

NEWS YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO KNOW

# noseweek

R48<sup>00</sup>  
(inc VAT)

ISSUE 249 DECEMBER 2020

## EXPOSED:

The "dark PR" origins of "Mia Taylor" the **Facebook troll** set up to distract attention from the City of Cape Town's long-held dirty secret...

One **murder** leads to another... and another... and another...

The latest **SAA bailout** was more likely a banks bailout



*"Although we are apart now, we have been together the last 22 years"*



## JURGENS BEKKER ATTORNEYS



WE CATER TO SERVE THE UNIQUE REQUIREMENTS OF EACH CLIENT AND WE PRIDE OURSELVES IN OUR EXPERTISE AND PASSION FOR VARIOUS AREAS OF LAW.

We specialise in the following:

Commercial and Corporate Law  
Family Law  
General Litigation & Taxation

Criminal Law  
Labour Law  
Media Law

Debt Collection Matters  
Acting as Correspondents  
of Record

*Celebrating 22 years in business*

### ALBERTON

Office 3, Gemstone Office Park,  
36 Hennie Alberts Street, Brackenhurst,  
Alberton

Tel: 010 591 8164

Cell: 072 011 3670

Email: [megan@jurgensbekker.co.za](mailto:megan@jurgensbekker.co.za)

### BEDFORDVIEW

22 Plantation Road, Oriel, Bedfordview

Tel: 011 622 5472 / 5445 / 5524 / 5523

Cell: 083 294 9995

Email: [jurgens@jurgensbekker.co.za](mailto:jurgens@jurgensbekker.co.za)

### CAPE TOWN

Spaces, 4th Floor Sunclare Building,  
21 Dreyer Street, Claremont

Tel: 078 989 2957

Cell: 083 294 9995

Email: [jurgens@jurgensbekker.co.za](mailto:jurgens@jurgensbekker.co.za)

### KEMPTON PARK

14 Belgrade Street, Spartan,  
Kempton Park

Tel: 010 442 6743

Cell: 072 424 3177

Email: [louis@jurgensbekker.co.za](mailto:louis@jurgensbekker.co.za)

### PRETORIA

Suite 203, Waterkloof Gardens,  
270 Main Street, Brooklyn,  
Pretoria

Tel: 067 011 6837

Cell: 082 776 8650

Email: [johnre@jurgensbekker.co.za](mailto:johnre@jurgensbekker.co.za)

[www.jurgensbekkerattorneys.co.za](http://www.jurgensbekkerattorneys.co.za)



# noseweek

ISSUE 249 • DECEMBER 2020

## 4 Letters

- Loyiso Gola; not a joke
- Vodacom WASP fraud
- Danmar; corruption at the top

## 5 Editorial

- Noseweek's viable options
- SAA "a goner"
- Trolls and Cape Town's shit

## 21 Notes & Updates

- Spar: Undisclosed interests

## 22 From another country

- Isabel dos Santos steps down with a few billion dollars

## 23 Books

- Death and the After Parties
- The Autumn of the Ace
- Written in Blood

## 24 Letter from Umjindi

## 25 Ronald's Lockdown Diary

## 26 Last Round

## 27 Smalls



The Mia Taylor of San Diego

## FEATURES

### 6 One murder leads to another

The Facebook post could not have been Hari's because by June 2020 Hari was already dead.

### 9 "Mia Taylor", Facebook troll extra-ordinary

For a year she faced off critics of the City of Cape Town's water and sanitation mismanagement. Both well informed and a skilled liar, who was the woman - or man - behind the mask? UCT's Prof Lesley Green investigates.

### 14 SANDF "rotten to the core"

Maj Gen Sandile Sizani, Chief Director of Counter-Intelligence tells Zondo Commission his story.

### 16 Goldman Sachs fined \$3-billion

A meaningful punishment for a major financial crime?

### 17 Gail Behr: Baroness of the Bo Kaap

Sue Segar interviews Gail Behr and checks out her latest venture, Dorp, a hotel in a class of its own - and a view the angels share.

Your favourite magazine is now available on your **iPad** and **PC**



**AVAILABLE ON YOUR TABLET**

Download your digital edition today

BOTH SINGLE ISSUES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS AVAILABLE! SEE MORE ON PAGE 5.

**PLUS** never miss a copy - with back issues available to download and store

DOWNLOAD YOUR DIGITAL EDITION AT [www.noseweek.co.za](http://www.noseweek.co.za) OR ☎ 021 686 0570

# Letters

Letters to the editor should be sent by email to [editor@noseweek.co.za](mailto:editor@noseweek.co.za)

## Seriously

IF YOU REALLY REALLY REALLY WANNA know what is happening in South Africa you must read @Noseweek. No big companies are advertising in the publication, which means they owe nobody nothing. Some of the stories are out of this world, right here in SA!

**Loyiso Gola**

[Two-time Emmy nominated stand-up comedian, to his 1m+ followers on Twitter.]

## Vodacom's WASP fraud

I COMPLAINED ABOUT THIS & THEY suggested that I butt-dialled into subscriptions. How can Vodacom allow these contracts to be entered into with a pocket-click of a button but I have to make five selections before buying data? The cost was R13/day.

**Kefilwe, Bonn**  
On Twitter

■ I'M HAPPY TO RECORD THAT I NOTICED THIS a while ago and left Vodacom.

**@Geniusoftime**  
On Twitter

What I want to know is who in ANC holds a chunk of Vodacom shares that has been protecting the company from prosecution for its deliberate participation in a billion rand fraud for the past ten years? If you know, please let Noseweek know! – Ed.

## Danmar director's "fraud"

WHEN BLATANT CORRUPTION AT THE TOP IS not prosecuted, everybody has a license to try their luck.

**Kris Steyn**  
Via Facebook

■ THEY PROBABLY PAID Ms MANDELA-Amuah to be chairperson. Pretty sure those guys are the main corrupters. SA has become one big scam after another. Soon there won't be money for anything. What will they say when SASSA money can't be paid?

**Peter Naude**  
Cape Town

## Fools or phishing fraudsters

I HAVE JUST RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING SMS from Brooks & Luyt Inc., Telephone 011 5439084:

