



Mannie cried freedom

Description



Emmanuel Jacob was just 12 when he saw the rallying call on a bridge in Clairwood, Durban. ‘Free Mandela,’ the grafitti said.

‘It started me thinking about something I had never given thought to before,’ said Mannie, now 68.

There were queues for different race groups at the post office and library

Mannie grew up in an Asian community in South Africa under apartheid. His was a happy childhood, playing barefoot in a close-knit neighbourhood.

He asked an uncle about the Mandela slogan. ‘Don’t talk about it,’ he was told, ‘don’t mention it to anyone’. Mannie realises now his uncle was protecting him.

Mannie was quick to learn. He noticed how race groups lived in separate communities.

There were queues for different race groups at the post office and library, and they had to use separate public amenities. Brought up in a Methodist family, Mannie wondered, ‘How could people be treated in this way, in a country that claimed to be Christian?’

Mannie became involved in student protests alongside the likes of ‘black consciousness’ leader Steve Biko. ‘We felt we were not being given the freedoms – let alone privileges – that white students had,’ Mannie recalled. For his part in organising a student strike, he was expelled from university in 1972 and spent two nights in prison.

Although he’d studied science, Mannie turned to theology in 1978. He attended the Federal Theological Seminary for the black community, where he met librarian Lynn, and then Rhodes University, Grahamstown. ‘She comes from a white South African background,’ said Mannie, ‘and to work in a township is very brave.’

‘I decided I didn’t want to be a part of a system that divided people’

Growing up, Lynn was aware things were not as they should be. ‘We didn’t have television in the country until 1975 and that makes an incredible difference to how much people know. It was seeing pictures of young children in Soweto that spoke so loudly to me.’

Lynn, who is now 66, added, ‘That’s when I started to find out what was going on. I decided I didn’t want to be a part of a system that divided people’.

Read the rest of this story – including how the couple made their home with us – in [the spring 2019 edition of Roof ‘n’ Roots](#). (Photo of Mannie and Lynn in their MMHS home: Clive Price. Front page pic of street scene in Johannesburg with Nelson Mandela poster: [Gregory Fullard](#) on [Unsplash](#))

Category

1. Our residents

Date Created

27/04/2019

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