

TO; WILLIE & BETTY LESLIE

24th February, 1997

When Betty so generously offered to pedicure (cut) Docrat's toe nails on Saturday 22/2, we found that Bones had beat us to the draw. Bones had visited Docrat (82yrs) on that Saturday morning. She offered her skills that she had acquired on her mother's toenails and Doc accepted. We did not evaluate the work done but if he was satisfied that's all that mattered.

Thank you Betty. You told us that Jeff was getting married and I confirmed that I had read something in the papers. She confirmed that he was marrying on Saturday. I asked if they had been invited. There was an abrupt - NO. I know there was a lot of pain in that NO.

And Willie, your telephone call at 5.45am on Saturday morning offering to take me to the Market, would have been most welcome normally but since last week and the sugar diabetes I've been so groggy and holding up the walls to support me. It will pass they assure me. It cannot be too soon for me. Thank you Willie.

In both these acts, Betty's offer to cut Doc's toenails and Willie's offer to take me to the market depicts your instant generosity. It was generosity to two elders from whom no favour could be expected or reciprocated. Both Doc and myself are STRUGGLE pensioners awaiting the elusive pension that has been on the horizon for over two years. It was that generosity which led you into the struggle against apartheid; that led you into 15 years of exile. You two have done so much for the hard won democracy that we experience today, not to mention your three children the epitome of non-racism. Thank you.

In the course of exile we got to know each other and except for some hiccoughs we have enjoyed a very special friendship. We both met Jeff in Lesotho in 1981 when he was deployed by the Party to the underground. But I met him earlier.

It was Omar Badsha who told me of a BC who wanted articles of clerkship and asked me to talk to him. I could ill afford a clerk but knowing unless we opened our ranks no black lawyers will make it through the conservative practice of Law. I recall telling him (if my memory serves me well) along these lines. I won't be teaching you the Natal Law Society requirements, you can study that for yourself. The only rule that I impose on my staff is that all persons coming into my office be treated with dignity. The colour of one's skin should play no part in this. Of course he ballsed up in the first week, when he treated the SB's with dignity and brought them to my office.

I recall taking him to the 25th anniversary of Black Sash up in Musgrave Road in a church where the floral arrangements cost more than a year's wages for then gardeners. It was Alan Paton & Bishop Hurley who spoke or certainly were present at the function.



I recall returning with Jeff to my flat that night and his surprise that whites fought for the same things as we did. That's the trouble with BC I chided.

Jeff complained that he was not learning any law in my office but packing parcels for detainees. The fellow he wanted, the cession to, was known to be a scrooge. I phoned and insisted he pay Jeff a living wage. (He told me that morning in Court that he flew by charter flights to Port Shepstone at R10,000.00 a time Wow!)

But on hindsight I think he was distancing himself from me as he was about to go into exile. I think my office facilitated his meeting with Judson, Russel, Zuma and others. But I don't know when he changed from BC to us.

When I got to exile in July of 1977, I was made privy to Sechaba for the first time and maybe in 1978 an article described the work done in a legal office in SA. The office sounded like mine. I wrote to MP and asked who the author of that article was. He gave me a name I did not recognize immediately MANBGOBA. I found that Jeff was in our ranks when he went from the GDR to Tanzania. He had married and there was a child.

Then I had a letter from him asking for his son to stay with me. Soon after I was bombed and did not hear from him for awhile. Then he joined us in the underground in Maseru. I think you got to know him then. I don't know what money the underground had but invariably they relied on the pockets of those of us who were employed. You took care of so many comrades. You never worked for your immediate family only and even when Betty worked it was always for the larger ANC family.

Jeff kept cover even when we were massacred; his place was vandalised but what a disciplined comrade he was. When I was kicked out of Lesotho he broke cover and sat with me the whole night. I left on that Saturday morning in September, 1983 and left him and all of you behind. This time you were so upset you did not decorate the plane with rose petals or show me your checked underpants. Your General was in the plane with me and the coward did not say a bloody thing.

Was it 1986/7 when he was captured, the trial and Robben Island he had his prison number as 70/88. He certainly was there in Robben Island when Sahdhan my son was murdered on the 15th April, 1989 for his telegram and Ebrahim Ismail's were the first to reach me. It was Sunny Singh visiting me in Harare at the time, who opened their telegrams:

When I returned home in 1990 I went to the Island to see him and others.

After that work at Nadel and the ANC kept him busy and probably your return found him here. But I recall a telephone call from Jeff asking me to take on the Admin at the ANC office. What do I know about that?



I said they needed some younger person.

I am sure you will be able to write so much detail of your time together and you had done so much together and you too must be pained.

But we should not be upset at this. In spite of his membership of the party his position dictates otherwise. IN today's paper he was asking for tenders for Black businessmen for various jobs. His job offer to you I knew was impossible and what was the tokenism for? He did not call me when my Sha died. And look who sits at his head table. Montlana the business tycoon who during his detention in 1977 had meals sent from the Carlton, so too did Winnie and Fatima Meer. The two people that saw them were Gwenduna and Skenjana.

If ever he gets the boot from politics he has his brother-in-law Cyril Ramaphosa. So loose no sleep over this.

So make sure you get that job and attend to yourself and your family. Dont loose your humanity ever.

Love

Phyllis