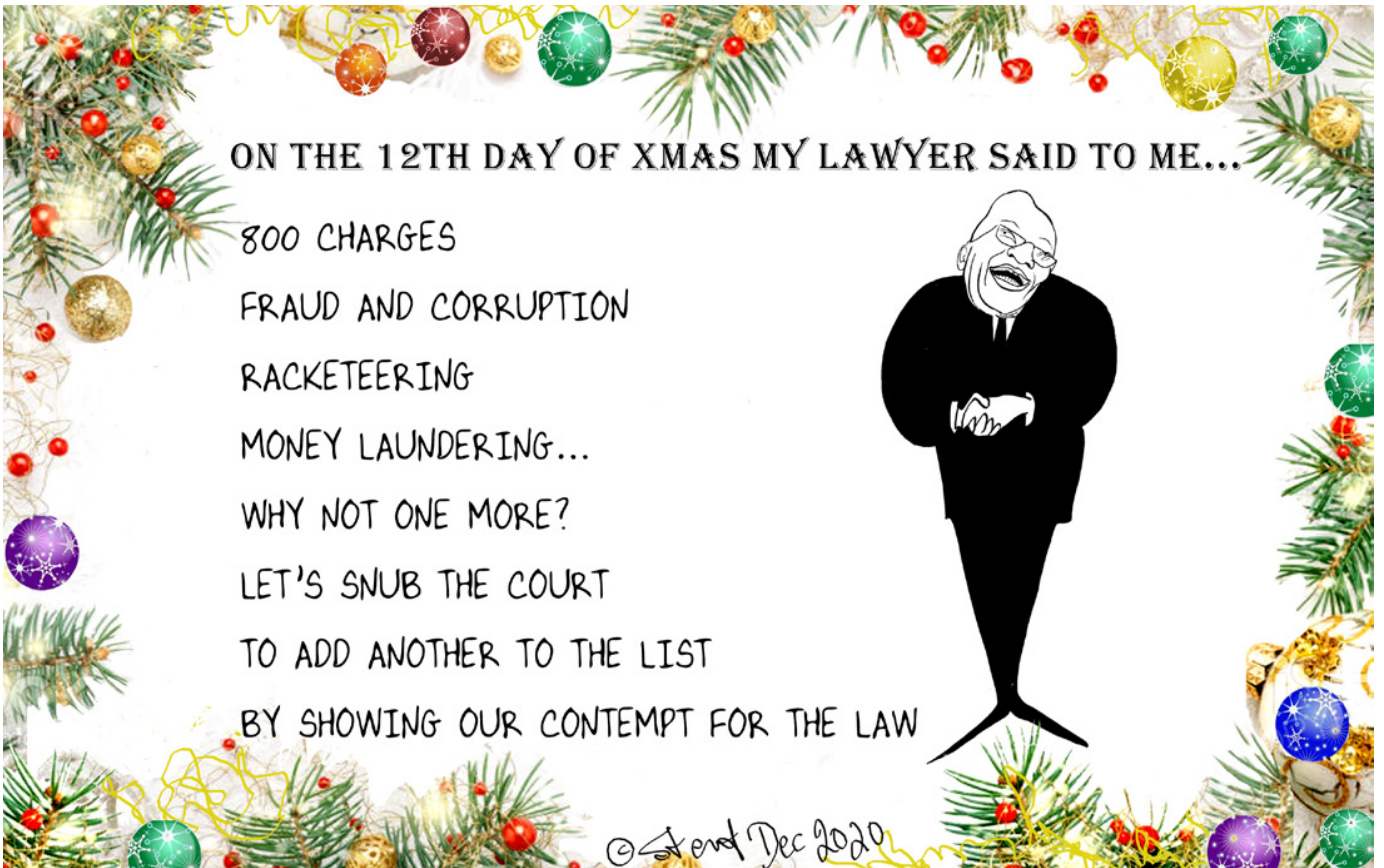
Dear customer, we noticed you were unable to pay your NEDBANK card account as arranged. Reply Yes to make affordable arrangements, alternatively make affordable payments to NEDBANK Acc No. 5898... [number deleted by NW] This is probably the 4th time I have contacted them to tell them that I am not a client of Nedbank, or for that matter themselves. (I simply ignored the first dozen or so.)

Each time they assure me that my number has been removed from their database, while it obviously hasn't. What is worse is that the person/s to whom the sms was supposed to be addressed, is obviously not receiving it. Perhaps a letter in *Noseweek* may make them understand how incompetent they actually are?

**Clive Varejes**  
Johannesburg

Or maybe it's a fraudster phishing for your true bank account details? – Ed.

Stent



# Editorial

## A word in your ear

**D**ear loyal readers and subscribers. As you will have gathered, life is not yet back to normal at Noseweek. We are going to have to rely on your generous support and patience for a while longer. The majority of our readers want a printed magazine; so they tell us every day. I too enjoy print more. But delivering print has become not only unreliable because of the ongoing collapse of the Post Office, but also unaffordable because of the high cost of distribution. For every Noseweek you buy at the supermarket, nearly 60% of the cover price goes to distribution cost (which includes the retailer's margin).

Noseweek journalists' pay, office admin costs, production and printing must make do on the remaining 40% - which has made us rely on the generosity of donors: a precarious existence.

So be patient while we try to devise more viable ways of doing things. Meanwhile, print issues might not be as regular as we'd all wish and you might have to resign yourself to at least some of the time reading our content on your smartphone or computer.

We will keep you updated as our plans develop! With your continued support, I am confident we can continue to make an important contribution to the pursuit of civil liberty and public fair dealing in our country.

● For some time it was widely believed that Public Enterprises Minister Pravin Gordhan and Finance Minister Tito Mboweni had different views about rescuing South African Airways: that Tito was in favour of closing down SAA, while Pravin was - unexpectedly - towing the party line to save the endlessly loss-making airline, to "save jobs" and national pride. Then suddenly, last month Tito changed his tune and came out in support of yet another R10 billion-plus bailout for SAA, ostensibly for all those costly, ANC vote-catching reasons.

Noseweek readers should not be fooled. SAA is a goner, and both ministers know it. The airline's 49-aeroplane fleet was down to just nine planes - the rest are gone abroad, reclaimed by the owners who had leased them to the failed airline. As have the jobs of all those people who would have manned and serviced them. How serviceable the remaining few planes are, is questionable.

All SAA's other creditors can expect just six cents for every rand they're owed. This includes SAA's fuel suppliers. Owed tens of millions (SASOL R60m, TotalSA R7.7m, Engen R6m), they are hardly likely to supply fuel on credit to any relaunched SAA.

You are not likely to be served drinks on the airline either: Coca Cola are owed R1.7m, Six Cape wineries are owed R4.6m.

So you can accept the R13-billion additional

bailout was not to save jobs - not SAA jobs anyway. It was to pay the South African banks all the billions plus interest they lent SAA. They had been guaranteed repayment by the SA Government. Nedbank alone was owed R3.43 billion. It is unlikely to have survived non-repayment. ABSA is in for R3bn, Standard for R1.6bn, Investec for R1.6 bn, and FNB for R1bn - a total of R10.6 billion, interest still to be added. (Add to that the banks' concurrent exposure to tottering Comair.)

Non-payment right now would have shaken the entire banking system, and panicked lenders to all the other SOEs. That was Tito and Pravin's shared concern. But for SAA the party is undoubtedly over.

● Cape Town has never reckoned with its shit: not historically, not now, not for the future. "The 'best-run city' of South Africa suffers a failure of reason and rationality when the sewage in its sea water and rivers comes into focus. Hidden toxicities don't make a tourist paradise. There is no pipe that goes nowhere: our shit never leaves the planet." So UCT Professor Lesley Green prefaces her study of just how devious the City of Cape Town (CoCT) appears, by all accounts, to have been in order to hide its mismanagement of the two most basic municipal services: provision of an adequate supply of clean drinking water, and the safe disposal of sewage.

The drought and the City's then hurriedly constructed desalination plants closed the loop between the two, and caught out City officials who had long hidden sea water pollution figures to keep the tourist market rolling.

Within no time some very well-briefed, propaganda-adept trolls took to various popular Facebook sites in aggressive defence of the city's water and sanitation department.

It is vehemently denied, but there is good reason and a deal of circumstantial evidence to support the view that CoCT's backroom boys and girls were years ahead of Donald Trump when it came to the devious use of social media to get them out of trouble with their disenfranchised voters, as Prof Green demonstrates in her remarkable research on page 9.

She goes on to point out that the use of fake social media profiles ("trolls" or "avatars") to channel political discussion away from the reality of unmanaged shit is surreal in a city that claims to be led by the best available science - and makes it that much harder for everyone to properly address these very basic issues.

The big question: Will CoCT come clean and hold those who trolled on their behalf to account? Sadly, it seems not. Let's hear your views! - **The Editor** ■

# noseweek

### Editor

Martin Welz

editor@noseweek.co.za

### Special Correspondent

Jack Lundin

### Designer

Simon Wilson

### Contributors

Susan Puren, Jennifer Crocker,

Sue Segar, Justin Brown,

Bheki Mashile, Ronald Wohlman,

Viv Vermaak

### Researcher

Tom Welz

### Front Cover

Dr. Jack

### Cartoonists

Stacey Stent

### Accounts

Nicci van Doesburgh

accounts@noseweek.co.za

### Advertising

021 686 0570

ads@noseweek.co.za

All material in this issue is copyright, and belongs to Noseweek Online (Pty) Ltd, unless otherwise indicated. No part of the material may be quoted, photocopied, reproduced or be stored by any electronic system without prior written permission. **Disclaimer:** While every reasonable effort is taken to ensure the accuracy and soundness of the contents of this publication, neither the authors nor the publisher will bear any responsibility for the consequences of any actions based on information contained. Printed and Published by Noseweek Online (Pty) Ltd.



## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

### Print

SA only	R420
Neighbouring states (airmail)	R620
Europe, Americas and Australasia	R760

### Internet edition

1 year	R305
--------	------

### Combined

Print+Internet (SA only)	R520
--------------------------	------

### To subscribe

By phone (021) 686 0570

Online (pay by credit card):  
www.noseweek.co.za

Email subs@noseweek.co.za

(Note: cheques no longer accepted)

### Further information

Call (021) 686 0570; fax 021 686 0573 or  
email info@noseweek.co.za

---

# One murder leads to another... and another... and another

**O**N THE 13TH JUNE 2020 HARI Nathvani complained on Facebook about the restrictions of the lockdown in South Africa. Three years had passed since the 71-year old last posted anything on social media; then he had simply updated his cover photo to show himself behind the steering wheel of a black Mazda MX5 convertible. A street sign in the background indicated the area as a neighbourhood in the Borough of Harrow, the part of London that Hari then called home.

Eighteen of his friends from across the world responded to the June post, all stating concern about his well-being because they had been unable to contact him since March.

Bharat Kotecha, who went to school with Nathvani in Malawi wrote “Where are you? Tried to phone you – no luck. Have you changed your mobile number?” Nimesh Bhatt who lives in the UK asked “Where r u? Send ur

mobile no” while Arvind Chaganial simply said “Worried”. In her response Nathvani’s daughter, Kaz Thorpe, told him not to worry. “Despite lockdown we can still get you back to the UK safely and swiftly...Miss you xx”

Hari replied in cryptic sentences, thanking his friends and family for caring and assuring them that he was doing well.

“The people are very good to me. They are all very caring. Am happy to be settled here now. Will come to UK next year after the cold season. We had some cold days here because of snow but not as bad as UK. At least here we get a few hours of sun and am loving the beautiful weather and African country. I always knew that Africa was my home. Thank you for caring. Will send a few lines whenever I get an opportunity. Love you all and God bless.”

But the writer of the Facebook post could not have been Hari because by

June 2020 Hari was already dead.

Police had been holding his charred remains at the morgue for six months, unable to identify him as the British man, Harkanth Nathvani, whose worried daughter in the UK had contacted the authorities in South Africa in May to report him missing in the country.

Because of the lockdown the body in the morgue was only identified in September after Hari’s dental records finally arrived in South Africa.

In the meantime another charred body, this time that of a woman, was discovered in August in Walkerville, just a few kilometers from where Hari’s yet to be identified body was found in March. The woman’s fingerprints identified her as Lynette Mustapha from Johannesburg. The one person that figured in both Mustapha and Nathvani’s lives was 59-year old Zaheera Boomgaard. She was Lynette’s friend and also the person that Hari had come to visit on his trip to South Africa.

In the early hours of the morning on the 9th of October police descended on Boomgaard’s Randburg apartment. She was arrested and has since been charged with two counts of murder, two of kidnapping, theft of Nathvani and Mustapha’s bankcards, cell phones and around R70,000 from their bank accounts. Added to that are charges of theft of Nathvani’s passport and Mustapha’s car.

*The Daily Mail* in Britain wrote in October that Nathvani’s relatives remembered him as a ‘gentle giant’. The grandfather of two travelled to South Africa to “relive happy childhood memories” having spent time in the country when he was little.

In a statement his family said Hari’s heart was especially with children as well as the elderly and he did all he could to assist those in need. “Once a year, Hari would take a trip from the UK to India to hand out food parcels to less fortunate children and the elderly.”



**Hari Nathvani - his last posting on Facebook before leaving for South Africa. Nobody heard from him again for 3 years. Then...**

Boomgaard's arrest was a huge shock to the residents of the security complex where she has lived since 2019. She had told them she was a retired medical doctor who worked night shift and slept during the day. She was especially known for the home cooked dishes she sold via her WhatsApp group, Mixed Oriental Food. "Am making prawn spring rolls @ R60 per doz", "Tomorrow lunch is Breyani @ R55 per serving" and "Koeksisters are ready for collection" were a few of the messages she sent to her clients. From the responses it is clear that business was good.

Pensioner Rinie Uys, who lived next-door to Boomgaard, had no idea of the dark secrets hidden in her neighbour's neat apartment where Christian devotion was openly displayed.

The two women spent many happy hours together feasting on hot chocolate and the food that Boomgaard showered on Uys.

"I was probably Zaheera's next victim," she says. "That is what the detectives told me."

Boomgaard has been on the police radar since 2012 when she used the surname Wookey. John Naisby, an 83-year man from Cape Town vanished while visiting a woman in Johannesburg called Zaheera Wookey.

**"I was probably  
Zaheera's next victim,"  
she says.  
"That is what the  
detectives told me."**

The two met on Facebook a few months earlier but Naisby's wife, Sinie, had no idea about the blossoming friendship between her sickly husband and another woman.

Sinie reported him missing when she noticed that large sums of money were withdrawn from Naisby's bank account shortly after he had left for Johannesburg.

The police searched Naisby's home computer for clues and found passionate emails that were

exchanged between him and Wookey. At the OR Tambo airport they also found images of the two of them on security footage; Wookey was seen pushing Naisby's luggage as they left the arrivals hall.

When interrogated in 2012 Wookey, who was a pig and goat farmer in Walkerville at the time, claimed she had dropped Naisby off at the Eastgate Mall where he would be meeting someone else. She also told police that she had run into him again three days later when he was waiting for a lift to visit his son in Rustenburg.

Wookey was arrested soon after and charged with the possession of an unlicensed shotgun and ammunition that police discovered in a safe at her Walkerville house. She was eventually found guilty of fraud for using Naisby's bank cards – which she claimed he had given her to use as she wished – and sentenced to 4 years correctional supervision.

Naisby's stepdaughter, Alida Heine, said recently that whatever the truth, Naisby's conduct was absolutely out of character. She believes the medication that he was taking for his many ailments affected his judgment and left him vulnerable.

Because his body was never found, Naisby was only presumed dead by court order in 2013.

Police are now also having another look at the death of Boomgaard's first husband, Saban Boomgaard, who died in 1998, apparently from a shotgun wound. Her second husband, Andrew Wookey, also died under mysterious circumstances in the Sunninghill hospital in 2010.

His symptoms prompted doctors to test for the presence of a commercial toxin in his body. If unearthed, the ten-year old toxicology report might hold more vital clues for forensic investigators who are said to be looking at seven possible murders connected to Boomgaard.

Meanwhile it has been established that Boomgaard's brother Prem Basdeo is the accused in another, seemingly unrelated murder case that is currently before the Pretoria high court.

It was alleged that Dawn Basdeo disappeared after leaving her home for an appointment at a nearby hospital. Her family, led by her husband, Prem,



**Prem Basdeo, charged with murdering his wife, since himself murdered.**



**Zaheera Boomgaard charged with 2 murders.**



**John Naisby, missing presumed dead.**

opened a missing person’s case at the Brooklyn police station and her car was found abandoned in Soweto two days later.

In a turn of events police have found a bloody knife and towel in the Basdeo’s house and charged Prem, who is a former senior police officer, with Dawn’s murder, perjury and defeating the ends of justice.

The case has been postponed several times and the next court date is set for 29 January 2021 without bail.

