



Dennis Brutus activist and former Robben Island prisoner is one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit of gross violations of human rights. He was banned from teaching, publishing poetry, and attending meetings. PHOTO: NONHLANHLA KAMBULE-MAKGATI

DENNIS BRUTUS

At a tribute to Pete Seeger, Patrick Bond, from UKZN read out a poem Dennis Brutus wrote for Pete on the occasion. What's the connection between the two ?

Patrick Bond (from UKZN) explains below (from his introduction to the poem - Dennis's poem follows on the next page):

Dennis has a broken rib but in his absence, this poem was read today (May 3, 2009) at the local tribute to Pete Seeger at UKZN's outdoor amphitheatre, organised by Phyllis Naidoo and friends, which attracted more than 100 musical and political fans.

A vast concert (was subsequently) held in Madison Square Garden, USA. (featuring the likes of Bruce Springsteen, Dave Matthews, Joan Baez, etc.)

Seeger has been Dennis' friend since 1967 when they teamed up to fight apartheid. In the mid-1970s they worked against a white South African rugby team sneaked into the US for a match in Chicago which was moved to Albany; together they opposed that tour, marching in the rain.

In 1984, when Dennis was targeted by the Reagan Administration as a subversive, and subject to deportation, Seeger volunteered to do a benefit concert at Northeastern University Law School for Dennis' appeal that raised \$18,000 for legal fees and saved the day.

This is just one way those memories continue... "

– Patrick Bond

A tribute to Pete Seeger

on his 90th birthday, 3 May 2009

by Dennis Brutus

There is joy in that voice
and lilting courage in that music
his message will endure, will endure
will endure, will endure
even while the years roll along

He has sung his songs in the face of hate
he has endured the storm's bitter cold
he has preached his faith, his tolerance
confronting scorn he said "Be bold,
we will not be trapped or lured by gold"

His voice joins a mighty chorus
Arlo, Paul Robeson, Dylan and Joan
and all who sing in support of Freedom:
we know we are never alone
we know we are never alone

Footprints

My young comrade, Viroshen, said that Dennis Brutus cost him a distinction in his final matric English paper in 1990. An unseen poem by Dennis Brutus appeared in the Exam paper and so delighted was he by the communist nature of that poem about a girl on a red swing, coming as it was in the apartheid education system, he spent nearly the whole session analysing that poem – writing 4 or 5 pages on it, and then waking from his reverie realized that time was almost up and the poem only really accounted for 15% of the total marks. So he didn't have time to write for 85% of the marks.

“But what a poem!,” he said, “what a poem! - it was worth it.”

Dennis, our comrade, our friend, our enduring political activist – we salute you.

Phyllis Naidoo
6 November 2009
Durban

