

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF SOUTH AFRICA  
GAUTENG LOCAL DIVISION**

Case number: 2019/445

Original case no: 1982/130

In the matter of:

**THE REOPENED INQUEST:  
LATE NEIL HUDSON AGGETT**

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**AFFIDAVIT**

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I, the undersigned:

**GAVIN ANDERSSON**

do hereby make oath and state that:

- 1 I am an adult male born on 4 October 1951. I currently run my own company.
- 2 Unless the context indicates otherwise, the facts contained in this affidavit are within my personal knowledge and are, to the best of my belief, both true and correct.
- 3 From 1972 I was involved in organisation which supported the emergence of the trade union movement and was secretary and then organiser for the Metal and Allied Workers Union until I was banned in October 1976. My banning



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order ended early in September 1981, and later that same month I was detained by the Security Branch under the Internal Security Act. I was kept at Norwood police station and taken to John Vorster Square (JVS) for interrogation. Some days after being released from detention in October 1981, I left South Africa for Botswana. In the years from 1982 I worked as a carpenter and then founded an organization called Cooperation for Research, Development and Education (CORDE) which I worked for until my return to South Africa in January 1995. The organisation supported self-managed community enterprises in manufacturing, agriculture and other sectors. I returned to South Africa in January 1995 and was Executive Director of the Development Resources Centre from that time until 2000.

- 4 From 2000 to 2003 I was the CEO and then Community Leadership Programme Director for LeaRN which was a leadership regional network operating in six countries of Southern Africa. From 1999 until 2004 I studied for and obtained a PhD in Development Studies. I founded the Seriti Institute in 2009 and was its CEO until 2017 and thereafter director of learning and innovation until the end of June 2019. I am currently a director at Andersson Afrika which strengthens popular development organization, working in communities across the country.
- 5 The purpose of this affidavit is to set out information regarding my relationship with Dr Neil Aggett (Neil) and my detention and interrogation at John Vorster Square (JVS) which I believe may be of assistance to the reopened inquest into his death.



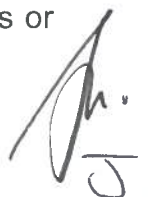
## ACTIVISM

- 6 While studying at Wits University towards a BSC degree between 1972 and 1974, I became active in the Wages Commission which carried out research on workers' wages. In 1974 I started a magazine called Africa Perspective and this brought me to the attention of Pindile Mfeti, one of the founders of the Industrial Aid Society (IAS) which was set up by a small group of ex-SACTU activists working with the Wages Commission, to provide legal assistance to black workers. He brought me onto a team of people working on a worker education programme within the IAS.
- 7 I spent time every day and night working in the IAS, and got to know others working for the organization, amongst whom was Siphon Kubheka (Siphon.) Pindile Mfeti mentored me and Siphon for a period of almost three years before he was banished to Butterworth in the Eastern Cape. Siphon and I became close friends and together with Pindile were amongst the group that started the Metal and Allied Workers Union, (the union) which later became part of NUMSA. This started with the formation of the metal wing of the IAS late in 1974, and then formally launched as the Transvaal branch of the Durban-based Metal and Allied Workers Union in September 1975. I was secretary of the union for six months and Siphon was an organiser. When I stepped down from the position in March 1976 Siphon was elected secretary and I became an organiser.
- 8 In the second half of 1974, I accompanied Pindile to a meeting in Botswana with SACTU and the ANC, together with Miriam Sithole, who was also one of the founders of the IAS. We met three people, one of them being Ray



Alexander. Thereafter, Pindile maintained contact with the ANC on a regular basis, with an understanding that if ever necessary I could make contact in Botswana. I was not acting under instruction of the external ANC and in fact we were very determined to create mass-based democratic organization within the country. Pindile continually reminded us that the external liberation movement could not lead internal struggles, although he argued that we needed to maintain contact because in the long term we needed to unify all forces for liberation. I agreed with this position.