It has since emerged that Prem Basdeo and his 18-year old son, Jordan, were acquitted sixteen years ago of the murder of Prem’s first wife and Jordan’s mother, Neetha Basdeo.

Her lifeless body, shot in the head, was found in 2000 inside a shipping container in Phoenix, Durban where the Basdeos lived at the time. IOL reported in 2004 that Prem’s younger brother, Vinesh Basdeo, who was also a police officer, told the court that on

the day of Neetha’s murder, Prem came to his house saying his wife was dead.

During cross-examination Vinesh said Prem told him that he had shot his wife but defense advocate, Gideon Scheltema, accused Vinesh of using a family secret to manipulate his mother, Sheila and sister, Zaheera Boomgaard to implicate Prem in the murder.

**“Your sister gave birth to a baby when she was 15... it’s a family secret. You were told that your mother had killed the baby... buried it alive,”**

“You had a hold over your sister and mother. Your sister gave birth to a baby when she was 15-years-old... it’s a family secret.

You were told that your mother had killed the baby... buried it alive,” said Scheltema. “You used this knowledge to pressure your mother and Mrs Boomgaard to serve your own selfish interest.”

Vinesh denied this as well as the allegation that he was obsessed with

Prem’s second wife with whom he had previously been in a relationship. The woman referred to was Dawn Basdeo, for whose murder Prem now stands trial.

Vinesh Basdeo recently told online news platform *Maroela Media*, that Boomgaard was not a blood relative of the Basdeos and that he had not seen her or Prem for many years. He threatened with legal action should his name be mentioned in the current murder cases.

● Prem Basdeo’s older brother, Amichand, was hanged for murder in 1980 when he was 24-years old. His name appears on the list of people who died at the gallows and there is a reference to the case on the *SA History Online* website.

Like his brothers, Amichand Basdeo was also a policeman and during his training was the top student at the police college.

● As we went to press *Noseweek* learnt that Prem Basdeo was shot dead in the early hours of the morning of 30 November, the day that his murder trial would have resumed. Unconfirmed reports said Basdeo and one of his sons were travelling from Hartbeespoort Dam towards Pretoria when their car had a flat tyre.

While they were repairing the tyre robbers allegedly approached them and shot Basdeo. The prosecutor is said to have received a call from Basdeo’s lawyer, at 3am saying his dad had died an hour earlier in a hospital in Atteridgeville, west of Pretoria.

A team of forensic investigators rushed to the morgue to verify that the body was indeed that of murder accused Prem Basdeo. – **Susan Puren** ■

**Do you have a business?**

**Are you against corruption?**

**Support investigative journalism by placing an advert with us today**

**Contact us now at [ads@noseweek.co.za](mailto:ads@noseweek.co.za) for rates and more info**

**noseweek**  
NEWS YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO KNOW



# The “dark PR” origins of a Facebook troll called “Mia Taylor”

Mia Taylor, no profile, no picture, no friends, appeared on a number of Facebook platforms related to Cape Town’s water crisis at the height of the great drought in 2018. She spoke with the authority of someone with high-level insider knowledge of the City of Cape Town’s water and sanitation department, but was not always truthful.

Indeed, her main mission, it soon transpired, was to distract attention from the department’s long-hidden dirty secret: it had so polluted the ocean all around Cape Town with the raw sewage it had for years recklessly been pumping into the sea, that all the emergency desalination plants that had hurriedly been constructed to fend off D-day failed at the height of the water crisis.

Who was the man or woman behind the mask? On whose brief was he/she acting, and was the choice of name as sinisterly significant as subsequently unearthed evidence might suggest?

UCT Professor Lesley Green investigated and tells *Noseweek* about her shocking discoveries.



**I**N 2018 CAPE TOWN, A CITY OF SOME four million, came close to shutting off its taps after three dry years. With around 300km of coastline on the Atlantic and Indian oceans, the city proposed to set up desalination plants – contrary to the World Bank’s advice in an economic report of November 2017, and also contrary to a research article published in the *South African Journal of Science*, of which I was a co-author.

The proposed Waterfront plant, we had argued, was too close to the marine sewer outfall at Green Point that daily discharges about 40 million litres of macerated but otherwise untreated sewage to sea.

Suspended solid particles would likely foul the desalination plant membranes and allow microbes through, risking the contamination of drinking water. The research made front page news nationally.

Despite these warnings, only weeks later, the CoCT quietly signed a contract with a supplier, Quality Filtration Systems (QFS) to construct a desalination plant at the V&A Waterfront. (See *nose* 236.)

Less than Two months later, on

Feb 22, 2018 and again in June 2018, two articles by California-based travel journalist and social media consultant-for-hire Mia Taylor appeared in an online tourism publication called *Travel Pulse* in which she explained how Cape Town was fighting a water crisis in the worst drought on record.

She went on to note that: “already hotels in the port city have begun building their own desalination plants in an effort to provide clean water without relying on the grid”, as it was anticipated that on July 9, City officials would turn off water supplies to residents.

She wrongly attributed the now controversial desalination project to the private enterprise of Waterfront hotels looking after their own tourist interests, rather than the interest of the general public at large, temporarily letting the City off the hook on that score.

In her June 2018 article punting Marriot Hotels, she repeated the claim that a hotel had paid for the desalination plant at the V&A Waterfront, assuring tourists who booked in there that there would be water for them.



The Mia Taylor of San Diego

Mia Taylor, the named author of that article is, she states, resident in San Diego. Her picture by-line on both stories matches the portrait to be found on her marketing website at [www.miataylorwriter.com](http://www.miataylorwriter.com). Who briefed and paid her or her firm to do the story is not known. Why and how a writer-to-purpose based on the other side of the globe came to be commissioned to write the piece is possibly the first hint of an out-of-the ordinary agenda. But the most obvious possibility is that, at the very least, someone wanted people on social media to place Mia Taylor very far away, hiding the fact that the Mia Taylor, or someone using that brand name or pseudonym, who was just then becoming a regular contributor to the debate surrounding Cape Town water crisis on social media, was resident in Cape Town and, as obviously, closely associated or aligned with the city's department of water and sanitation. (She was also regular on the "Water Shedding Western Cape" Facebook page offering information

associated with the department – so closely associated that when, on 21 March 2018 – just a month after Mia Taylor of San Diego California's article appeared on *Travel Pulse* – a dam levels report appeared on the Showme Paarl website with a graphic of the Voelvlei dam that was credited to Mia Taylor. The graphic was clearly a product of the CoCT water and sanitation department. But this passed unremarked at the time.

Sewage-to-sea was not the only concern I and my research partners had about ocean water quality. Cape Town's many rivers flow through industrial areas, shack settlements and suburbs. In addition, the lack of adequate sanitation and solid waste management leads to foul stormwater run-off. Regular sewage spills occur into rivers and vleis by waste-water treatment plant operators. (Several of them have been the subject of court actions or face criminal charges for negligent management.) The result is that algal blooms are exacerbated

both in fresh water systems and the open ocean. These too would foul the desalination plants.

The Waterfront desalination plant was up and ready by March 2018. But a year later, in April 2019, the City and the supplier, QFS were at loggerheads. CoCT was refusing to pay QFS, arguing that the produced water did not meet national drinking water standards.

The story broke in *Die Burger* and was shared on StopCOCT that morning. Within no time Mia Taylor, no profile, no portrait, but already an established participant on Facebook went into battle in defence of the CoCT's case. If it was the same Mia Taylor who had written about the drought and Cape Town's water problems in *Travel Pulse*, she would most improbably have to have been up and about in San Diego at 1 a.m. there, able to read Afrikaans and ready to correct Capetonians' ignorance on all aspects of Cape Town's water and sanitation programme.



