

Tribute to Professor Harry Zarenda

Shalom and Good Morning

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Family and friends of Harry

Today is a sad day for me, since I have lost a brother. That is what Harry meant to me.

I knew Harry for 34 years, longer than I know my wife. Nineteen of these years we spent working alongside one another in the Department of Economics at Wits University.

Our introduction came through Martin Fransman at Queen Mary College, University of London, in 1979, where I was doing my Master's degree in Economics. Martin suggested that I write to Harry about a job at Wits.

I started teaching at Wits in 1980 and my relationship with Harry grew and intensified in a natural way.

Harry was a Jew

I am a Muslim

Harry was a White person

I was classified as a non-white person

I called him Zee and he called me Cas

We travelled, ate and shared many Lachaims. Our lives became intertwined – not tainted by race, religion or ideology. We spontaneously put barriers aside and became intimate friends.

There are many facets and deep values to his life. He was an economist who chose to specialise and confine himself to development economics. This speaks volumes about his commitment and passion for putting people first. He did not view the world only through numbers and the cold calculus that economists use to frame the world.

Harry threw his lot in with the Macroeconomic Research Group (MERG) project in the early 90's. That says a lot about his commitment to a better alternative.

Harry was a passionate consumer of the arts, cinema, literature and played a damn good game of scrabble, outdoing many younger students.

Above all, Harry was a profound humanist in nature. He had rare qualities – foreign from today's consumerist and material culture.

He gave of himself to students, colleagues and friends. He was a true mensch.

More recently, when he spoke to me, he voiced some deep concerns about government. I listened patiently to him and took him seriously. Harry, expressed what decent and well meaning people expect from a government.

Harry, I will miss you. You have left a void in my heart. Now I wonder, where will I find another Zee. I regret not seeing him often enough. Zee, you will be missed but never forgotten.

May you rest in peace, my brother.

Fuad Cassim