

Mr Mahome the Towering Giant

It was a privilege and pleasure to witness the school leadership under Mr Mahome. He was man of courage and intelligence. With his colorful blazer jackets (green, brown, red and navy), some suggested that the jackets were a uniform of Ok Bazaar's "o di kreile ka mokabelo". He drove a powder-blue Colt which was always parked in front of the staff room, in 1990/91 our then SRC President Abel Ngwenya acquired a similar Colt and parked it next to Mahome's. His Ok bazaar's jackets and colt galled was no sign for lack of style. I think he was just masquerading to us, later in life I took a peep into his real lifestyle, which was characterized by appreciation of finer things in life.

Mr Mahome worked hard to lead a performing school that excelled and still excels academically given the conditions of township constraints in a politically volatile era. In his own words Mr Mahome strived for "Par Excellence", he has obviously left an indelible impression on all of us.

"There is a right way, there is a wrong way and there is a Thabo Owen Mokwena way. When I think of this young man, I am reminded of a song by Frank Sinatra"

I've lived a life that's full, I've traveled each and every highway;
And more, much more than this, I did it my way.
Regrets, I've had a few; But then again, too few to mention.
I did what I had to do, And saw it through without exemption.

Elias Mahome: December 2005, Salga Farewell Function

In reciprocating the honor, though much too late as we bid him farewell from this earth. Those who know the song by Salt & Pepper will agree with me, when I say Mr Mahome was a mighty good man; What a man,

what a man, what a man, What a mighty good man
He's a mighty mighty good man, Yes he is
I want to take a minute or two, and give much respect due
To the man that's made a difference in my world
And although most men are ho's, he flows on the down low

Thunderous slap in the face

During my first year at the school in 1986, I had an encounter with a vicious teacher who thunderously struck me with the most excruciation slap in the face. For my sins, all I did was to place an empty scrapbook underneath my writing pad, so as to smoothen the surface for writing. But to her limited aptitudes "ntse ke kopisa an empty scrapbook, worse off, paper one ya sepedi". I left the exam room and never returned for the rest of exams, and left the school without the knowledge of my parents. The reports arrived and my parents discovered my deeds. Fortunately or unfortunately I had to repeat standard six.

Un-leashing the baseball bat

At some stage during my term as SRC I pleaded with some guys to stop "doboling" inside the school next to the main entrance "mo stoepung", when they refused, I unleashed a baseball bat on one of them, a hefty boxing fellow whom under normal circumstances I wouldn't have dared

fight him. The guy bled badly and was rushed to hospital or clinic by the teachers. An impromptu parents meeting was convened within 24 hours. The sanity of parents prevailed. The principal and teachers were asked to explain why was there gambling in the school premises during school hours? That saved my life, once more I survived. The issue here was not beating a fellow student but was rather my presidency in the SRC and some dark forces saw an opportunity to upset the applecart.

The thrill of sports

We also cherished our soccer and netball teams. We had talents such as the likes of Rura Ten Ten, Amos Mukhari, Frans" the black cat" Masango, Pretty boy Mabadi, Shelly Ndlovana, The "Bo" Ronald Makhafola, Mchini and others that I have forgotten. Unfortunately I don't remember us winning any soccer or netball trophy, nor any of the players playing nationally, nonetheless we enjoyed those moments.

Hlanganani sent us Helter Skelter

Most of the inter-schools games ended in physical clashes among various schools. One fateful day during a soccer game, Hlanganani High School sent us helter skelter in our own school and backyard. Leading the runaway was Teachers Ernest Matjila, Master and Aphane. That's the day we realised teachers will never protect us especially our male teachers, they ran faster and further than learners, fighting for "lesoba la fence" behind the soccer grounds, some of them ran as far as the Mabopane Highway, go sena motho a ba tibisitseng.

Tantalizing world cup commentaries

The most cherished moments of soccer were World Cup commentary by the likes of the Richard Matjeni (may his soul rest in peace), George Phoshane and Ivan Monyai (they called him Poti, I don't know why). These guys narrated soccer games as if it was live and they would make you not want to miss the World Cup review moments, you would rather miss a test than miss that moment. These sessions were taking place behind Lusaka on an obscured corner. On one occasion a teacher pitched up while we were in the thick of things, Richard tantalizing us with the Brazilian performance. He rocked up from nowhere, because we have always appointed a scout to check if a teacher is approaching. All what we heard was a voice saying "bakgomana e letje". One of the big tall guys turned around and asked him "o ra mang o re bakgomana?" the teacher quickly replied and said "aowa ke dio ba ke ethalokela", the big guy looked at him and said "O dlala rofo". Interesting this good teacher is still unleashing his best at Reitumetse as the school principal. I could name the big guy but it is not advisable, I saw him at the recent RHS sports tournament and he threatened "go mpetha" and I see him from time to time at OR Tambo airport and he still possess the tendency "tsa go betha batho".

The beautiful minds

While we had fun outside the class we also enjoyed the academy part of the school. There were fine and exceptional brains that graced the classrooms of Reitumetse.