# ROVOS RAIL

30 YEARS OF TRAVEL EXCELLENCE

Bespoke train safaris through the heart of Africa combine magnificent scenery with the glamour and excitement of the golden age of leisure travel. In a series of journeys lasting from 48 hours to 15 days, Rovos Rail links some of the subcontinent's greatest destinations. The beautifully rebuilt trains carry a maximum of 72 passengers in 36 superbly appointed suites and are also available for charter.

*The Most Luxurious Train in the World*

CAPE TOWN | DURBAN | VICTORIA FALLS | GOLF SAFARI  
AFRICAN COLLAGE | NAMIBIA | DAR ES SALAAM | ANGOLA



+27 (0) 12 315 8242 · [reservations@rovos.co.za](mailto:reservations@rovos.co.za) · [rovos.com](http://rovos.com)

Recognising her name from social media posts that had long bothered me, I began an impromptu public interview with her on the Facebook site of StopCOCT.

*LG: Can you please provide details of the poor water quality [supplied by the QFS desalination plant]? How was it assessed? Was the public alerted to the poor water quality?*

*MT: Source water quality was the ACTUAL issue for QFS....and hence the quality and volume of produced water was problematic too and became an issue for CoCT.*

I'd asked about supplied water, that is, drinking water supplied to the public, but Mia had answered about source water, that is, sea water. Not acknowledged in her answer was that the City was sending millions of litres of sewage out to sea every day, close to the desalination plant. I probed a little further:

*LG: Was the public alerted the water being provided was poor quality?*

*MT: Not relevant.*

*LG: How so?*

*MT: Ask yourself this....of the 181MI supplied by QFS how much do you think was actually consumed by mouth?...a very very small fraction. This water was being fed into the reticulation system of the CBD .... not to households.*

Reticulated water however is the water supply. Did tourists not have mouths?

"All our water is safe to drink", she continued. The "our" was a giveaway. *How do you know if you don't work for COCT, I asked. Did you test privately?*

*MT: The water was processed through the RO....the end product is safe to drink.*

Mia Taylor knew the technical language of desalination: RO stands for Reverse Osmosis membranes. Mia's comments shifted blame:

*MT: They [QFS] should have known that the water quality was poorer than stated in the tender document....after all they claim not to be a "fly by night operator".*

Asked about the City's sea water quality data, Mia replied: *Source water was measured at times when there was no algal bloom etc. I responded: Why was it collected only under optimal conditions?*

*MT: Do they measure each m<sup>2</sup> of*



**Tony Leon**

*ocean abutting our coastline and out a few 100 metres too....certainly not. Best way to test water quality for desalination is to actually have a small test plant....that is exactly what has happened....all 3 current plants are test facilities and prove that their current locations are not suitable for a permanent plant. [...]*

*[A ludicrously expensive "experiment", so ludicrous that it is clearly a lie spun to cover for the CoCT's dishonesty and very expensive and careless misjudgement - Ed.]*

Asked whether sewage would still be sent to sea in the future, she replied:

*MT: Perhaps we need to accept that municipal supply should not be drunk...and buy bottled water instead for cooking and drinking.*

This "Mia Taylor" had, a few lines before, insisted that all the city's water was safe to drink. Here, she was trying to persuade us that only privatised water could be in our future. A skilled liar was claiming "science" to be behind the decisions made by Cape Town's water governance team, and using a false online identity to say things she could never say were her true identity known, in order to steer public opinion away from criticism of a failed desalination programme that had been pursued against the advice of independent scientists and a World Bank advisor.



**Priya Reddy**

I copied the discussion to screenshots. Fortunately so! By 10pm that evening, the Mia Taylor profile was deleted.

Other participants on that Facebook thread quickly concurred: "Mia Taylor" was an unscrupulous, well-informed insider in the City's water and sanitation department – or likely more than one of them, because her style would change from time to time.

Joan Alcorn on StopCoCT: "That profile was used by multiple people / departments at CoCT. The [American] Mia Taylor is definitely not the Mia Taylor troll that we had. Maybe CoCT decided they will steal her name because of what her supposed knowledge is on desalination."

Bruce van Rensburg: "They may have conveniently used this person's name to create confusion, but the CoCT 'Mia Taylor' is a CoCT-sponsored PR arrangement."

Mike Clegg: "She was clearly a spokesperson of some sort for the city."

Not knowing quite what to do with the material, I saved it and focused on other research. In the intervening period, the City of Cape Town has libellously accused our research team in the media for reporting water pollution figures that they had refused to discuss with us in a meeting we had requested; taken a *Carte Blanche* team to the Broadcasting Complaints

Commission for their piece based on our research on pollution in the Kuils River (the City lost); made Ratepayer Associations sign non-disclosure agreements for water health figures released to them, making it impossible for the results to be independently checked; and this year outlawed independent scientific testing of inland water quality in nature reserves without their prior permission.

A year later I returned to tracking “Mia Taylor”.

In 2016 the City of Cape Town awarded its media contract to Hero Communications. To assist with water strategy in 2017/8, Hero Communications appointed BrandsEye, a small South African data

and analytics company. According to one study, “they relied on daily social media sentiment analyses conducted by BrandsEye ... Whenever the city designed a new campaign, it used all available media channels – including its social media accounts, as well as local newspaper and radio spots.” BrandsEye claims to “combine AI and human intelligence. Algorithms are used for certain preprocessing tasks and our Crowd of human contributors filter noise for the conversation that’s high risk, high value, and urgent.

“The BrandsEye crowd is a proprietary crowdsourcing platform comprising trained and vetted local language contributors from around the world.

Contributors are remunerated for executing micro-jobs that include the verification and categorisation of social media posts and other short-form texts.”

Hero Communications had a subsection called Shapeshift, which offered a theory of communications based on a Bruce Lee YouTube video. Called “Be Like Water”, it advises:

“Empty your mind. Be formless. Shapeless. Like water. You put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle. You put water into a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Be like water, my friend! ... Human beings are strange and complex creatures. To truly connect with your audience, you



**WE'VE MOVED!**  
**COME SEE US AT**  
**THE LEONARDO**  
**OFFICE LEVEL 12**  
**75 MAUDE STREET**  
**SANDOWN, SANDTON**

**IAN LEVITT**  
**ATTORNEYS**

Contact us at:



**TEL: 011 784 3310**  
**FAXEMAIL: 086 579 5368**  
**INFO@IANLEVITT.CO.ZA**

*We will be your  
frontline fighters*

must speak to both their pragmatic and emotional side. Shapeshift has a wealth of experience in helping businesses master the art of adaptation.”

In 2017, the CoCT appointed a third company, Resolve Communications to assist with water crisis communications as the fallout for the DA-led administration deepened with the approach of “day zero”. Resolve is led by former DA national leader Tony Leon. Its website explains: “We navigate our clients through the political landscape with tailor-made plans aimed at changing political opinion and winning public support. ... We enlist and leverage influential third party advocates to foster a multiplicity of views complimentary [sic] to those of our clients.”

But, it transpires, “Mia Taylor” was not one of the “third parties” enlisted by Resolve Communications. As Tony Leon explained when approached by *Noseweek* for comment: “I am advised that Resolve’s role in the water crisis was to assist Hero with strategic advice and counsel on the water crisis communication to encourage citizens to save water. Resolve’s contract with Hero ended on 29 January 2018, some months prior to the introduction of the desalination plants. We have never heard of Ms. Mia Taylor.”

Hero Communications, the council’s consultants at the time Mia Taylor was active on social media on behalf of CoCT closed shop earlier this year (the company appears to have existed only for as long as it had a contract with the city). That leaves only the City of Cape Town itself to do the explaining.

Was “Mia Taylor” an anomaly? Or is that a strategy that was/is more routinely used?