- 9 One strand of thought within the union movement at that time, often associated with some leadership in Durban, suggested that the trade unions should not be part of the broader struggle for democracy but should focus entirely on shop-floor issues. We strongly disagreed with this position and saw the union movement as a leading part of the struggle for democracy.
- 10 In March 1976, the government and the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation (SEIFSA) decided to quash our union. On 26<sup>th</sup> March workers were prevented from entering the Heinemann Electric factory unless they were prepared to sign a form denouncing the union. At that time, there were 607 workers in the Factory and 603 were union workers, who all refused to sign the form. On Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March the gates of the factory were again locked and management and SEIFSA personnel stood behind the locked gates, together with many policemen armed with pick handles, and with dogs on leashes. At ten o'clock the Commanding Officer took out a megaphone and declared the gathering of all the barred workers who were standing outside the Factory a Riotous Assembly. He informed us to leave the premises within 30 minutes or



we would be dispersed by the police. Some of those in the crowd did not hear well and many did not understand the Afrikaans instruction. As union officials we immediately realised what was about to happen.

- 11 I was physically prevented from speaking to the workers by the police because they believed I was the secretary of the union. They didn't know that I had stepped down and Sipho had succeeded me. They therefore didn't notice Sipho telling the workers that there was no point waiting outside the factory to be beaten by the police so they should disperse and go to the Freedom Square in Alexandra to continue the meeting. The workers decided to leave and waved as they left, well before the half hour given by the commanding officer, waving as a kind of victory. Then the police unleashed their dogs and charged at us, beating whoever was in their path with the pick handles.
- 12 The police broke my arm and beat people very badly. I recall a pregnant woman who was deliberately beaten on her stomach with pick handles.
- 13 I was arrested on the spot by the police on that day, and later Sipho was also arrested. We were charged under the Criminal Procedures Act with inciting a strike and assaulting the police and were defended in the Germiston Magistrates Court by Advocate George Bizos in June 1976. We were found guilty and appealed the order. The charges were reduced in the course of the trial and we were eventually found guilty of inciting the continuation of the strike.



- 14 From 16<sup>th</sup> June 1976, there was no real possibility of conventional union activity and we devoted ourselves to supporting emergent student organisation, and specifically used our union contacts to work with students to prevent violence on the East Rand. This happened after terrifying events in Soweto where Mzimbhlophe hostel dwellers attacked and killed Soweto residents. We realised that *agent provocateurs* would try to incite similar "black on black" violence in other places and so used our networks on the East Rand to prevent this.
- 15 In October 1976, Siphon and I were both banned for five years. We agreed to continue linking with each other despite the conditions of the banning order and arranged to meet once a week at eleven o'clock on Thursdays. To make sure that the SB did not find out about this, we would each leave our homes at about six or seven in the morning, take elaborate routes, check several times to make sure that we were not being followed and then we would meet for an hour to discuss the political struggle and what we needed to do. We continued these weekly meetings for three years, but after that time we were joint members of a Woodworkers Cooperative and saw each other every day.
- 16 The banning order issued to me prohibited the following:
- 16.1 Meeting with more than one person at a time.
  - 16.2 Entering the grounds of any educational institution or any factory.
  - 16.3 Teaching anyone anything, except my own children, in the event that I would have children.
  - 16.4 Talking about any form of government or state.



- 16.5 Being quoted.
- 16.6 Communicating with any other banned person.
- 16.7 From leaving the Johannesburg Magisterial District. I had to show I was present in Johannesburg I had to sign in at John Vorster Square (though this was later changed to Hillbrow Police station) every Monday between six in the morning and six in the evening.
- 17 As a result of the banning order, I had to find new ways to earn a living. At University I had been doing a part-time job at a quantity surveying firm. This firm offered me a job, but the Minister of Justice stipulated that I could only take up this position if I did not contravene the conditions of my banning order. Of course, this was not possible because the work would involve being in the company of more than 1 person at a time.
- 18 I then taught myself carpentry and later started the Woodworkers Cooperative with three other friends, with the cover that I was developing appropriate technology prototypes for the Environmental and Development Agency (the EDA). Due to the banning order, I had to pretend that I was not part of the cooperative, when in fact I was very much a part of it.
- 19 Woodworkers Cooperative followed socialist principles, and also demanded that its members be part of the struggle for liberation of our country. My own contribution was to assist the emergence of a programme for literacy, which adopted the Freirean pedagogy. Siphon and I also started running an unofficial political education programme for union members.



