



PIC FROM GCIS

THE INAUGURATION

9 MAY 2009

I switched on the TV at 11.00 am, hoping to cut out the preliminaries to South Africa's fourth Presidential inauguration ceremony. This was not to be. Viewers were forced to endure the commentator Tim Modise talking to a military big wig about soon-to-be President Zuma's late arrival. Thunder storms were threatening to upstage the proceedings. We in the 'third world' welcome the rain – it's a sign of better things to come. Superstition like Hope springs eternal!

The 'first world' usually dressed for a cattle show dare not have rain, as their top hats and woman's head dresses, costly hairstyles and facials would be reduced to an unsightly catastrophe.

The 'first world' lent its glitz and glamour to the event, while the 'third world' which gave its votes in thousands to the soon-to-be President, awaited him, after the pomp and ceremony of the oath-taking to begin their musical extravaganza.

I watched the President (he of many wives) arrive with his senior wife, Sizakele Khumalo holding her hand. I choked with delight at his choice on this auspicious day.

Thirty five years ago, in 1974, after a ten year stretch on Robben Island, he visited my crowded flat in Brickfield Road, Overport, holding Sizakele Khumalo's hand, guiding her to lunch with my children, Sahdhan, Sha and Sukhthi.

Sizakele Khumalo answered to another name then, one which evades me now, but I recalled her severe, pained face which she carried 35 years ago.

Prior to his arrest, detention and subsequent incarceration, she had been engaged to Comrade Zuma. I had learnt from Zuma, the awful cost to her of his incarceration.

I am uncertain whether Zuma with his limited level of literacy and he himself learning to read and being self-taught had written to her in Zulu or whether Sizakele would have been able to read at the time. It was an impossible time for both.

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Lobolo had not been paid, and her father impatient for grand children, wanted her married to another man. To avoid this heartache Sizakele drank winter-green, an external medicinal preparation. The excruciating pain and subsequent disability she endured made it impossible for her to ever have children. She had performed her own execution! (See *'Footprints in Grey Street by Naidoo*).

My memory plays tricks with me now. In those dark years I interacted with so many ex-Robben Islanders from the then Natal Province and their families, that I am not sure of this. I thought it was Zuma who brought 10 Christmas cards when he visited me saying that they were all the letters or cards that he had had while at the Island. I had sent them all!

I am sure though he had told 'his lawyer' that he had not received a single letter on the Island. In this vacuum Sizakele had not lost faith in him. Ten years is a life-time to live in a vacuum!

My children and I were in awe of our luncheon guests. Before this lunch I had bought Sizakele a sewing machine for R150 to help earn her keep. Much later I bought house-arrested Leonard Mdingi a similar machine to help him patch and mend clothes at 6 cents a piece in Umlazi or was it Lamontville?

It was Archie Gumede, my partner in our legal firm, who persuaded me that Lobolo was a contract like any other and I should help Zuma with the R400 he required, if I was able to.

I think I was able to pay part of the '**umvula mlomu**' (open your mouth) ceremony as well. I love this ceremony. The elder (most times the father) would sit on the branch of a tree and had to be persuaded with gifts (eg. a shirt) to come down and start the matrimonial negotiations. Today, our guys (kneeling) do it with a boxed diamond ring and after marriage, deal with the mother-in-law - daily these are in our comic strips.

There were so many arrested in 1963! In Durban we had the ANC 27 on trial in Ladysmith and Billy Nair's 21, umKhonto weSizwe trial in Pietermaritzburg and others.

I was not aware of Zuma's arrest on the 12 August 1963, but met 'Jo' a co-accused in 1977 in exile. He had served a similar 10 year sentence on Robben Island. They were MK cadres arrested crossing the

Bechuanaland (now Botswana) border on the way to acquire military skills. Jo, while hanging out of the window of the 10th floor (similar to Babla Saloojee, murdered in detention 9/9/1964) told the following story:

They were going to Tanzania to study music.

This was their defence! The SB's (special branch of the South African police) laughed, saying Cape Town University (UCT) taught music. Why did you not go to Cape Town, where no illegal crossing and passport was necessary?

What my informant did not tell his torturers then, was that UCT did not admit Africans.

I am not sure what Zuma's defence was, but you do not plead guilty. The court must be used to politicise the visitors in the gallery, the court officials and the judicial officers.

Zuma was released from Robben Island at the end of 1973. By the end of 1974 he had left the country. He rang me on the 5 January 1975 (my birthday) to say he was safe in Swaziland. In all he was at home for a year into which he packed so much.

His marriage to Sizakele, his jobs, 3 meetings a day – one before work at 7am, one at lunch time and one after work at 5 pm – returning after 11 pm.

His constant need of money for petrol, for work - he travelled to Pietermaritzburg, to beyond Stanger, to a comrade on the South coast and to Newcastle.

His work took him to other comrades all equally poor. One was Riot Mkwanzazi, our boxer who flattened many a Special Branch officer and who spent ten years on Robben Island. On his return Riot was jobless and dependent on his poor family. Whenever he walked to Stanger to visit comrades, he would see my brother Paul David, his attorney. Paul took care of him and his family when he was house-arrested and until he left for exile to complete his military training.

The large family and friends Zuma has today were not around then. He only had his brother Mike and Sizakele. He wore Mike's old clothes on

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his return from jail, but nothing that was bought from Casanova (a popular men's boutique in Grey Street)!

Then the other incident I recall was the fact that his first job was at a pet shop at the end of Berea Road, where he filled bird seeds into little packets similar in size to those in which sweets are packed and given out at a child's baptism or christening. It was boring work, mind-destroying work. At the end of the week he earned R17.34 cents

Does he run to the furniture shops to buy a radio? He complained he was better informed on Robben Island. Released he was starved of information – he could not afford the daily newspaper. So which was his jail?

He walked into my office throwing his wages on the table, saying "Put this into your Trust Account for Curnick Ndlovu's father to visit his son on Robben Island."

He who had never had a visit for the ten years on Robben Island wanted Curnick (serving a 20 year stretch) to be visited by his father.



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I am shivering! It was only a year in the country of his birth in 'freedom' and then forced into exile. Read my book ('Footsteps in Grey Street') for more.

For the most part, I write about comrades who have died and end with, 'Hamba Kahle.' But I say the same to President Zuma:

Hamba Kahle - Go well – on this challenging path before you!

Phyllis Naidoo
Durban
19/5/2009.