

A pioneer in the fight against oppression

Obituary

ARTHUR MAGERMAN

ARTHUR Magerman was born on May 17, 1933 in Alexandra Township. He attended the Alexandra Catholic School in Second Avenue, and became one of the first to matriculate from the school.

He studied further at the University of the Witwatersrand where he obtained a law degree – one of the first Alexandra Township residents to do so.

Magerman used his legal expertise to defend the downtrodden, some of whom were caught in the midst of the township social ills and became victims of their circumstances like the notorious Msomi and Spoiler Gangs.

He soon realised, however, that he

did not wish to continue practising law within what he considered a racially biased legal system.

Instead, Magerman channelled his entire life into community work in Alexandra Township through the formation of various socially uplifting community programmes, most notably the NGO Phutaditjaba, joining forces with another community leader, Linda Twala, to do their level best in pushing back the suffering and poverty for the aged and poor in the township.

During his student years Magerman became involved in politics. He was involved in the historic Alexandra Bus Boycott “Asikwelwa” (We shall not ride) in 1957 which spread to Western Native Township, Soweto and parts of Pretoria.

Quoted in a 2007 interview with the Mail & Guardian, he said: “People like ANC leader Oliver Tambo and ANC

deputy leader Nelson Mandela sent us messages of encouragement. It was more than just buses. It became more political, a feeling that we need to be liberated.”

His contribution was later acknowledged by former president Thabo Mbeki in his last state of the nation address in Parliament.

“Bra Arthur” as he was affectionately known by Alexandrians was instrumental in fighting the oppressive regime against the removal of Alexandra through the Save Alexandra Campaign led by Reverend Sam Buti and Frikie Conradie, a non-conformist Afrikaner theologian, and outspoken leader within the South African Council of Churches.

Magerman was also widely known for his underground work in successfully recruiting, aiding and abetting various

cadres of the ANC who have grown into venerable government leaders in and out of South Africa through what was then a porous Mafikeng/Botswana border.

He leaves behind his four sons: the oldest, Errol, who is an ANC Member of the Gauteng provincial legislature (chairperson of the portfolio committee, local government and housing); Stanley, a language practitioner in the Gauteng department of education, Masimo a Badimo, an MBA graduate who co-founded and heads up the Mergence financial services group.

Eugene, the youngest, is a specialist medical doctor practising in Canada.

Magerman’s funeral will be held on Saturday in Alexandra. Proceedings commence at 8am at 82, 2nd Avenue, Alexandra, followed by a church service at 10am at St Hubert Catholic Church in Alexandra.



TRUSTED LEADER: The role of the late Arthur Magerman in the struggle for freedom is remembered. PICTURE: AFP