In April 2019 another fake profile (new, no friends) appeared on the Water Shedding Western Cape site under the name JJ Wright to defend the CoCT. When challenged as to why the arguments and cadences were like that of “Mia Taylor”, that profile also disappeared along with all posts made in its name.

Early in 2020, CoCT announced that the second of its three desalination plants was to be decommissioned early – with many unanswered questions on why the

drinking water supply around the plant (at Strandfontein) had caused an outbreak of diarrhoeal disease so severe that the City had had to advise residents not to drink from their taps, and instead, collect water from a tanker.

The day the decommissioning of the R250 million plant was announced, one “Willie Cuthgart” appeared on StopCoCT, defending the wasted expenditure (it had been a worthwhile experiment, he said, echoing Mia Taylor), claiming not to work for the City and declaring “all our local sea water is not fit for purpose ... [we should] build [desalination plants] as far away from Cape Town as possible”.

He declared that “GW” (ground water) “is the primary source of water for the next decade”.

This PR technique is known as “bait and switch”. It lightly shrugs off responsibility for the expensive desalination disaster (“it was an experiment”, “we all know you can’t desalinate sea water anywhere near CapeTown”) and subtly mounts a new, more modest steed: ground water. The obvious solution, haven’t we always known it? our new troll suggests. You take the bait, forget about that disasterous desalination project and without pausing to think, also switch horses: ground water is the better option. Of course! So what’s the problem?

Willie Cuthgart claimed on his Facebook profile to work for the UN in London, and claimed to be from “Capetown, California”. There is no branch of the UN in London, and no Capetown in California. A search for his name on Facebook linked me to another post under the name of ... Mia Taylor. – **Lesley Green**

● In response to *Noseweek’s* request for comment on this story, Priya Reddy, CoCT’s Director of Communications replied:

“The City has stated the following on the record in April 2019: The City does not know who Mia Taylor is, and does not use fake personal profiles on its social media accounts.”

Dear reader, you be the judge.

In our next issue, Professor Green follows the trail of Mia Taylor wherever it goes abroad, and makes more intriguing discoveries.

[See Editorial on page 5.] ■

**GRAFIK THOUGHT**  
DESIGN CO.

+27 72 141 8854  
MICH@GRAFIKTHOUGHT.COM

**IF YOU RENT PROPERTY  
KEEP THIS NUMBER**

**I CAN HELP YOU WITH  
PROBLEM TENANTS**

**I CAN ASSIST YOU WITH THE  
RENTAL HOUSING TRIBUNAL**

**IF YOU DON'T NEED ME NOW,  
YOU WILL LATER**

**JOHN: 082 901 0824**

**TINUS DE JONGH**  
His life and works

NOW AVAILABLE AT:  
[www.tinusdejongh.co.za](http://www.tinusdejongh.co.za) | [dejongh@yebo.co.za](mailto:dejongh@yebo.co.za)  
R265 incl postage within South Africa

---

# SANDF “rotten to the core”

**“I knew that going back to Defence Intelligence was going to set me on a collision course with those hell bent on embezzling state funds.” – Maj Gen Sandile Sizani, Chief Director Counter Intelligence (ret) SANDF, in his submission to the Zondo Commission.**

**D**ESPITE HIS MISGIVINGS ABOUT Defence Intelligence, South Africa’s military advisor at the High Commission in London did return to the country in 2014 to take up the position after being convinced by the minister of defence, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, and the chief of the defence force, Gen Solly Shoke that it was the right thing to do. Now, in retrospect, Maj Gen Sandile Sizani refers to this deployment as “four years of hell”.

In his recent submission to the Zondo Commission of Enquiry into State Capture the now retired top military man claims the defence force is rotten to the core and that contracts worth millions of rand were being awarded fraudulently.

These are mostly open secrets among the generals, as Sizani found out in London before he even started in the position as chief director of counter intelligence in 2014. While on a work-related visit, Brig Gen Modise, responsible for Counter Intelligence Operations, told Sizani that he should brace himself for a “bruising term of service within Defence Intelligence.”

The same Modise also told Sizani of a R1-million bribe which a Brigadier General Thalita Mxakatho, who then headed the vetting directorate, had received from a private company that was given a project in the department. The money was allegedly used to extend her house and she threw a huge birthday party for her friends and colleagues to show off the place, once the job was completed. Two chief directors at Defence Intelligence (DI), Maj Gen Matlakeng and Lt Gen Jeremia Mduduzi Nyembe were apparently privy to the information and seemingly did nothing about it.

Sizani says he blew the whistle on many fraud and corruption cases, the biggest a R79 million contract which the department of defence (DOD) awarded to UHNU IT Solutions (Pty)

Ltd to provide a so-called “analytical tool” to the army. He questioned this contract when he realised that monthly invoices were submitted without timelines or plans for the delivery of the goods. No one could give an acceptable explanation as to what the company was being paid for.

“It seemed we were pumping millions into this company without it delivering anything,” he declared.

Sizani then discovered that some of UHNU IT Solutions’ invoices were actually a repeat of previous ones, with only the dates changed. When he informed the owner of the company, Hunadi Phaiphai, that there would not be any further payments until the issue of the duplicate invoices was resolved, she was obviously not thrilled and “made all sorts of threats”. Unperturbed, Sizani set up a team to investigate the project and discovered that UHNU IT Solutions was even paid for an item that had been donated to the department by someone from Wits university.

“The person gave it for free, but UHNU IT Solutions charged R4m for it,” says Sizani who then appointed Deloitte’s to conduct an audit on the project. Their findings indicated that R53 million could not be accounted for.

Next he approached the Hawks and opened a criminal case in 2015 –but was left disillusioned by the lack of results achieved. The chief of Defence Intelligence had apparently told the finance department not to cooperate with the Hawks’ investigation.

“We gave them the investigation report and the audit report. It was a matter of the Hawks just finalising the whole investigation and arresting the culprit,” says Sizani.

He was later told at a management meeting to withdraw the case against UHNU because there would be an internal investigation, but he refused. Next he was called to a meeting where Hunadi Phaiphai was also present.

“What shocked and annoyed me was the fact that I had a case of fraud already opened against this individual and her company and it was very unprofessional to expect me to sit and discuss the case with the suspect.”

Two of Sizani’s subordinates were also in the meeting to act as witnesses for Phaiphai. He says it was clear that the purpose of that meeting was to convince him to drop the matter against her company. When that failed, top management allegedly used another strategy: they asked Phaiphai if she had something to say.

“Ms Phaiphai then claimed that the only reason that I stopped payments to her company and opened a case against her was because she had rejected my advances; that I had been calling and sending messages declaring my love for her. That is exactly where she blundered.”

It came as no surprise to Sizani as he already knew the lengths to which some of his colleagues would go to tarnish someone’s image and he challenged Phaiphai to show everyone the messages as well as her call register that would reflect the numerous calls he was allegedly making to her. She was unable to do so. At that stage the then Chief of Defence Intelligence (CDI) Lt Gen Nyembe stood up and said he had to go. The meeting ended on that note. I should add that a week or so after that meeting ms. Phaiphai called and asked that we meet and resolve issues. I obviously refused and told her never to contact me, ever.”

Sizani says UHNU rose from being only a shelf company with no assets to one that had millions in its bank account. “It is also important to view the inaction on the part of the Hawks as nothing else but defeating the ends of justice. One other way of ensuring that criminals escape the full might of the law is to deliberately conduct your investigation in such a way that the prosecuting authorities end up telling

you that there is not enough evidence to prosecute.”

During his four years at DI Sizani exposed several more instances of fraud and corruption. In the case of Shaya Security Services the “unholy web” allegedly ran right to the top of the SANDF. Sizani found that the company – which was providing security at the building where DI operated in the Pretoria CBD – did not have a proper contract, yet they were being paid monthly fees without knowing what they were meant to cover.