## RELATIONSHIP WITH NEIL AGGETT

- 20 Neil was my brother's friend at medical school in Cape Town and I initially met him when I went to Cape Town in 1975 to visit my brother.
- 21 In 1977, I bumped into Neil at Exclusive Books in Hillbrow and after that we visited each other. Neil was evading conscription to the army and was working at Tembisa Hospital in the casualty department at the time. He lived in a little house near Tembisa standing alone in the veld, and I once worked with him to establish a potato patch outside the house. Later Neil moved to Fuller Street in Judith's Paarl, which was near where I was staying at that time with my partner. He would come over for meals, so we got to know each other very well and became good friends. Over time I introduced him to many of my friends, including Siphon, and he was well-liked.
- 22 Neil was an extremely well-balanced and good-natured person. He was quiet and appeared reserved, but he could bring a roomful of people to laughter with his wry sense of humour. If something went wrong, he would think about the situation deeply but then lighten the mood with a little joke about it before contributing his insights about what to do. When someone offered strong opinions that he didn't agree with, he would listen carefully without interruption, and then calmly point out what he thought was wrong with the argument and suggest another way of thinking about things. Many people turned to him for advice and he was able to help them think through their situation and find a way





forward. He was a caring physician and was happy to visit people in their homes in the townships if they needed medical assistance. I don't think I have ever seen another doctor quite so gentle and respectful to his patients, and so prepared to explain what caused an ailment and therefore what could be done. He became loved by many people for his humility and gentleness. There was nothing morose about him at all. He had a sanguine disposition and was optimistic about the work that he was doing. He was exceptionally well read and introduced some of us to his favourite poets.

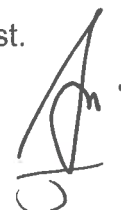
- 23 Neil was very interested in the trade union movement because his partner Liz Floyd had been part of the NUSAS Wages Commission at the University of Cape Town and had been a part of the grouping that was supporting the emergence of the Western Province General Workers Union.
- 24 He started working at the IAS towards the end of 1977 with an exciting proposal to start a medical aid scheme for workers that would provide a quality of care and access to medical practitioners which was lacking under the apartheid system.
- 25 Soon after joining the IAS, Neil had an argument with one of the people who were determined to prevent any political discussion in the unions. Neil argued convincingly that trade union struggle was inexorably linked to the struggle for democracy, but although he won the argument it soon became apparent that he was not going to be welcomed in starting the medical scheme he dreamt of. He however continued to work in the IAS part-time with other volunteer doctors, mostly focusing on workmen's compensation cases.



- 26 In the middle of 1978 Oscar Mpetha (Oscar) came to Johannesburg from Cape Town with Jan Theron the general secretary of the Food and Canning Workers Union and stayed with Neil. Oscar was given the task of restarting the Gauteng branch of the African Food and Canning Workers Union by Jan Theron, and when the latter returned to Cape Town, Oscar continued staying with Neil in Fuller Street. The two became close friends over a period of some six months, with Oscar an inspiring mentor. Neil drove Oscar to meetings across the Witwatersrand and learned about the principles of unionism, organising strategies and the long history of the African Food and Canning Workers Union.
- 27 The African Food and Canning Workers Union had been strong in Fattis and Monis during the 1960s, and Oscar was tasked with rebuilding organisation in the factory at Isando. The factory's management in Isando and in Cape Town refused to talk with the union and indeed fired 88 workers in Cape Town. This precipitated a strike, followed by a boycott of Fattis and Monis products by consumers who supported the union. Oscar convinced Theron to draw on voluntary support from Neil, and he in turn was able to find good contacts in the factory amongst some ex-Heinemann workers, now employed by Fattis and Monis. In July of 1979 Neil was appointed secretary of the Transvaal branch of the AFCWU. He showed himself to be a dedicated organiser. He was good at facilitating dialogue, and in ensuring democratic process in the union, allowing decisions to be taken and following up on them. He was very proud of the work of the union and devoted most of his time to it but earned a living by working as a doctor in the casualty ward at Baragwanath Hospital on Friday and Saturday nights.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. M.' or similar, with a horizontal line underneath.

