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# advocate

Iphaphabhuku labameli basemajajini baseNingizimu Afrika  
Dzhenala ya dzangano la vhaadivokati vha Afrika Tshipembe  
Die Suid-Afrikaanse Balietydskrif ■ The South African Bar Journal  
Kgatisobaka ya boadifokata ya Africa-Borwa  
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## FROM THE EDITOR

In 2009 I went to the offices of the Legal Resources Centre to interview Tembeka Ngcukaitobi who had just been appointed to head up its constitutional litigation unit.

It seemed a quiet, ordinary day at the LRC, people in their offices at their computers and not much else going on. We did the interview and Jason Brickhill popped in to say hello. We all had a nice chat and then it was time to go.

Jason and Tembeka were walking me to my car when load-shedding hit; we had to trek down the 16 flights of stairs. So, off we missioned down these stairs, Tembeka, Jason and I, joking and chatting and laughing.

Except that at a point, I realised that I was talking to myself. The other two had stopped on one of the landings and were having a hushed conversation that they didn't want Franny the Journalist to hear: about what they were "going to do about George".

It took me a few seconds to realise that a) they were talking about the great George Bizos; b) they called the great George Bizos "George"; and c) it was already past four and somehow the great, but elderly, George Bizos was going to have to get down 16 flights of stairs.

I eavesdropped more and was struck further when I realised that this was not the first time they had had this discussion. That despite load-shedding, which was an almost daily occurrence at the time, this uncle was still insisting on going to work every day. And that – while it could have been exasperating to his junior colleagues – their discussion was respectful and patient; loving even.

I never knew Bizos personally and only met him once. But I saw him in action a few times. I saw him – gloriously – argue for why Clive Derby-Lewis, who murdered liberation hero Chris Hani, should not be paroled at that particular stage. I saw him at the Marikana Commission. My personal favourite Bizos moment was at the Judicial Service Commission when he questioned Justice Chris Jaffa – not yet appointed to the Constitutional Court – about the infamous visit of Western Cape Judge President John Hlophe to the Constitutional Court when he – the justices alleged – tried to influence the outcome of cases then pending before the highest court involving former president Jacob Zuma. Justice Jaffa was humming and hawing a little bit and Bizos would have none of it. He was fabulous.

But it was that hushed conversation between Tembeka and Jason that I always felt was most revealing about Bizos. I could never quite put my finger on why I was so moved by these two busy and very clever lawyers trying to solve this practical problem of how "George" would get down the stairs; and trying not to let me hear – to protect his dignity.

But as I read the tributes and anecdotes we have collected for this edition, I think I see why. I feel that, like many of the best counsel, Bizos had a touch of the showman in him. But like only a few advocates, he went to work every day – and would climb stairs – to be there for clients that had nothing; and that no one ever knew. For cases that were not famous or glamorous. That he was there for countless people, and that is why they were there for him. That his greatness as a lawyer was rooted in his deep compassion as a human being.

And that perhaps this is why he inspired and encouraged generation upon generation of lawyers, some of whom have written for us on the pages of *Advocate*.

As the year draws to a close, we are also hoping against hope that we will see an end to the pandemic that has turned the world and life as we know it upside down. In this edition, we have checked in with members on how the pandemic has affected practice with a new survey and commissioned a substantive look by Michael Williams at the way the pandemic impacted the courts.

It has been a tough year and very few of us have not experienced loss and grief this year. From the team at *Advocate*, our sincere condolences to those who have. Take care, be safe and rest well over December. **A**

**The editor contributes to *Advocate* as an autonomous author. The views she expresses are entirely her own, and do not purport to represent any view or position of *Advocate* or of the GCB.**