



A time to reflect: the late Mandla “Fire” Zulu

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Asked why he wanted to be Prime Minister, David Cameron is rumoured to have paused and, with characteristic humility, said, “Because I’m good at it!”

That is the sort of thing Mandla Zulu, a colleague since my return to the Bar in late-2007, would have said if asked why he wanted to be Senior Counsel. Except, Mandla didn’t much care for such status baubles, and would have said it with a mischievous twinkle in his eye – and a busy laugh.

I say “busy” because Mandla did not laugh like you and I. His was, well, busy, with arms flailing and hands covering his clean face and clean-shaven head as if to ward off airborne germs.

His sartorial elegance was legendary; his well-groomed visage the envy of most beastly-looking male colleagues. Indeed, his chambers (adjacent to mine) were a refuge for many a lady both in distress and in mirth. He knew the boundaries though.

Impatient and quick on the trigger if a man should be “out of order”, while generous to a fault otherwise, Mandla was the quintessential embodiment of a 21st century advocate. He de-

tested injustice. He encouraged young advocates’ industry. He was (and still is) the only advocate I know who straddled Bar and business with equal dexterity and success.

Transformation of the Bar was in Mandla’s blood. It was not something he did. It was what he was. In a sense, the Bar did not deserve Mandla. With its resistance to change for the better, it tainted him. So much so that on occasion he would murmur demurely about the formation of a separate Bar, free from the shackles of decades old anachronistic rules.

As I reflect on my own transformation path at the Bar, I wonder, loudly, if time has not come for giving effect to Mandla’s murmurs of demur. I wonder – given the history of ham-fisted transformation at the Bar and where the Bar seems headed in that regard as demonstrated in my 2017 annual report – whether it is at all possible to continue Mandla’s transformation legacy in this place.

I am not at all hopeful. Mandla’s legacy deserves a better canvass. **A**