

A tribute to a friend by Reason Beremauro.

### **A tribute to a friend: Dr. Gugulethu Siziba (1979-2017)**

At the beginning of 2011 I had a situation. At the time, I was in Roskilde (Denmark) on a 5 months PhD writing residence. Back in Johannesburg my wife, Jacqui was not only taking care of our 4-months old son but she was also registering for her Masters degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. Whilst we had gathered most of the required finances there was a shortfall of close to R10 000. I had no hesitation in calling Gugu to ask for help.

‘Gugu, I’ve got a situation. Jacqui needs about R8000 or so to complete her registration. We only found out today that.....’

Gugu interjected, ‘Oh, I can give you guys R10 000. You can give me back at a later date.’

‘Oh, thank you!’ I said.

Although I was relieved and quite delighted with Gugu’s response I was surprised that he had not teased me before offering to assist. Such was Gugu’s witty deportment that I was a little disappointed he had not made light my situation. His generosity did not surprise me at all.

I had known Gugu since 2000 having been introduced by a mutual friend a few months before we were due to start our 1<sup>st</sup> year at the University of Zimbabwe. Fate ensured that we were in the same Sociology/Anthropology class from 1<sup>st</sup> year till we completed our Masters’ degree at the same institution. We later shared an apartment in Harare as we sought to gain a career foothold. Throughout this period I was captivated by his sharp wit but I came to appreciate his reflections and analysis especially the nuanced approach he took on any issue we discussed. In numerous ways, he sharpened my own analytic skills and helped me take a fine-grained analytic approach to any issue- from politics to sport. I had no hesitation in giving him my work to review because he was candid. I did not always like this but Gugu’s insights improved my work and no doubt that of many other colleagues.

Back at the University of Zimbabwe, Gugu was a renowned footballer playing for the University team that competed in the regional first division league. I have no doubt he would have made a career in either football or in the academy, perhaps both. His experiences in 2010 in Johannesburg attest to this. Gugu spent a year affiliated to the Wits University and while this period was generally unhappy for him (career-wise) he executed his numerous responsibilities well whilst dealing with the uncertainties, demands and expectations that come with being an immigrant. I was often amazed and admired the way he wrote quickly. Gugu was talented, clever and intelligent but he also showed steely determination and commitment to succeed in the academy. These qualities are exemplary for me and indeed many other friends and colleagues close to or at Gugu’s level.

As a friend, I will miss Gugu but his writings will live on. I will continue to engage on the themes that he focused on migration, migrant spaces, xenophobia etc.

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May Gugu's soul rest in eternal peace! Gone too soon!

Reason Beremauro  
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