Soon after he cancelled Shaya Security’s services, attempts were made to dissuade Sizani from proceeding with his decision. He says the most interesting one was when his namesake, Brig Gen Mbinimzi Sizani (currently South Africa’s military attaché at the UN in New York), informed him that a certain Mr. Radebe, an employee of Shaya Security Services, wanted the letter terminating the company’s services withdrawn.

“Brig Gen Sizani told me that the man made it clear that I would be shot before I could reach for my weapon which I supposedly carried in a brown bag. He said I wouldn’t have a hope of reaching for my gun as I would already be dead.”

MajGen Sizani suggested that they should contact the police as someone had just threatened to kill him but the other Sizani vehemently disagreed. When Maj Gen Sizani eventually got hold of Radebe, he denied having made those threats and suggested that a meeting be convened where he would tell Brig Gen Sizani to his face that he had fabricated the story.

“I was not interested in such a meeting and viewed the whole thing as a veiled message that if I did not rescind, I would be dealt with.”

The company eventually left DI only to reappear at the South African Air Force (SAAF). Sizani says the people involved were the Chief of Defence Intelligence (CDI), Lt Gen Jeremia Nyembe, the Chief of the Air Force (CAF), Lt Gen Fabian Msimang who has since retired and Brig Gen Modise, responsible for Counter Intelligence Operations (CI Ops) who had briefed him in London.

“I got to know of this when the air force chief wanted to transfer money

from the SAAF to Sub-division Counter Intelligence for payment to this company. I refused but the money was nonetheless transferred with the agreement of the three generals.”

There was a requirement to pay the company R10 million and since the money was already in Sizani’s sub-division, he had to recommend payment, but he refused again. He says Nyembe insisted that he sign and when he flatly told him that he would not do that, the Chief of the SANDF, General Solly Shoke, stepped in.

“He said something to the effect that this appears as if we are laundering money,” says Sizani who is unable to say how the matter ended. But he believes the company was ultimately paid R10 million.

Most appallingly it was later discov-

## “How could you work with someone you know to be a spy?”

ered that Shaya Security Services was actually spying on the SANDF and due to the seriousness of the matter General Shoke had informed both Minister Nosovive Mapisa-Nqakula and the President who was probably still Jacob Zuma at the time.

“I cannot get into details about the whole thing, the details will be provided to the investigators. The only thing I can say is that I am shocked and surprised that the company is still providing the same service to the SAAF.

It is also surprising that no action was taken against the three generals for parachuting into the SAAF a company that Counter Intelligence had fired.”

Sizani’s submission also mentions fraud and corruption with the Electronic Data Management System, safe houses, vehicles that were used during operations in the DRC, the auctioning of vehicles, the alert centre upgrade and the review of Defence Intelligence strategy.

Because of his stance against corruption his colleagues referred to Sizani as someone suffering from self-hate as he was seen to be going after

so-called black companies. “The most hurtful of all was the spreading of a rumour that I was a British spy sent by the English to spy on DI and render it useless.”

Sizani says the Minister and the Chief of the SANDF knew all this but nothing was done. “Maybe they believed whatever, but my experience as someone that was in the struggle is that people were killed for being called spies.”

He says he comes from a family that gave everything to the freedom of this country and to be labelled a spy is not only an insult to him as a person but also to his family and the worst of the dirty tricks used by those that continue to plunder state resources.

“For the record, I have never and will never be a spy for any country. Let’s for a moment assume that my accuser was correct. How could you work with someone that you know to be a spy without being worried that your information is being compromised?”

Sizani survived an attack on his life in 2017 when several shots were fired at him after he had parked his car in Sunnyside, Pretoria. He believes he only survived because he shot back. A month before his retirement in 2018, he was also involved in a mysterious car accident when his vehicle inexplicably ran off the road and landed against the side barriers.

“I survived that as well. I hope I will survive until my story is heard. If I have to die, so be it but the truth will eventually come out. It always does.”

Maj Gen Sizani did not respond to our request for an interview.

The spokesperson of the Zondo Commission, the Rev. Mbuyiselo Stemela, could not be reached for comment but the *Sunday Independent* reported earlier that their journalists had seen correspondence between Sizani and the Commission about the submission that said his submission was escalated.

Apart from UNHU IT Solutions (Pty) Ltd, Hunadi Phaiphai is a director of another three companies namely Phenyo Risk Advisory Services CC, Tasobyte (Pty) Ltd and a non-profit, Growing Smart Leaders NPC.

Phaiphai told *Noseweek* the matter is under investigation by the Hawks and UNHU IT is still awaiting the outcome. – **Susan Puren** ■

---

From another country

# Goldman Sachs fined \$3-billion

A meaningful punishment for a major financial crime?

**I**N OCTOBER, THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF Justice announced a landmark settlement with banking giant Goldman Sachs over its participation in a bribery scheme that syphoned hundreds of millions from Malaysian public coffers. The bank agreed to pay nearly \$3 billion to authorities in multiple countries, and agreed to have its Malaysian subsidiary plead guilty in a Brooklyn (New York) court to conspiring to violate U.S. bribery laws.

The fine, the largest ever under the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act followed the indictment of two Goldman executives who U.S. authorities alleged pushed the bribery ring.

*[But it's actually a fairly good deal for Goldman Sachs. In the third quarter of 2020 alone, Goldman Sachs earned \$3.6 billion in profits. – Ed.]*

The scandal focused on a multi-billion dollar fund known as 1MDB, which was ostensibly devoted to developing the Malaysian economy. Instead, billions were syphoned from the fund, often via offshore accounts, to wealthy elites, politicians and Goldman bankers. Some of the looted money is suspected to have financed the film production of “Wolf of Wall Street,” the Hollywood feature starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

In its action, U.S. authorities used a controversial tool called a deferred prosecution agreement, or DPA, in which an offending firm pays a fine and agrees to a period of probation in order to avoid the potentially ruinous prospect of being criminally prosecuted.

Critics say that the U.S. legal system's increasing reliance on DPAs to address financial crime reflects its softness on corporate executives, who can often safely assume that they will not face jail time for white-collar misconduct.

In many cases, huge amounts of suspicious money flowed through institutions that had already been subjected to DPAs for money laundering. “They’ve become in effect the cost of doing business rather than a real punishment,” a senior federal judge in Manhattan, told ICIJ.

Paul Pelletier, a former federal prosecutor who has been a vocal critic of the heavy use of DPAs, says he is impressed that on this occasion the government actually prosecuted two Goldman bankers allegedly at the heart of the bank's involvement with 1MDB.

In November 2018, the Justice Department charged Timothy Leissner, a former Goldman partner, and Roger Ng, a former Goldman managing director, for arranging bribes and laundering money in relation to 1MDB. Leissner pleaded guilty and is awaiting sentencing, while Ng maintains his innocence and is expected to take his case to trial next year.



● An earlier analysis by the ICIJ of the leaked secret files published in September revealed that five global banks – JPMorgan, HSBC, Standard Chartered Bank, Deutsche Bank and Bank of New York Mellon – all also defied money laundering crackdowns by moving staggering sums of illicit cash for shadowy characters and criminal networks spreading chaos and undermined democracy around the world.

And that they kept profiting from these illegal activities even after U.S.

authorities had fined them for earlier failures to stem flows of dirty money – and had warned them they'd face criminal prosecutions if they didn't stop doing business with mobsters, fraudsters or corrupt regimes.

U.S. agencies responsible for enforcing money laundering laws rarely prosecute megabanks that break the law.

JPMorgan, the largest bank based in the United States, moved more than \$1 billion for the fugitive financier behind Malaysia's 1MDB scandal, and more than \$2 million for a young energy mogul's company that has been accused of cheating Venezuela's government and helping cause electricity blackouts that crippled large parts of the country.

