Horst's 56th Newsletter

December 2024

Honouring another 11 South Africans who stood up against Apartheid: Rick Turner, Alex and Khosi Mbatha, Trudy Thomas, Anne Browne, Bishop Patrick Matolengwe, 'Christmas' Tinto, Bennie Khoapa, Peter Randall, Neville Curtis, Victor Honey.

On 8 December 2024 over sixty friends and family of the extended former Christian Institute community gathered at Goedgedacht, an olive farm and conference center north of Cape Town. They came to plant eleven olive trees, to extend the Olive Justice Grove initiated last year. In December 2023 twenty-seven[1] olive trees were planted by family and friends for the initial members of this activist community. Now there are thirty-eight olive trees, growing on the north side of the Goedgedacht Interfaith Chapel. Each tree is marked with the name of one person.

This Justice Grove reminds us of people who, besides many others, stood and acted for justice, equality and dignity for every human being at the time when our country suffered under the yoke of deeply entrenched racism enforced with authoritarian violence. In today's world, this community of thirty-eight would, without doubt, additionally, stand up for climate justice! Those memorialized here span a rainbow of gender, class, colour and sexual orientation. This 'Justice Grove' also reminds us that achievements are due to community collaboration and not simply the work of one or other individual. Deep in the heart of each one of this community was the passion to build a common, just and equal South Africa.

Goedgedacht is worth a visit! Children and grand-children of those remembered are often, because of Apartheid's doings, strewn across the globe. May they feel reason to visit South Africa and the place that honours a parent or grand-parent! The Grove provides a modest but appropriate space to come and pay respect and remember a single person, or a whole community, who had the courage to resist through word and deed. The price they paid is remembered in the biographies of each one of them. Steve Biko and Rick Turner paid the highest price, the former having been killed through police torture and the latter by the bullet of a police assailant not named to this day. Others spent prolonged periods in detention without trial, being charged or having access to a defence lawyer. Others were house-arrested or banned. Yet others were forced into exile. All of them suffered arbitrary actions at the hands of a lawless Apartheid police enabled to do as they pleased.

Our intention is to remember a further group of persons in December 2025.

[1] Beyers Naudé, Ilse Naudé, Steve Biko, Cedric Mayson, Helen Kotze, Theo Kotze, Frederik Conradie, Cosmas Desmond, Manas Buthelezi, Francis Wilson, James Polley, Albert Nolan, Margaret Nash, Vesta Smith, Lindi Myeza, June Chabaku, Tsankiie Modiakgotla, 'Dot' Cleminshaw, Florrie de Villiers, Des Adendorff, Francois Bill, Anne Hope, Mashwabada Mayathula, Oshadi Phakathi, Wolfram Kistner, Bishop David Russell, Rob Robertson.

At this year's event we had three speakers: Prof Bernard Lategan of Stellenbosch University, Ms. Venessa Padayachee, a member of the Goedgedacht Board, and Prof Mike van Graan, South African playwright and poet[2]. They reminded us not only of the sacrifices of those we came to honour, but how they defined their values and morality. Mike challenged us to once again stand up and redefine our values in today's times where egalité is globally under renewed threat. His challenge: face up to a South Africa that has the highest income inequality in the world and, respond to the increasing threat of global conflagration.

We met informally before the programme began to discuss Israel's genocide in Gaza that, we noted, is frequently met with silence between friends and within families. What does this mean or signify? No comprehensive answers were articulated. Silence as complicity at national, but now at a global level was, as always of concern. The on-going genocide, the global arms race, anti-Semitism, the wars in Sudan and elsewhere, global inequalities, the undermining and abandonment of international institutions, the prosecution of wars without negotiation or compromise as an outcome or goal, the rising voice of the global south, capitalism, the failures of democracies, not least in the USA, and despotic rule such as Putin in Russia, were all matters that demanded and required further discussion. The ninety-minute discussion remained uneasy. For many because of personal experience, including my own, of potential or tensions, within our own families. Afterwards several people expressed their appreciation for an opportunity to be amongst people where these topics were aired, albeit that there was no resolution.

Attached is a copy of the address by Prof Lategan and two poems written and read to us by Mike van Graan. Here is the link to the virtual publication for this year's event:
https://online.fliphtml5.com/ajhyo/nowd/#p=16
And see the photos of us planting an olive tree for each of the eleven person's we came to honour.

Big thank you to:

Christine Crowley who once more drew portraits of each person.
Alexi and Malcolm McCarthy who designed and produced the virtual booklet.
The entire staff at Goedgedacht, starting with **Deon and Sarah,** but also **Pieter, Paul, Nadia, Jacques** and others**.**
Jim Cochrane for his advice, edits and support.

And thank you, **the families**, who engaged me through phone-calls, emails and visits. Please continue to help us extend, improve and correct the biographies.

All god wishes to you,

Horst

[2] The invitations to this year's event included Dr Mamphela Ramphele as a speaker. She was prevented from attending due to a bereavement in her immediate family.