Irving and is as well-known within the Law Faculty at UCL and Birkbeck, as in literary circles for his work on TS Eliot and anti-semitism. Henry Grunwald QC has specialised in serious crime cases, including some of the most shocking public cases we have seen in this country. His term of office as the President of the Board of Deputies recently came to a close.

Several young lawyers wanted to know whether the current economic downturn fuelled anti-semitism. Grunwald cited the internet as a channel of communicating conspiracy theories but Julius did not see any clear link. On the threat from the BNP and the far right, Grunwald again believed this to be a 'serious threat', whilst Julius felt the far left was the major threat, though the BNP member's history of holocaust denial is despicable.

Debating the merits of modernisation of the UK legal system, Grunwald declared, 'I love my wig'. The QC went on to say, "It's a great leveller putting everyone on the same level as far as practitioners are concerned, and it does introduce an air of formality which is sadly lacking in countries where they have got rid of it." Julius however, dismissed it as a "relic". Both agreed, however, that the real casualty was the cut backs in public funding of legal aid.

The audience wanted to know how to tell if someone is lying in court and both pointed to tell-tale signs such as touching the face, looking down, evading questions, withdrawing into silence or beginning with an answer with, 'to be perfectly honest'. Julius added, "In the main, people don't lie, there are genuine disagreements which cause a collision and can lead to serious discomfort in the court."

Matt Barbet cross-questioned Antony Julius on whether it is difficult to represent someone who doesn't represent themselves very well. In reference to one of his clients, Antony Julius replied, 'You don't get paid a ridiculous hourly rate to do an easy job.'

Another young member of the audience wanted to know, had the workplace got tougher for new law graduates? Julius said the interview process had got a lot tougher though the calibre of graduates had not changed, 'When I first started recruiting it was a half an hour chat and now it's a two-day process.' Henry Grunwald agreed, 'I think more is demanded of young lawyers now. Though in the past, I had to pay my pupil master to do a pupillage.'

Henry Grunwald congratulated Norwood, saying "This is a fantastic charity and it has been a great evening. It's fantastic that you have a great committee and so many young people here tonight supporting Norwood and if this is the future of Norwood - it bodes well."

Alisa Fleishman, YN Fundraiser said, "Norwood would like to thank our panelists Henry Grunwald, Antony Julius and Matt Barbet, who stepped in at the last minute, for providing us with an entertaining and enlightening evening and a big thank you to the YN Committee for all their hard work in making this evening such a great success.

"A huge thanks goes to our guests whose generous support, despite the difficult economic climate, has raised an incredible £21,000 which will help Norwood to make a real difference to the lives of children, adults and families coping with learning disabilities and social disadvantages who use our services every year."

The evening was organised by the YN Lawyers Committee headed up by Simon Walton of Rosenblatt Solicitors and Simon Noonoo of Mishcon de Reya. YN offers events to young people age 18-33. Our events are dynamic and diverse and include keynote celebrity speakers as well as corporate and social networking. The following committees host events on behalf of Norwood: YN Property, YN Lawyers, YN Finance, YN Today, YN Social.

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