



# APDUSA VIEWS

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## A TRIBUTE TO ROWYN RAJAH



### **INTRODUCTION**

On 12 October 1985, Rowyn Rajah, aged 17, was killed tragically in a motor accident.

The untimely death of one so young, but so full of promise, came as a shattering blow to all who knew him.

Rowyn led a short, but remarkable life – a life worth recording so that it may inspire young people to walk in the path chosen by him.

It is our sad, but proud duty, to pay tribute to Rowyn by a brief description of his character and activities he had engaged in.

## **AS A STUDENT**

For most part of his school career, Rowyn's performance was high and school reports predicted a bright academic future for him. However, from the end of last year, when he wrote his standard 8 examination, the prediction of his future was that of brilliance. The amended prediction was understandable because Rowyn had obtained five "As" and one "B". His position was first, not only in his class, but in the entire division. This performance earned him four Certificates of Merit, including one each in Physical Science, Mathematics and Biology. He was all set on a course of studies and a career in which he would have acquitted himself with honour and distinction.

## **AS A PERSON**

In his relationship with people, Rowyn displayed a simplicity and a humility which endeared him to all with whom he came into contact. His friendliness, his strong sense of loyalty and warmth won him a large number of friends.

He also won the respect and admiration of members of his age group because of his knowledge and seriousness in discussion which went far beyond the school syllabus. His boldness and an uncompromising adherence to principles made the youth rally around him.

## **AS A SACOS SPORTSPERSON**

Many will remember Rowyn as an enthusiastic sportsperson. Although he enjoyed playing various codes of sports, his first love was cricket. At the time of his death, he was a captain of his school cricket team.

Rowyn was very particular and proud of playing all his sports under the SACOS banner. He did not tolerate people who betrayed the cause of the oppressed people by playing in the racist sports organisations, which of necessity, remained outside the SACOS fold.

For some time before his death, Rowyn waged a relentless battle against an infringement of SACOS principles by a young cricket player.

In spite of an attempted cover-up by the organiser of the match and a criminal indifference shown by a Natal Cricket Selector, Rowyn had the matter taken to the highest official in the Cricketing Code. Rowyn's charges against the culprits were upheld as being valid and correct. Such then, was his tenacity in defending and applying the principles he had adopted.

## **AS A MEMBER OF APDUSA AND THE UNITY MOVEMENT**

From a very early age, Rowyn interested himself in the society in which he lived. He was sensitive to the sufferings of the oppressed people and reacted sharply whenever he came across acts of oppression.

By the time he was 14 years old, he began to involve himself in the activities of APDUSA. At the end of 1983 he attended the first conference of the Unity Movement groups. Subsequently, he attended that historic conference where the decision to form the New Unity Movement was taken.

His was not a mere passing interest in the liberatory movement. On the contrary, he involved himself in the struggle with a burning intensity. He diligently assisted in the fieldwork of APDUSA. He conducted political study groups of students. In addition he critically evaluated and imbibed the teachings of APDUSA and the Unity Movement. His response to oppression was not just an emotional one as is the unfortunate case with so many of our young people.

Rowyn approached the political struggle in the same way as he did in his other activities — methodical, thorough, systematic and scientific.

His serious approach to the struggle and his relatively superior knowledge made him a natural student leader. It therefore, came as no surprise that when his school staged a stay-away as a protest against the declaration of the State of Emergency, Rowyn, together with others, was in the forefront.

Despite his young years, Rowyn displayed the maturity of a seasoned freedom fighter. He was aware of the corruption of young black students by the liberals. When, therefore, he and other students were invited to have breakfast in the Mayor's Parlour as part of the celebration of the International Youth Year, he spurned the invitation without even consulting his parents and the APDUSA leadership. He had reacted almost instinctively to the ill-disguised attempt to seduce the students on the part of the white elected Mayor.

At the time of his death, Rowyn had already worked out for himself his philosophy. From this philosophy came his deep commitment to:—

- \* The concept of equality of all human beings.
- \* The principle of non-racialism.
- \* The Ten-Point Programme of the Unity Movement embodying the democratic demands and aspirations of the oppressed people.

- \* **The policy of non-collaboration.**
- \* **The vision of a single, united and non-racial South African nation.**
- \* **A democratic system of education in a democratic South Africa.**

## **CONCLUSION**

Rowyn will always be remembered as a very special person. The huge throng of mourners at his funeral bears testimony to his popularity. His death left many shattered.

We, in APDUSA, had realised the great potential of this ill-starred youth. He had all the makings of a dedicated freedom fighter who would have towered above many through his intellect and single-mindedness. Needless to say that his absence from our ranks will be a great loss.

To us in APDUSA Rowyn was a cadre, a comrade, a brother and a son. Hence this tribute

To his family members, relatives and friends we say:—

*It has been your singular honour to have walked with Rowyn in life albeit for so short a time. There is only one way to honour his memory, namely, to do the things he loved doing and to equal or surpass his commitment to the struggle for a South Africa free of oppression and exploitation. Therefore:—*

**“Join in the only battle  
Wherein no man can fail,  
For whoso fadeth and dieth,  
Yet his deeds shall still prevail”  
(William Morris)**

**WE SALUTE ROWYN RAJAH!**

**WE GRIEVE HIS PASSING!**