- 28 After being banned in 1976 I had helped to start a vegetable buying cooperative, which involved communes of young white people living in different parts of Johannesburg. Each house would put in money every week and take turns to go to the Johannesburg market and buy vegetables, which would then be shared amongst all the houses. This helped to foster a sense of community amongst a wide range of people, many of who were later part of what was called the White Left. In around 1977 several of these households moved out of Johannesburg suburbs to houses previously occupied by white miners in Crown Mines.
- 29 This was a time when us young white middle-class intellectuals started to realise that we had a role in the struggle against Apartheid. In addition to the few people working in the unions, some people were active in student politics, some worked in the media, some supported the emerging rural action committees, some were involved in the arts and wrote powerful political songs or organised concerts like Rock Against Racism. We developed a network of activists right across the country that broke through the racial divides created over years and in which people from all walks of life participated. We started reading groups where political texts were studied and discussed, as we tried to improve our insights about what we could do, given the situation in South Africa.
- 30 In 1980 I moved to Peacock Cottage near Crown Mines, where Eddie Wes suggested that we could grow vegetables together. People from across Johannesburg – not only those living in Crown Mines - would gather at Peacock Cottage every Sunday and dig, weed, transplant and make compost.



Afterwards we would all sit and have a meal together and talk politics. Neil was very active amongst the vegetable growers, energetic and strong, and loved to do the manual work after working at casualty.

31 Neil sometimes shared stories of his experiences working at the casualty section. He found it enormously satisfying that he could save lives with his medical expertise. By way of example he spoke of having to perform an emergency tracheotomy which involves cutting a hole in the throat of the patient to free up the airway passage. I also recall him telling me of treating patients who attempted suicide, including that of a man who had hanged himself unsuccessfully because the weight of his body had caused the single knot to unravel.

32 When Pindile was banished, our groupings had lost their easy contact with the ANC and in due course it was agreed that I should renew linkages. I was able to establish communication channels to Botswana. We all understood that as someone involved in the trade unions Neil could not be linked at all to the ANC. For his part he made it clear, from the first day of joining the union, that he would never compromise it in any way and would only work openly and democratically within union structures. I never spoke to Neil about my ANC politics or activities. He sympathised with the ANC, but as part of a broad liberation movement, having been influenced by black consciousness activists long before he came to Johannesburg. His principle objection to working with the ANC or any other political formation as a union organiser was that this could potentially undermine the democratic processes in the union.



33 In the months leading up to my detention, a group of us activists would occasionally meet at a Sicilian coffee shop in Hillbrow. On one occasion Neil was late and told us that he had been followed but managed to lose the tail. We were not surprised because Neil was openly involved in the union movement, and was linking with other unionists across the country, including activists from SAAWU in the Eastern Cape and the General and Allied Workers Union that was emerging, starting in the Vaal. I do not think Neil feared detention or saw himself as a political target, but nevertheless I tried to pass onto him all that I had learned from Pindile about how to cope with detention.

#### **MY DETENTION**

34 I first met Barbara Hogan in the early days of the IAS, and we had many mutual friends. I did not work with Barbara politically but gradually came to realise that she was likely to be in touch with the ANC, as I was. I would on occasion talk through political issues with her, just as I would with Auret van Heerden, and Cedric de Beer.

35 On a Tuesday in September 1981, I was arrested in the early hours of the morning where I was staying on the veranda of a house rented by Joanne Yawitch. The police who arrived at the house said that they were detaining Joanne, and I tried to give her support by playing a song on my guitar. I was told to stop and asked my name, and at this point the security police (SB) phoned through on their walkie-talkies to say that I was there too, and I was also arrested.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. J.', located in the bottom right corner of the page.

