

From: Pascual Pastrana <felixleo2000@yahoo.com>
 To: Phyllis Naidoo <phyllie@africa.com>
 Date: Sunday, July 04, 1999 3:18 PM

Red.
6pm 4/7/99

Dear Phyllie:

While I was sending you my "please forgive my silence" E-Mail, your "What-the-heck-is-going-on-with-you-and-your-silence-E-Mail" was already in my machine, but I did not read it before I sent you mine. I will try to explain the technical reasons, to see if they make sense to you -- or to me, when I hear myself.

For some time I had been trying to learn how to type an E-Mail message in a file in my hard disk so that I did not use too much phone time, but no one seemed to be able to tell me how. You know I have been learning all this by myself. Then the day before yesterday I discovered that I could just "cut and paste". Now, when Wait & I decided to get into the E-Mail system to send you the message, there was a thunderstorm lurking. The only thing I really remember about the guy who installed my modem was that if thunder stroke in a 10-km. radius of my home while I was using the E-Mail, bye-bye modem. Then, when we were loading up the E-Mail (and my machine is a 486, and a slow one at that), I see I have one new message. "Ooooooh, that's Phyllie", I told Wait, and he said: "Just load the goddam message, because your'e going to lose the modem to lightening". He was right. I did everything quickly, and the second I was disconnecting the modem, a big lightening bolt stroke very near us, and the lights go out two seconds. I wasn't even sure if I had disconnected the modem in time. Fortunately, by a split second, I had. But I am very happy to have found a way to write a long E-Mail without using up telephone time. So now you will get real sagas from me.

Well, going back to your message. I see you are still concerned that I might have felt insulted by your direct criticism of my politically incorrect approach to Women's Day, and that might explain my long silence. That's just like you. I can imagine you telling a person every rotten thing you think of him/her, and then going back to verify if they are mad at your sincerity. No, I was not pissed off. Remember: I was married once, so I'm used to being unprovokedly insulted, harassed and abused by a

