

The Star

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Timol – 35 years later

Today is the 35th anniversary of the death of Ahmed Timol, a 29-year-old anti-apartheid activist who fell to his death from the 10th floor of John Vorster Square police station. Timol, arrested five days before at a roadblock, was being interrogated by members of the security branch when he plunged 10 storeys.

Timol's body thudded to the ground on the southern side of John Vorster Square (now the Central Police station), the Commissioner Street side, in the middle of Johannesburg, half a kilometre or less away from the Market Theatre and *The Star* newspaper.

As might have been – and was – predicted at the time, an inquest found that no one was to blame for his death; that Timol committed suicide for a number of reasons, the main one being that, being a so-called "trained" member of the Communist Party and having divulged some information to the police, he opted to die "rather than betray (his) organisation".

But there was a wealth of evidence then and now that contradicted this farcical and facile finding. The evidence of the policeman who was allegedly "guarding" Timol on that fateful afternoon was suspect and had clearly been rehearsed. The Timol family pathologist found at least 10 lesions and bruises, unrelated to a fall, on Timol's body. Another detainee, arrested at the same time as Timol, had been taken to a room where there was blood and hair on the floor and told to clean it up. He realised, from the hair, that it was Timol's.

On April 30 1996, Hawa, Timol's mother, now dead, appealed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to "find" her son's killers. After all, none of the policemen responsible for arresting Timol or interrogating him – all of whom, except one, are still alive – applied to the TRC for amnesty, nor did they ever testify before the TRC.

TRC investigators began investigating the matter but, for a variety of apparently bureaucratic reasons, nothing ever came of these investigations. Is it not time that the authorities – in this case the National Prosecuting Authority – did something about helping the remaining Timol family achieve closure?

Sticking with it

The world needs visionaries and mavericks like Richard Branson. Without their zest for life and their desire to make change happen, we would be much the poorer.

'Daddy, v

COMMENT

JONATHAN ANCER



Why should a young child have to defend itself against other people's prejudiced ideas?

Madonna is the K controversy: w touches turns i baloo. Earlier thi flew into Malawi and a week l out with her latest celeb acc month-old David Banda.

This is just another Materiz ity stunt to grab headlines.

Madonna's stunt is a fad anc to end well as far as most Afri cerned – especially David Ban a shame. Because, as the stati we're in enough trouble alrea

Three years ago I visited a d village in Mpumalanga. It hac over by the Topsy Foundatio being turned into a sanctuary t date children when the Aids r A village just for orphans! The r crisis hit me in the face like a r

When I met Jean, my part year ago, she introduced me They had adopted each other w was 5 months old. Her reason f a child was simple: if everyon adopt a child adopts a child, wouldn't be any orphans.