- 36 I was taken through the basement at JVS and I saw a man giving instructions to a group of policemen. The officer escorting me shared that this was Rooirus Swanepoel. Rooirus was telling the officers, "These are intelligent people, don't assume they are stupid. Some of them have got degrees and you've got to treat them properly". I assumed at the time that he meant political detainees.
- 37 The two SB assigned to interrogate me were Warrant Officer Pitout, in the lead, and Captain Engelbrecht who I later discovered had just been transferred from the uniformed branch and who had not participated in any interrogation before. After waiting for the whole morning, they started asking me questions in the early afternoon, without much focus, but repeatedly coming back to Barbara Hogan. I realised that the detention of me and Joanne had to do with her, and this was a bit of a comfort since it suggested that they might not know about my own activities. Pitout was experienced and extremely clever, and his role was to get me to like him, while Engelbrecht played the aggressive and threatening interrogator, shouting at me every now and again, and sometimes pushing his face close to mine in anger. Pitout would then intervene and reassure me that we could talk in a civilised manner.
- 38 After some hours Major Cronwright came into the room and said triumphantly, 'We have got you!' and tossed in front of me the document titled "Close Comrades." I tried to skim-read it as fast as I could, to see as many of the names on the page as possible, but then the paper was snatched away again. I said that I had no idea what on earth this was about, and that I could not understand how Barbara could call me a close comrade. I was genuinely



surprised, so it was not hard to take this position. I maintained this stance right through my detention.

39 Towards the evening, soon after 17h00, I was taken to Norwood police station, where the laces were taken out of my shoes and put into a labelled bag together with my belt and watch. I reached my cell after the evening meal. Pitout followed me in and demanded that I take down my pants so he could inspect my anus, in case I had hidden something there. I was outraged but Pitout repeated his instruction. The black warders who had escorted us to the cells turned away in disgust. I did as Pitout demanded but was angry at the humiliation. I stewed on this all night.

40 On the next day, which was Wednesday, I was picked up very early and taken for interrogation at JVS. I refused to talk to Pitout and told Engelbrecht angrily that Pitout had made a homosexual advance on me. I played the part of a homophobe who was absolutely disgusted. Pitout made the mistake of trying to reassure me that he was just doing his duty and had not meant anything, but I got enraged and told him I would have nothing to do with him. I could tell that Engelbrecht did not know what to make of this. It seemed that he did not know Pitout very well, and Pitout made the story believable because he did not deny it outright but kept in the mode of trying to make me like him. I realised that this was a helpful dynamic for me and so played this game throughout my detention. As it turned out I was very fortunate because the roles in the interrogation team were reversed, and Engelbrecht became the lead interrogator while I would bark at Pitout every time he tried to come in with a question.



- 41 I was taken back to Norwood police station that evening in time for supper at 18h00 and picked up to be taken back to JVS on Thursday morning. The interrogation lasted all of Thursday and through Thursday night, with a break of two to three hours when Engelbrecht allowed me to sleep sitting in the chair. I was returned to Norwood late on Friday night. I was not interrogated over the weekend, but I was given Bibles that had been left for me. One was from my father and was in isiZulu, while another was in English and in going through it, I found a note written by Keith Coleman, saying "Auret, don't let the bastards get you down!" I had already worked out that Auret must be one of the detainees, but this note from Keith cheered me immensely.
- 42 I recall being interrogated for a further 2 days from Monday through Tuesday, taken to JVS at 08h00 and brought back to Norwood at the end of the day.
- 43 Cronwright demanded to know what Barbara meant when she said that she did not work with me but knew that I was "under discipline". I speculated that this was because I was vegetarian, had a discipline of doing yoga daily and ran every day. Cronwright asked me if I spoke isiZulu since my father had given me a Bible in that language, and I said that I didn't but clearly my father thought this was a good way to learn. The stories about Cronwright from before my detention suggested that he was a fervent Christian, so I suggested that my faith might also lead to Barbara's imagination that I was under discipline. I spoke very dismissively about Barbara, playing into the SB's own misogyny. My strategy was to undermine and discredit Barbara's list and smear her as a way of distancing myself. I did not enjoy this, just as I did not enjoy the role of





homophobe, but I could see that it helped me to play into the SB's own prejudices.

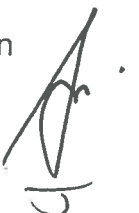
44 The fact that I had been under SB surveillance for 5 years was helpful to me. At various points when questioning was getting tough, I would demand to know when and how I could be involved in ANC activities, since they knew everything about what I did. Again, I was fortunate, because this played into their conceit, that they had been diligent in following me. As a matter of fact, it was only in the first 2 years that I had been aware of being under intensive surveillance. Paul Erasmus and his team had made it their business in 1977 and 1978 to make my life tough and would raid my house at 3 or 4 in the morning on the grounds that they had 'reason to believe that a crime was being committed'. I realise that exaggerating the degree of surveillance could only work in my favour, since whoever was tasked to keep track of me would tend to agree, if questioned, that they had done a good job.

