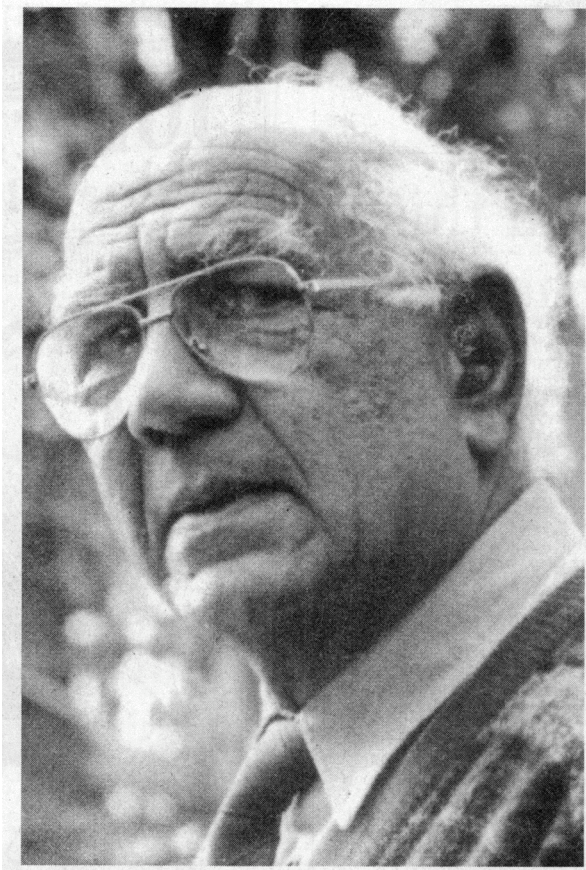


RICHARD DUDLEY

Born 15 April 1924 – Died June 2009.



It was Dr Gonda Perez, now Deputy Dean Health Sciences Faculty, at University of Cape Town, who two years ago while chatting told me that she loved one Dudley who taught her in her Matriculation year at Livingstone High School in 1973 (See Footprints Beyond Grey Street)

Today 15 June 2009, Goolam Aboobaker, erstwhile employee of the Presidency, now working in New York, USA, while visiting confirmed that he knew Dudley and that he was a great teacher and belonged to the

Unity Movement. They came a cropper over the popular cry of “liberation before education” – Dudley believed that the ANC was playing government’s game. In spite of this difference, Goolam himself a Mathematics teacher in Durban says that Dudley was an excellent teacher.

In the undermentioned motivation to the Honorary Degrees Committee, more of this great educationist comes to the fore to better understand this icon of the struggle.

“MOTIVATION FOR AN HONORARY DOCTORATE

(Taken from “Teacher and Comrade – Richard Dudley and the Fight for Democracy” by Alan Weider)

“Richard Dudley was born in 1924 to Samuel and Alleta Dudley in Newlands, Cape Town. Samuel Dudley was the principal of St Andrew’s Mission School in Newlands, the primary school that Richard Dudley attended. He then went to Livingstone High School and later the University of Cape Town, where he obtained his education qualifications.

“Dudley entered standard five at Livingstone High School at the age of 9. He excelled academically and wanted to study English and History at university but the School committee decided that they should “study science so that you could come back to Livingstone to teach science and mathematics”

“Dudley was just 15 when he enrolled at the University of Cape Town (UCT), while World War II was raging. It was while at UCT that Dudley began his political activities as part of the New Era Fellowship (NEF) the Student Socialist Society and later the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM). Dudley excelled at UCT and after his first two years, began teacher training and a master’s degree in biology, which he completed within five years of entering university. Dudley graduated in 1944 with a bachelor’s degree, master’s degree and a teacher training certificate.

“Dudley began his teaching career in 1945 at the age of 20 at Livingstone High School and remained there for the next 39 years. Family responsibilities prevented him from continuing at university to pursue an academic career. Initially Dudley taught Maths, Science and English but gave up English after a year. While at Livingstone, Dudley developed his own curriculum as he was opposed to the “coloured curriculum” that was being put forward by government.

“Politics and opposition to racial discrimination and apartheid was part of what made up Livingstone High School. Many of the teachers were members of the Teacher’s league of South Africa (TLSA). The principal when Dudley first joined the school was Edward Roberts who was the President of TLSA and chairperson of Anti-CAD (Anti Coloured Affairs Department). The school boycotted many events arranged by the CAD to celebrate colonial history such as the anniversary of the arrival of

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“Jan van Riebeeck in the Cape. In 1953, on the retirement of Roberts, Dudley was named acting Principal, on motivation by the school committee.

“Dudley believed that every child had potential for growth and dignity and worked towards ensuring that they reached this potential. He ensured, like his predecessors, that the learning at Livingstone was not limited to academics but aimed at education in the fullest sense of the word. Political issues were integrated into the teaching. It was this ethos that ensured that Dudley never became principal, even though he was eminently qualified for the job. In 1955 the Livingstone School Committee approached the superintendent general of education, Mr Malan to ask that Dudley be appointed as the principal of the school. This request was repeated frequently throughout the 39 years that Dudley spent at Livingstone High School but was always refused. Mr Malan’s response was that he would not pay for Dudley opposing the department’s school policies.

“Despite many attempts by the Department of Education at repression of what was seen as “politics” at Livingstone (the banning and detention of staff members some examples), Dudley saw as his mission to continue teaching and working towards democracy in South Africa.