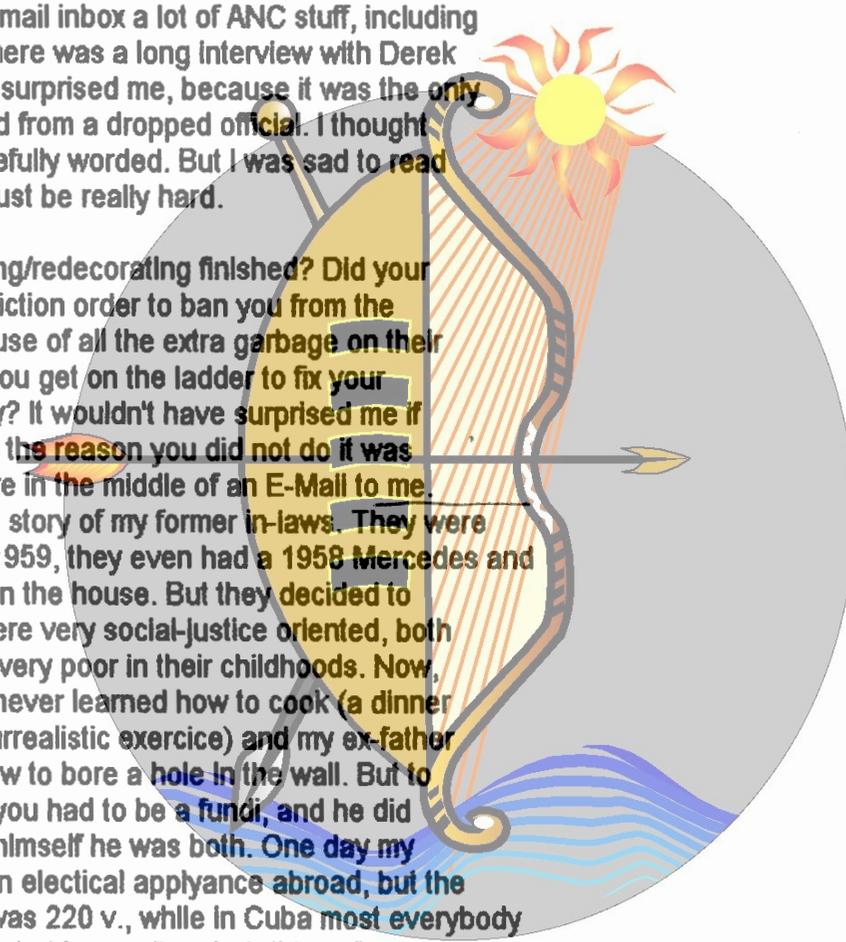
marriage
unprovokedly insulted

woman. Which is not the case. I will try to repeat my position (paper) on women's day: I loathe it because I think that is the day when most men will pamper women, tell them how important and loved they are, to go back to nullifying them the next day -- and for the following 364 days, until next year's women's day. Why is there not an international men's day? Don't tell me -- yes, because it's not necessary. We have the remaining 364 days in our pockets.

So Gonda -- the moon lady -- is with you. Does she know where she'll be going? I imagine it's a time of job changes for a lot of your close friends. By the way, I am getting via CEAMO, to my E-mail inbox a lot of ANC stuff, including the daily briefings. There was a long interview with Derek Hannekon that really surprised me, because it was the only one such thing I found from a dropped official. I thought it was good, very carefully worded. But I was sad to read about his illness: it must be really hard.

Has all the refurbishing/redecorating finished? Did your neighbours get an eviction order to ban you from the neighbourhood because of all the extra garbage on their garden? Why didn't you get on the ladder to fix your neighbour's electricity? It wouldn't have surprised me if you did, and perhaps the reason you did not do it was just because you were in the middle of an E-Mail to me. That reminds me of a story of my former in-laws. They were very wealthy before 1959, they even had a 1958 Mercedes and three people to help in the house. But they decided to stay because they were very social-justice oriented, both of them having been very poor in their childhoods. Now, my ex-mother in law never learned how to cook (a dinner at her place was a surrealistic exercise) and my ex-father in law never knew how to bore a hole in the wall. But to be politically correct you had to be a fundi, and he did his best to convince himself he was both. One day my brother in law buys an electrical appliance abroad, but the problem was that it was 220 v., while in Cuba most everybody only has 110 v. current at home. So what did my former father in law do? He went to the electric box, and discovered that there were two incoming 110 v. cables, because it was a two-storey house, and each storey had an independent electric intake. So he concludes: "110 plus 110 makes 220". Well, mathematically correct. Not electrically correct. He puts the two cables together. The whole electric box hasn't hit the ground yet.

Ah, the joys of age. Thanks for informing me about Lewis Williams and his two books on rock art. Incidentally, you