45 Captain Engelbrecht was in charge of my investigation, working with Pitout, and occasionally Cronwright would come in. On one occasion Colonel Coetzee came into the room and said "So! We're trying to make the black workers realise their economic potential, are we?" I was bemused by the question, but it also helped me to understand that when looking into my case they had only found evidence of activity relating to my Union days. I cultivated a good relationship with Engelbrecht, asking respectfully after his family every morning, while continuing to ignore Pitout. I began to realise that Pitout himself could not share with his superiors that he was being ineffectual. Engelbrecht shared his lunch with me on the Monday and Tuesday.

46 On Wednesday and Thursday, I was not collected for interrogation, but by now I was extremely worried when reviewing my answers to the SB's questions, and wondering how I could respond if the SB showed me that I had lied. I found it difficult to sleep and incessantly went over possible scenarios that could play out if they picked up that I had lied. In the early afternoon of the second Friday of my detention Captain Engelbrecht came to see me in my cell at Norwood. He had just come from a meeting discussing all the detainees' cases and told me that I would be released the coming Tuesday. He also confided to me that Alan Fine was "very clever," because he had agreed from the start that he was in contact with the external movement, but with SACTU not the ANC. That was the first time that I realised that Alan had been picked up.

47 When digesting the news that I would be released, I recalled my training from Pindile. He had cautioned that it was a common trick for the SB to lead a detainee to believe that they were going to be released, but then instead intensify the interrogation on the day they thought they were going home. In terms of the Internal Security Act, you could be detained for two weeks and then the security police had to let you go or they could re-detain you indefinitely under the Terrorism Act. I started to prepare for indefinite detention by going on hunger strike, telling the police warders at Norwood that I couldn't eat because I was vegetarian, and all the meals had meat.

48 These days of being left and then being told I was going home were nightmarish for me. I went over all the answers I had given to questions, and what I could say when they proved that I had been lying. I simply could not believe that I was going to be let free. I recalled all the advice I had been given



by Pindile in preparation for torture. On the evening of my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October, I was visited in my cell by a medical officer. He asked me if everything was fine and I replied that I was starving, but he was not really interested in my condition and left.

49 I realised that if I was detained under the Terrorism Act then I had to prepare for intense torture that was likely to include electric shocks. I had been advised by Pindile that when this occurs an experienced police officer watches over the process and stops the shocks as soon as the victim loses consciousness, because it is impossible to know beforehand how much shocking a person can withstand. I therefore had to prepare to pretend to have lost consciousness. The day and night before my final day I drank as much water as I could hold. The idea was to pretend to lose consciousness by urinating during electric shock treatment, so that the SB would think that I was not in control of my bowels.

50 When I arrived at interrogation the next day, Cronwright told me he didn't want to release me, but he did not know what to charge me with. He interrogated me in his office for six hours and made me write a statement. There was no torture or bullying of any kind, but I found the hours with Cronwright very hard because I needed to urinate the whole time but could not let him realise that this was so, in case he realised that there must be reason I had so much water in me, and thus keep me there.

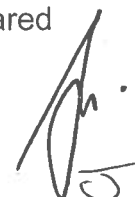
51 My first statement was a general one that included the name of Alan Fine. I spoke about how Alan Fine was a surprisingly good winger in football, able to



deliver crosses to the goalmouth with pinpoint accuracy. Cronwright rejected this statement outright and demanded that I get serious. At this point I fell back on a story that Cedric de Beer and I had agreed upon a week or so before detention, in case we were challenged about an unusual meeting we had each attended at which Alan, Barbara, Monty Narsoo and some others were present. Cronwright was interested in this story and accepted my statement.

52 My certainty that I was going to be detained for an indefinite period under the Terrorism Act turned out to be wrong. I was released on 6 October 1982 after just 2 weeks in detention. I discovered that Joanne Yawitch had also been released, and that people were starting to organise in support of detainees.

