

Incomplete without My Brother, Adonis – Why the Book had to be written

Thank you [programme director] and Good Day to everyone....

Ordinarily, an occasion such as we are having today would signify the conclusion of a mammoth effort, which has taken a long time and required absolute dedication.

An event like this would mark the end of a process that would have taken many months, even years to complete.

It would suggest closure. It would indicate the end of the road, resulting in relief and release for the writer.

The writer would have told the full story - and finished it.

But today's launch of ***"Incomplete without My Brother, Adonis"***, by my friend here Kaizer, is laden with paradox.

True, the book itself is finished. It tells a particular story. But that story is itself a part of a much bigger story.

Instead of being the end of the long road, it introduces us to only the first part of an already difficult journey for Kaizer and the extended Nyatumba family.

It helps us to understand how the journey started, unceremoniously, with the taking of the life of Adonis in the most tragic and cruel manner, about five years ago.

It tells us, how, following that fateful day, Kaizer's quest for justice, on behalf of Adonis and the greater Nyatumba and Motha families, began.

It reminds us, too, of the South African story of how so many citizens are let down by the law.

You know, I recently watched a movie. It was about a man - a spy - who has a safe house in Paris.

One winter he returns to his house, only to find the house occupied by squatters. All three generations of them – the grandfather, the father and his wife; and their children.

Having squatters in his house renders **him** homeless, of course. Quite apart from the fact that that's where his guns and other spying paraphernalia are hidden.

He is naturally annoyed, but then he thinks – piece of cake!

He heads for the local police station to report the squatters. He explains that he has nowhere to sleep. Can the police please perform the simple task of ejecting the invaders?

Barely paying attention to the man's predicament, the French policeman behind the counter tells him no! The law does not allow evictions in winter.

So, what's the man to do? Ok, he'll go and evict the squatters himself, he tells the officer!

The policeman? "No, no, no!" he warns our spy. "You will break the law, and you will go to jail".

Now exasperated, the man asks: "What do you want me to do then?"

"Wait," replies the officer dismissively. "Wait for ze spring. For ze birds an ze bees".

And so the squatters get to stay while the house owner has to find alternative accommodation for himself.

This is a story that would resonate with Kaizer, who has knocked on every conceivable door in search of justice for Adonis. It would also ring familiar to the many citizens of our country who've lost their loved ones to crime.

Those who, when they ask for justice to be done, are simply ignored, or told to "wait for the spring, for the birds and the bees".

Those for whom that spring all too often never arrives, and the "birds and the bees" never come.

Those who have seen investigations which start ostensibly seriously, but then end up going nowhere – in a way no one can quite explain.

Now, Kaizer has not said so. But I suspect that deep down, in writing the book and inviting us to today's occasion, he wanted to let us into the hitherto private struggle he has had since Adonis's passing.

It is the struggle of grappling with the question: What's to be done about the memory of Adonis?

Is it to be erased by the shifting sands of time, as if Adonis never walked the face of the earth?

And what of the deep pain felt by the Nyatumba and Motha families at the time of Adonis's passing and thereafter?

At another time, where the law did not claim vengeance for itself alone, Kaizer probably would have set forth on a path of avenging Adonis.

And as the purported police investigation appeared to go nowhere, I'm sure Kaizer would have asked himself many questions, many times: What would Adonis have wanted him, as his brother to do?

Would it not be a betrayal of Adonis to simply walk away from this seemingly intractable matter?

What kind of a brother would he be if he turned a blind eye to a wrong so grievous?

And, faced with a seemingly dead-end investigation, Kaizer would perhaps have asked himself if he had done enough to move it along. Did he let Adonis down, he might have wondered.

But, my friend, many of us know the lengths to which you have gone to try to find justice for Adonis.

You have publicised the matter in the media;

You have engaged the services of a private investigator;

You've knocked on the ultimate doors that any citizen can knock on – those of the president and of the minister of police. What higher office than the presidency is there that one can knock on?

Of course, many people who die in circumstances similar to Adonis's end up as mere statistics; as faceless numbers – as if they had no families and no friends.

Therefore, can I venture today to suggest that, in a society where the law more often than not asks us to wait for the proverbial “spring; and the birds and the bees”, you have indeed done what was humanly possible to get the responsible state agencies to do what is right.

But we know that your influence over them (the police, the minister and the president) is limited.

As you said in your article during the week, our role is to pay the taxes to the state and expect that its agents will do right by us as citizens – which they have spectacularly failed to do in Adonis' case.

You may not have won that battle – yet.

But you have ensured, through the book, that the story of Adonis, his life and manner of his departure from this world is recorded for his children and for future generations of the Nyatumba family.

I think I can say without doubt that Adonis's children (uMbali; uNonkululeko; uNjabulo; uMotlotlo, noBuhle), as well as the Nyatumba family as a whole, will be most thankful to the work that you have done in giving abiding life to the memory of Adonis.

I think you should yourself recognise the enormous job of work you have done.

I also believe that, Adonis himself, looking on from wherever he is, will be proud of your efforts to preserve his memory and to find justice for him.

But as you yourself indicated during the week, that struggle for justice is far from over.

I'd like to say congratulations and well done, my friend!

And may your quest for justice for Adonis be successful!

Now, as we probably all know, writing a book involves sacrifices, not only from the writer, but also from those closest to the writer.

In this case I would be remiss not to recognise uGugu, uMrsNyatumba, for being understanding of the stresses and strains that must have come with the writing of the book.

I thank you all.

Mike Siluma