This school was a pioneering academy unleashing beautiful minds. We witnessed combative competition for excellence and achievement. Unfortunately this was during the system of ranking learners by the highest mark or achiever, from number one to number mtshela. At primary school I hovered around top five, competing with George Matlala, Desmond Kgagudi, Portia Masanabo and Joseph Motlatla also known as “woroso” and suddenly Michael “happy cow” Mashapa joined the race. At Reitumetse I met very smart people, in my class the ladies were dominant, the likes of Eunice Mamabolo, Yolanda Mabena, Esther Morudu and later we were dominated by Phyllistus Maphotho, Margaret Moropyane and the others. These ladies were not only brainy but were stunningly gorgeous. Truth be told, dating them was not a bad idea, but they instilled fear in us and we couldn’t even confess our feelings to them. However I felt no need to mount a competition since it will diminish my chances of dating them. As a result I chose not to compete with the ladies and I became seasonal in my performance and was relegated to top ten in a good semester otherwise anything was possible. Off course in other classes there were equally potent beautiful minds. I heard of some beautiful ladies in the commerce classes who were causing academic havoc for their male counterparts. They too were the beautiful minds that graced Reitumetse.

One distinguished gentleman, a friend, comrade and brother whom we met at Arethabeng, made it his personal mission to top every class and conquer the school for a solid five years. He possessed one of the best minds an exceptionally intelligent fellow. He was announced at assembly several times named the best student. Despite his gift for maths, he defied the school and refuse to register for maths and science instead he opted for history classes. He ventured into karate and attained a black belt, I decided to spend less time with him due to his threatening leisure pursuit. We later found a common hobby called politics which strengthened our bond, let alone that we emptied his father’s alcohol decanter and filled it with water. This is none other than George Phahla Matlala. Teachers used to warn other students “le seka la ikana le Owen le George, ba le latlhetsa and corrupting you with politics, bona ba bala ba etsa mmereko wa bona”. We only got to know about this because some friends of ours who were in pursuit of “ a group of beautiful chicks tsa ko di-DD” who were from Central High and joined Reitumetse. The parents of this ladies were all either teachers or principals, so our friends had to face the parents who warned them against us. For the sake of their mission “ya go nyaka di-cherie, they sold us out”. They know now that we know and thanks God “ba ba ganne ko di DD” as such none of them achieved their intended mission.

Reitumetse fine minds

Our generation of students infiltrated the best tertiary institutions in South Africa. Some conquered Medunsa, while some went to the Durban coast, others choose the peninsula coast, the brave ones took WITS head-on, whereas some entered Turfloop and so on. A high number of our colleagues stormed various technikons. Our school in a short space of time was well represented in all corners of the tertiary spectrum. Minding my own business at UCT, some young Medical student came to me, and introduced himself as Steve. I was less interested in this guy but he persevered and claimed he was also from Reitumetse then I started to give him attention. I was pleasantly surprised, having served at the UCT SRC as an academic officer dealing with student enrolments, curriculum and exclusions, I know how difficult if not almost impossible to enter UCT Medical school. Together with my guy there were two distinguished ladies, Emily Mokoena and Tumi Mashilo and one gentleman, Tshepo Mogoai, all from Reitumetse studying at UCT. Recently I met a bright and brave Tebogo Matshogoe a former Reitumetse and UCT graduate, who is going back to pursue nuclear physics.

Memorable teachers

Thirty years down the line the school has persevered and continues to produce the best result they can. We appreciate the leadership of Principal Mahlatji , a man who joined the school back in the years, he was one of the well-educated, disciplined, old-fashioned teachers with a strong Sepedi accent. He had an obsession for tight pants “what we use to call di-Pental”. I only know that he was a commerce teacher who was dedicated and gave hundred percent to his work. On academic days when teachers used to bring their academic gowns to assembly, he was one of the shining stars. The school is carried by a team of memorable teachers of our time. Mr Maredi who teaches English and insist that “retshwile mo manaleng a gage”. He use to throw around big English words, more than anything he was genuine and treasured his English subject. Mr Sekgobel, my friend William Koshane “Gauger” use to call him “Ngamola or Ngemthi” a sweet guy who just love teaching. Mr Mogale “Goodie”, a vernacular teacher who is also street smart and mastered the art commanding respect and attention of students during class. Mam Shokwe is the only female I could recognise in the team of erstwhile teachers. She was a kind, sweet teacher faced with a group of hectic students. She knew her purpose at school and kept focus on delivering good results.

Turning point in our lives

Reitumetse was a turning point in our lives, a fountain of knowledge, a breeding ground for academia, intellectualism, scholarly and true growth. We echo Tom Hank’s sentiments about Chabot college his alma mater, when he said

“That place made me what I am today.”

To most of us, if given the opportunity to go back to high school will choose none other than Reitumetse. It is without doubt that every moment is precious but we thrive for moments which are highly enjoyable and memorable.

“Like sands through the hour glass, so are the days of our lives” Socrates