53 Soon after my release I met with Neil and Sipho and talking to them helped me deal with the anguish of my detention. I shared everything I could remember of the Close Comrades document and the names I had seen on it, and what I had gathered from the interactions with Engelbrecht. The aspect that bothered me most was the thought that I had unwittingly got another comrade in trouble by writing things in my statement to Cronwright that appeared harmless to me but that the SB might use in a different way. I also felt very bad about speaking so dismissively about Barbara. On the substance of the questions put to me, we realised that three times I had managed to steer the SB away from a question about a trip to Durban soon after being unbanned. Sipho and Neil pointed out that when going through the transcripts the police would discover this evasion and would be bound to come to detain me again. They advised me to leave the country until things quietened down. I later met with Fink Haysom and shared



the course of my questioning with him too and told him that his name was on the list. He too advised me to leave the country for a little while.

54 After the discussion with Sipho and Neil, Sipho left and Neil and I sat chatting for a while longer over a cup of tea, I told him of the terror that I had experienced as I waited without interrogation in the last days of detention, while I knew that there were unanswered questions. I shared my nightmare that I might be forced to give names when tortured, and that all the networks set up over the years in the labour movement would then be broken. I told him that I had even considered what I might do if I was in the situation where I felt I might be going to break, and that the only way I could imagine stopping things would be to climb up the metal grille inside the cell and drop down on my head. I surmised that if one could do this enough, it could even kill you. Neil was very empathetic and gentle, and reminded me that I had done well. He repeated what he and Sipho had said earlier that I should make sure to get out before the SB detained me again.

55 About 10 days after my release, I left South Africa and went to Botswana. The day after I arrived in Gaborone, I phoned back to tell Joanne that I had arrived safely. She shared with a degree of merriment that the SB had arrived that very morning to detain me again and had been very frustrated and spent hours searching the house. Some days after that there was a second wave of detentions, and Neil, Liz, Fink and others were detained. As it turned out I only returned to South Africa at the end of 1994.



56 A few days before Neil was detained, he wrote to me and the letter was brought to Botswana by a friend. He was trying to cheer me up because I was out of the country, whereas I had always said that I would never leave. There was no sense of foreboding about the letter, it was a friend saying, 'Don't worry things will be okay'. He said he was very pleased to hear that I was getting a vegetable garden going again and repeated a phrase we used to use in our vegetable-growing days: "When in doubt, dig!"

### **NEIL'S DEATH**

57 In January 1982 my visa to stay in Botswana was coming to an end, and the Botswana government conveyed its wish that I leave the country for a while. My brother paid for a ticket to London where he lived. I tried to contribute to the living expenses by doing small carpentry and painting jobs. At the beginning of February my friend Edwin Wes invited me to accompany him and a group of fellow students to Osea Island, where they were making a short film as part of their Film School examination. On 5<sup>th</sup> February I phoned my brother from the film set as agreed, to tell him all was well. He asked me to sit down, although I was in a telephone booth. Once I confirmed that I was sitting down he told me that Neil had died, that the police claimed he had hung himself in his cell.

### **The Aftermath**

58 I was filled with guilt over the next weeks and months, and perhaps years. I have been advised by a psychologist involved in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder that this condition is known as Survivor's Guilt. I believed that I should



have been the one targeted by the police; it was me who should have been tortured. At times I even felt that had Neil not met me he might not have got into the situation he did.

59 Over the years I have found it difficult to reconcile that Neil the passionate, dedicated optimistic friend I knew would give a detailed complaint about the torture he had suffered and then commit suicide. I have already said that upon reading his statements I did not find anything in them that was incriminating of his comrades and I also knew that he did not belong to any underground organisations and was not involved in any underground activity – he had no secrets to divulge to the police.

60 I pray that there will be justice for the brutal murder of Neil Aggett, this gentle human being, this fine physician and dedicated trade unionist

  
GAVIN ANDERSSON

The Deponent has acknowledged that he knows and understands the contents of this affidavit, which was signed before me at SANDTON on this the 13 day of FEBRUARY 2020, the regulations contained in Government Notice No R1258 of 21 July 1972, as amended, and Government Notice No R1648 of 19 August 1977, as amended, having been complied with.

719-286-4 CJT  
RAKCAWA E J

**COMMISSIONER OF OATHS**

SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICES  
CLIENT SERVICE CENTRE  
GALLO MANOR  
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