

Cde Ram: a life well lived serving humanity

A gentle giant has fallen in Africa. Khanya College celebrates the life of Ram Seegobin, a lifelong socialist, dedicated to the struggle of humanity. Cde Ram was a member of a member of Ledikasyon pu Travayer (LPT), the workers' education association; and a member of Lalit (meaning 'struggle' in Creole), a socialist organization based in Mauritius; and. He was insightful and unassuming, and touched the lives of many with his gentleness, ease, and humour.

I first met Cde Ram in 1999 on a work visit to support public sector unions in Mauritius. We had heard about Lalit and were keen to make contact. Wearing what became his trademark: a colourful caftan top, slip-slops and flowing long grey hair, Ram was a sage, free and unfettered. Time flew as we spent the afternoon at Flic in Flac in discussion, about unions, the working class, parties, and the world. Ram was open and engaging, and thus began the comradeship and friendship, and solidarity between Khanya College and LPT.

Amongst many exchanges of ideas, initiatives, and debates over the years, Cde Ram was the keynote speaker at the regional five-day Khanya Winter School for activists in July 2003 in Joburg. Themed *Nepad and the The Struggle for Regional Solidarity*, he provided a critique of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), the brainchild of President Thabo Mbeki. In effect, the NEPAD extended South Africa's neoliberal agenda into Africa. One of the School's aims was to strengthen social justice networking in the region. The papers from the School formed the basis of the *Khanya Journal* edition on NEPAD (2004).

Later that year, the People's Parliament, a broad coalition of civil society organisations from Southern Africa, was held in Mauritius to oppose the US war in Iraq, and both the Nepad and AGOA. Delegates from the unions and social movements in South Africa attended.

Cde Ram's loss is therefore particularly acute in the struggle for international solidarity in the current context of iniquitous relations, war, genocide, widespread poverty, and ecocide.

Lindsey Collen, cde Ram's life-partner, was the Guest of Khanya's Jozi Book Fair in 2010, our second festival; and remains a Patron of the Fair.

Together with the late Oupa Lehulere, we shared happy times together with Ram, Lindsey and Lalit comrades. Ram always made time to listen. He was a fine cook and made a mean fish curry, and often historicised his dishes, its ingredients, and its health benefits. This was part of the enjoyment of the meals - debates, some wine, hope, and laughter – a taste of socialism. On occasion, Rajni Lallah enchanted us at the piano.

Our solidarity and love to Lindsey, LPT, Lalit, and the many comrades and friends internationally. Cde Ram is a role model of a life well lived and enjoyed, in the service of humanity. Ram's life's work will inspire new generations. Another world is possible!

Maria van Driel