

FOREWORD

There are many questions that come to mind when you pick up this book, but the questions bound to be more prevalent than others will surely be: **“What! Don’t tell me that cheeky *old bag* has produced yet ANOTHER ONE!?”** Closely followed by: “Will this series ever end (or for that matter – HER)?” and securing third place: “Hasn’t anyone yet told that woman to stop publishing and enjoy her bloody retirement?”

I will deal with the questions with all brevity I learnt from Phyllis – the answers (in order) are: YES; NO; and HELL YES!

And just a quick glance at the contents page will answer any question as to why this collection had to be published.

Anton Xaba

If you haven’t met Anton Xaba before, you will delight in the acquaintance of a giant of our struggle. In 1976 Anton Xaba stood trial with among others, Harry Gwala, Cleopas (Cass) Ndlovu and Joseph Nduli for recruiting for the ANC. He passed away this year (2009) and the little account in this book is taken from the speech Phyllis Naidoo delivered at his funeral on August 1, 2009 at the Sobantu Sports Ground in Pietermaritzburg.

David Webster

The son of a miner, born in colonial Rhodesia, who later became one of our most beloved activist academics, David Webster, is also featured in this collection. The forces of apartheid murdered David at a time when we sorely needed his immense contribution.

Professor Ronald Albino

One activist academic who survived the dangerous struggle period was Professor Ronald Albino from UKZN, who passed away earlier this year at the grand age of 93 years. Professor Albino conducted isolation and sensory deprivation experiments on himself and his students to prove that evidence given by detainees were inadmissible. In this story Ronald Albino is brought to real full colour, everyday life in the way only Phyllis Naidoo can do.

Richard Dudley

Yet another academic and activist who features here is Richard Dudley, from UCT, who died in June 2009 at the age of 85. Banned many times, and prejudiced for his activism, Dudley believed that the popular cry of “liberation before education” was playing the apartheid government’s game. This great educationist used the system to politicise and empower hundreds of mathematics and science graduates, many of whom, like Dr Gonda Perez, contributed more richly to our ongoing struggle.

Reverend Charles Hooper

If you start thinking that Volume 4 of the Footprints series is dedicated to academics only, let me tell you that priests and nuns live in this collection too. Reverend Charles Hooper – the activist man of the cloth, who penned the widely read “Brief Authority” once wrote a very intimate and humorous account of the part he played in helping Wolpe and Goldreich (two of the four escapees from Marshall Square in 1963) get to safety. The original of this 14 page article, typed by Hooper, entitled “Red Car” found its way to Phyllis Naidoo many years ago. Here it appears in published form for the first time.

Also included in the article is the eight scanned pages of “Diary of a Country Priest” a brief autobiography of Rev Hooper, told by himself, which first appeared in ‘Africa South’ July-Sept, 1958, edited by Ronald Segal (yes the same Segal we featured in “More Footprints that Shaped our World.” – how integrated our struggle was!)

Sister Christine Obotseng

Sister Christine, Catholic nun, teacher, and anti-apartheid activist was detained on numerous occasions but still she persevered. She passed away this year (in Dobsonville, Soweto) on September 7, 2009. How broad and diverse our struggle was!

Bishop Denis Hurley

Phyllis Naidoo’s association with Bishop Hurley goes back to 1938, Pietermaritzburg. In this inimitable account, Phyllis tells us how throughout the long years she interacted with him as a young Catholic girl, as an atheist (much to the chagrin of her mother), as an activist and as a friend.

Kgoti (Andrew Moletsane)

I met many of Phyllis’s fellow struggle comrades through her written works, and that is how I met Kgoti, and now may I tell you, it is hard to

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forget Kgoti. He must have been a great person to know personally. Through several accounts (by Phyllis, by Mosala Moegomi, by Willie Leslie and by Irene Gale), his life shines large and proud. He met a tragic and early death and was one of many who didn't live to see the fruits of their toil.

Many others

You will meet many others too in this collection of over twenty rare stories. Incomparable comrades who gave assistance either directly or through solidarity or through inspiration – Dennis Brutus, Helen McCue, Monty Moodley, Solomon Sokupa (Soks), and many more including Che Guevara and Chedi Jagan (the son of an Indian Indentured labourer who became Prime Minister of Guyana, who was an active anti-apartheid campaigner and who was honoured by our government with one of its highest accolades - Member of OR Tambo).

Children

Lastly, this book is dedicated to the children of South Africa. It is hoped that they will carry on the legacy bequeathed to them selflessly by the stalwarts of the struggle. In order to understand their journey they must know their past. This is why this book exists.

Our attention in one of these stories is turned to schools and the challenges faced there. Sometimes the help given by parents is too little and in other cases it is too much. Parents, especially those whose children are in former Model C schools or private schools, are increasingly taking over their children's homework and sometimes even outsourcing the homework to professional service providers. There is an old saying that goes "In the long run feeding your child with a silver spoon will teach him nothing but the shape of the spoon." We also look at the impact of the Matriculation Dance hype and teenage pregnancy.

That you hold in your hands yet another book in the Footprints series is no fault of Phyllis's prolific pen. It is also no fault of her overflowing memory of the struggle (a memory which she complains is getting ragged - though I wish I had even half that capacity). The fault – if fault is a correct term – lies in South Africa's rich vein of the most diverse, mostly amazing, and almost forgotten, struggle heroes who played their little walk on part in our epic fight against apartheid and colonialism. That legacy is so deep and because of that there are so many untold stories.

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We can only hope the stories that do get told will continue to inspire generations to come, even after authentic writers of our contemporary history – like our old bag of 82 years “shuffles off the mortal coil.”

And finally yes, everyone does tell Phyllis to put away her ‘razor-sharp’ pencil and to ‘go and hibernate’ in some frail-care-home – but lucky for us she is as stubborn as an old bull – an old bull, mind you, with ‘blood-dimmed’ sights that sees the red rag of new fights to fight.

The Footprints journey endures yet again. Thank you, Phyllis. Live long, old friend.

Viroshen
3/11/09
Durban