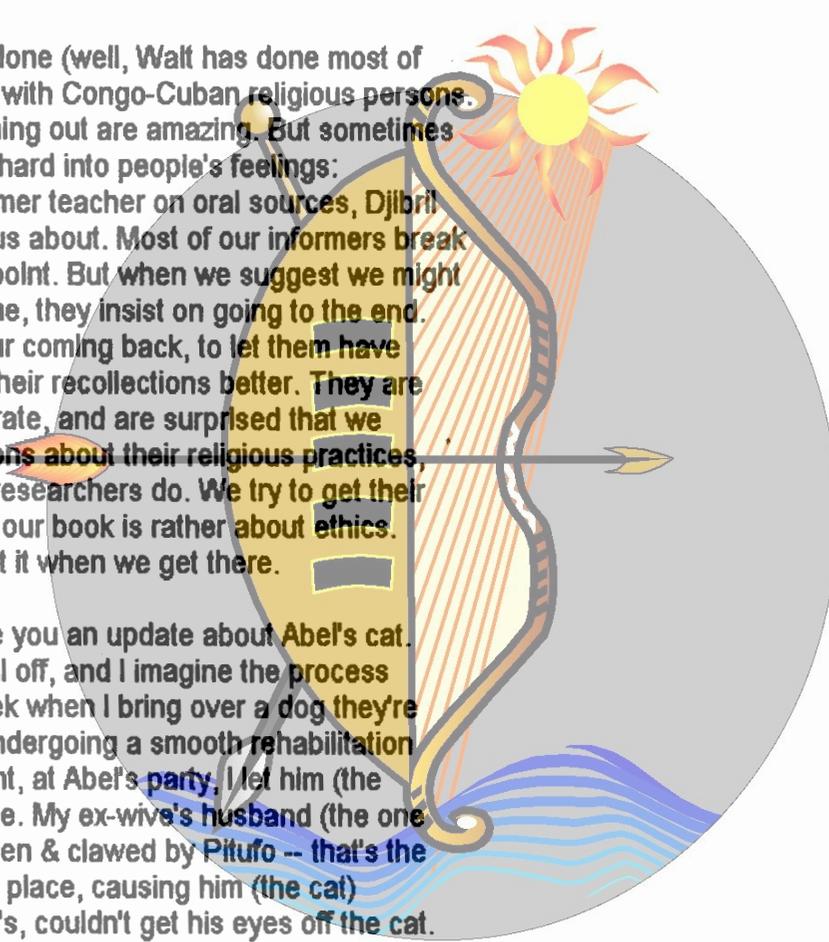


sent me the one on rock art, which I read and already thoroughly commented to you in a past E-Mail. It is an excellent book, very much in line with what I have read from the Zimbabwe rock art fundi, Peter Garlake.

Well, it's still early Sunday, Walt just got up and we have to start working on our book. By the way, you were speaking to me in your latest E-Mails of two projects, or are they just one: the dairy/calendar and the book on the former strugglers senior citizens. What about Chris Han's biography? That was due to be finished around your dissertation, I think, but I never heard any more about it.

On our book, we have done (well, Walt has done most of them) 8 long interviews with Congo-Cuban religious persons. The things that are coming out are amazing. But sometimes I feel we are prying too hard into people's feelings: that's something my former teacher on oral sources, Djibril Tamsir Niane, warned us about. Most of our informers break down and cry at some point. But when we suggest we might continue some other time, they insist on going to the end. they always insist on our coming back, to let them have some time to organize their recollections better. They are all very eager to cooperate, and are surprised that we do not ask them questions about their religious practices, which is what all other researchers do. We try to get their insight on life, because our book is rather about ethics. Well, we'll tell you about it when we get there.

Walt advises me to give you an update about Abel's cat. His hair continues to fall off, and I imagine the process will accelerate next week when I bring over a dog they're giving me. The cat is undergoing a smooth rehabilitation process. On Friday night, at Abel's party, I let him (the cat) come into the house. My ex-wife's husband (the one who was assaulted, bitten & clawed by Pitufu -- that's the cat's name -- in the first place, causing him (the cat) to be banned from Abel's, couldn't get his eyes off the cat. But no problem, the cat just went around, pressed against people's feet, jumped on some people's laps, purred and lovingly bit people's toes. I think he (the cat) has been rehab, but the thing is now their former owners (if one could say that anyone owns a cat) are afraid to take him (the cat) back. He (Abel) wants him (the cat) back, but the older people in the house are not sure he (the cat) is rehab. Do you think (as a lawyer) we might take this up with some cat rights organization? Please write back on this. Can you write to Sukhti about it? Ask her if she thinks the cat might get along well with flower...



It's almost 9 am, Sunday, Walt brushed his teeth, had his breakfast and is back and says: "I can't believe you're still writing to Phyllis. You're going to have your inbox cancelled!" By the way, constantly things come up that remind me of you. This morning, at breakfast, I broke a tooth? What was the name of that Santiago dentist again? Or should I wait for that better-than-sex dentist in Durban?

220 v of love, David & Walt.

Do You Yahoo!?

Get your free @yahoo.com address at

<http://mail.yahoo.com>