“In the 1960s the Dudley family became one of thousands to be removed from their home in Newlands as the area was declared “white” under the group Areas Act. Most of the family moved overseas at this time. Dudley was committed to staying in South Africa and continuing the work at Livingstone and in the struggle for democracy. Richard Dudley was affected again by the Group Areas Act in the 1970s when Claremont where he lived was designated as a “white area” and he was forced to move to Elfindale.

“In 1961 Dudley was banned along with 200 other teachers. He was allowed to continue teaching at Livingstone but was not allowed to attend meetings or participate in NEUM or TLSA activities or teach at the technical college. In 1963 Dudley returned to UCT to do a degree in business administration. The decision to study was mainly to “assert the right to attend the University of Cape Town without getting permission from the Minister of Education”. He obtained a B.Comm degree after 4 years of study.

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“Dudley continued, throughout the apartheid years, to push his students academically towards a university education. Teachers at Livingstone and other such schools went way beyond what was required by the syllabus provided by the Coloured Affairs Department. Despite protests by the Department, Dudley found ways of maintaining high standards and included political awareness in whatever was taught.

The greatest legacy that Dudley has given South Africa is the success of hundreds of pupils who obtained professional qualifications and university degrees, many of whom became academics and reached the professorial level. Dudley taught them that while maths, science and academics are important, it is more important to be a critical thinker and fight for what is just.

For this contribution to education and democracy in South Africa, Richard Dudley is deserving of an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, the University of Cape Town. “

This is Dr Gonda Perez who conducted the funeral:

“Words seem so inadequate to describe the impact that RO Dudley or Pops, as we affectionately called him, had on me and the hundreds of students he taught – not only at Livingstone but also at UCT, the townships around Cape Town and within the political structures he led and participated in. Mr Dudley, as we heard today, was an intellectual giant, a freedom fighter, a political leader, a person of great integrity and moral standing, and a person who could debate intelligently on any subject, be it sport, medicine, literature science or languages.

Mr Dudley’s influence extended way beyond the classroom and it would be an injustice to restrict his value to education.

However it is as a teacher (Gary and I were in the same class) that I and hundreds of others encountered Mr Dudley. He could have been an outstanding physicist or mathematician, sociologist or historian and made a huge contribution to the academe, such were his intellectual skills. He elected to teach young people and be involved in the struggle for justice. For this, I and hundreds of others are grateful. He taught his pupils way beyond what was prescribed by the Coloured

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Affairs Department. He ensured that we were taught to think analytically, to reason and look critically at the world around us.

Mr Dudley brought issues of social justice into our lessons. He encouraged us to read about global events and analyse what was happening in the world. As Malcolm Campbell, from the class of '73 says: "Mr Dudley's teaching was such that in addition to performing academically, we had a social and political role to play, which was equally important... He constantly emphasised the need to subject everything that may have seemed commonplace to critical scrutiny, and would never miss an opportunity to display with what rigour this critical scrutiny should be applied."

Another fellow pupil Denise Sims reminisces: "Probably the most significant of the contributions RO Dudley made to our impressionable and developing minds as high school students, was the deep conviction that as human beings we were entitled to dignity and the same rights and opportunities as everyone else, irrespective of race, colour, creed, and gender. He also instilled in us as students, both through what he said and did, that we should not be passive in the face of oppression, that it was our moral obligation to take a stand against injustice."

The policies of the apartheid government ensured that he would never be a principal, but all of us knew who led the school.

I visited Mr Dudley, when he was ill in bed. I reminded him of how intimidated we were of him when he taught us. He was a strict disciplinarian and anyone who broke the rules was punished. Sometimes he resorted to corporal punishment. But we all knew that Mr Dudley's tongue was more effective than any cane and no-one wanted to be on the receiving end of a tongue-lashing from Mr Dudley.

Mr Dudley, in a conversation that we had when I was trying to get him to agree to accepting the honorary doctorate from UCT, reminded me that he could not have done it on his own – that he was privileged to teach alongside the best teachers available at the time. He spoke of Mrs Petersen, GL Abrahams, Tessa Fairbairn and others who preceded and antedated them. Mr Dudley of course rattled off all the names along with a brief bio-sketch of each – I unfortunately don't have his memory and can only repeat some of the names.

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I would like to end off with a piece I wrote the morning after Mr Dudley's graduation with an honorary doctorate from UCT on the 7 April 2009:

"Last night I was privileged to be part of four UCT people and Mr Dudley's immediate family who attended his graduation with an honorary doctorate from UCT. It was very moving. In typical style, Mr Dudley would not allow us to take charge of what would be his moment. From his bed he was the centre of it all and commanded from that position. He took time to acknowledge everyone - mine was "my pupil from class of '73" - said the names of each of his family members and where they fit in and what they do.. He welcomed everyone, remembering everyone's names - it was so moving, I felt tears that I had to hurriedly choke back. After the reading of the citation and the conferring of the degree Mr Dudley - although visibly tired, made a short speech of thanks. The ceremonial hat kept slipping and Mr Dudley had to frequently adjust it - Max Price, the VC, said maybe he would prefer to take it off but Mr Dudley kept it on. Even from his bed and being ill and weak he was very much in charge...

"To RO Dudley's family I want to say thank you for sharing your father and grandfather with us. "

Thank you Dr Dudley. Our democracy is deeply in your debt.

Hamba Kahle comrade!

Phyllis Naidoo
Durban
30 October 2009.