

5 May 1986

The Hon. Mr. Stoffel Botha
The Minister of Home Affairs
Parliament
Cape Town
8001

Dear Sir

I am writing to you in response to your decision not to grant me a south African passport to travel abroad. This is the fifth time in eighteen years that I have applied for and have been refused a passport and on each occasion no reasons for the refusals were given to me.

As you know my application to travel abroad was principally to acquaint myself with the latest developments at American universities in the teaching of photography, and also to attend the opening and launch of the exhibition of the book "South Africa The Cordoned Heart", which I edited as part of my work for the Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa. The purpose of my visit to various American Universities was to build links with these institutions and in particular with the Center for Documentary Photography at Duke University in North Carolina. As the principal of the University of Cape Town, Dr. Stuart Saunders, pointed out to you in his letter dated January 10, 1986, I have been asked to set up a similar centre at the University of Cape Town.

I can only conclude that you have such serious objections to my passport application that you find it necessary to impede the establishment of links between Duke University and the University of Cape Town, especially in view of the fact that overseas Universities still willing to make such links do so under tremendous pressure from their staff and students.

I therefore assume that the reason why I have been refused a passport, once again, is either that you wish to punish me for my well-known opposition to your government's apartheid policies or that I am being accused of some heinous crime against the State.

If I am a threat to the State, then I would like to know what I am accused of and by whom. I have been harassed by the police over the years, my family and I have been subjected to security branch raids of our home in the early hours of the morning, and I have been threatened by members of the security police and one of my books has been banned. However, I have never once been accused of any crime in an open court. My only crime therefore appears to be an open dislike of your government's apartheid policies.

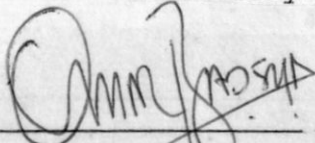
In the years between 1972 to 1976, I was active in the trade union movement. My colleagues and I were then seen as dangerous subversives for wanting to organize black workers. We adhered to the principle that the African worker has the right to belong to a trade union in the same way as other workers and by 1982 the government had to concede to the workers' demands and our stand was vindicated. But at what cost? Some of my colleagues were banned, others jailed, driven into exile and some, like the late Dr. Richard Turner, were assassinated under mysterious circumstances. These and other acts have not deterred me or thousands others like me, all South Africans and patriots, from continuing to voice our open and democratic opposition to this country's apartheid policies.

I urge that the State must allow me to answer in open court any accusation of crime (s) that I might have committed; or else any action against me, like the refusal of my passport, can only be seen as a form of punishment for my views which are public knowledge and which are held by millions of my fellow South Africans.

I would like to inform you that I intend to ask writers, artists, photographers, and academics to voice their support for my right to freedom of speech and movement, by writing to you. I cannot see how your government can talk about reform and the peaceful transformation of South Africa when you continue to use administrative and other measures to suppress open and legitimate opposition.

I hope that you would allow me and all others who oppose your policies to write, paint, photograph and voice our opposition without fear of reprisals.

Yours Faithfully



OMAR BADSHA