JPMorgan also processed more than \$50 million in payments over a decade for Paul Manafort, former campaign manager for President Donald Trump.

The bank shuttled at least \$6.9 million in Manafort transactions in the 14 months after he resigned from the campaign amid a swirl of money laundering and corruption allegations arising from his work with a pro-Russian political party in Ukraine.

This, despite the bank's promises to improve its money laundering controls as part of settlements it reached in 2011, 2013 and 2014.

In response to questions for this story, JPMorgan said it was legally prohibited from discussing clients or transactions.

HSBC, Standard Chartered Bank, Deutsche Bank and Bank of New York Mellon also continued to wave through suspect payments despite similar promises to government authorities.

The FinCEN Files show banks moving cash through their accounts for people they can't identify, and failing to report transactions with all the hallmarks of money laundering until years after the fact.

The median time it took Barclays to report suspect transactions was found to be 3 years and 5 months, JPMorgan took 1 year and 7 months.

– **Spencer Woodman, International Consortium of Investigative Journalists** ■



## Baroness Behr of the Bo-Kaap

Dear Reader, meet Baroness Gail Behr, artist, hotelier and creator of Cape Town's hottest new hotel, Dorp...

It's not a hotel, nor a house, nor a pub. It is, instead, a kind of oddballs club."

Baroness Gail Behr is reading me a poem she wrote recently about the hotel she built from scratch high on the slopes of Signal Hill, above the old Malay Quarter. She intends putting the poem on her website so that guests know what they're coming to.

"You'll know if you fit the moment you arrive. And if you don't, simply reverse down the drive," she continues with her poem, as a Chopin piano piece plays in the background. We are sitting in the airy plant- and antique-filled parlour of the Dorp hotel. In the background is the splutter of a coffee machine coming from the hotel's bistro, christened Café Covid by Behr.

On arrival at Dorp, I don't know where to look first: at the plush furnishings – settees covered in sumptuous cushions and exotic throws; antique tables covered with books, vases and candlesticks; wooden floors under Persian carpets – or to gasp at the spectacle of Table Mountain being so very close. I did not know you could get so high up in the Bo-Kaap.

"We want everyone to be happy or as happy as they can be – and that also applies to the staff and to me," Behr's musings continue.

She pauses and peers at me above her mask: "If people are rude to my staff I don't give a fuck about throwing them out."

Behr, the wife of the late Baron Nicolas Behr, "the great love of my life", is also known for building the Moroccan-styled Grand Café & Rooms in Plettenberg Bay and other venues in Cape Town, as well as for the much-loved and missed Plett-based clothes shop, Homework. (The shop is back and it's in the hotel!)

Clubby, colonial and utterly luxurious, Dorp has just 30 rooms. They range from the Rose room with its own pool and steam room to what Behr fondly calls The Worst Room in the Hotel. The hotel is set in a magical, wanton garden that perfectly fits the mountain landscape. (It is managed by Melissa van Hoogstraten, formerly of Melissa's deli fame.)

about the hotel's "gorgeous stoep", he concludes "it truly is the best hotel I've ever stayed in."

*Visi* magazine calls it an "intimate yet breathtaking hotel". The UK's *Daily Telegraph* gave it ten out of ten for location and ten out of ten for style and character, describing it as "a grand yet unpretentious place to stay ... with unparalleled Table Mountain

views. It has a fairytale garden and eccentric spaces. The work of a creative maverick, it's both haven and inspiration, and unlike any other hotel I've encountered."

"Dorp is original, theatrical, transcendent, unapologetically didactic in its commitment to Gail Behr's clear loathing of the mundane," wrote a Tripadvisor guest.

Dorp first opened in July 2019 and had to immediately shut down for a month because of "bad plumbing". It kicked off properly towards the last quarter of last year and quickly built up a loyal clientele in the creative industries. Then Covid struck.

During the lockdown, Behr jokingly called the hotel, *The Shining*, after Stephen King's horror movie, set in an isolated hotel in the Colorado Rockies.

During the interview, Behr is, by turns, witty (I spluttered over my coffee a number

of times) and vulnerable. Generous with her time, frank and irreverent. She reminds me of someone I've never met. Maybe Joan Didion or Carson McCullers. She speaks of her love for "the old cities of Europe", for beautiful buildings and for "civilized behaviour". Describes herself as bohemian, hugely independent, a free thinker ... and speaks of 'big losses' and huge, huge grotesque griefs which, in her experience, have provided her with a potent creative energy. She loves



Gail Behr – picture credit: Surita Joubert

There are terraces and plants on rooftops and a greenhouse under construction to grow tomatoes. There's a private bar. They have opera events with hot dogs. The roast chicken at Dorp reportedly has "an international reputation".

Though the baroness is fiercely private and shy of publicity, there are a few reviews: a *Conde Naste* Travel reviewer describes Behr as hilarious and runs the hotel "like a modern day Gertrude Stein". Reminiscing

people who are truthful about their imperfections and despises disguise.

It's been said that if she doesn't like a guest, or if someone's rude to her staff, Behr simply boots them out of her hotel. (If she likes them, she's been known to run after them into the driveway and beg them to stay longer, at no cost.) She's reportedly pulled guests back inside to dress them properly before they go out.

The well-known Dutch trend forecaster, Li Edelkoort, who was in Cape Town at the time, ended up staying at Dorp for months with her business partner as the only guests. "We were total strangers. I was terrified of her ... I cried when she left," says Behr.

It's also been said that Behr is so proprietorial that, when the first real guests arrived, she didn't want to let them in.

"She dreaded the arrival of guests," says NYC-based old friend, Ronald Wohlman. "We'd hear a car pull up, and we'd leopard crawl to the window ... I would say, 'you have to let them in. They are guests and this is a hotel.'"

"The Baroness had created such a close-to-her-heart hotel, so distinctly in her own style and so luxuriously homely, that the idea of guests to her was unfathomable."

Says Behr: "We have already developed a weird sort of membership. It sounds elite, but it's openhearted ... and there's no room for bullies, bigots and bullshit."

"People come in here and say, 'we are influencers, can we have a free night and we will put you on our Instagram as we have 72 billion followers?' I say, 'I will pay you not to ... There are 8 billion people in the world. We have

30 rooms. These are not the sort of like-minded people we are looking for: people who become part of Dorp. I know it sounds romantic, but do you get it?"

The like-minded people she speaks about are the actors, directors, musicians, artists and photographers that she loves. Vito Palazollo is a welcome guest who, says Behr, is "kind, and interesting and very harshly judged".

**"We were never allowed to see my father. In every photo of my father, he was decapitated."**

"We are mainly a production crew hotel. We also have dodgy businessmen who sit in the corner and play poker and give the place a bit of grit. I love grit. Cape Town is very white. It's Sussex and that's always bothered me. We're very supportive of black design, movies and creatives. This is not a party place; it's not a cocaine and champagne joint. It's an oddballs club."

Not long after Dorp opened, Behr was seeing US actress Jodie Foster to the door of the hotel when a couple who were staying in the hotel walked up to Behr and "started telling me how marvellous I was because of the hotel".

"I was standing next to Jodie and they totally ignored her. I said to her, 'sorry, I am clearly more famous than you are!' She loved it. She is absolutely real to her marrow. No shit. Just glorious."

"It's very easy in South Africa to be a big fish as the pond is very very small and you can't take self yourself so seriously. I hate pomposity. The public do it to you. They make you very famous very quickly. It's unbearable to me."

When we meet, Behr has just moved into a house in Oranjezicht, having been based at Dorp. "I couldn't be more excited. I was the janitor for God knows how many years, building it, furnishing it and running it and a week ago I moved out. I feel like a teenager in digs ..."

Gail Behr was born in Melrose, Johannesburg. Her mother, Jean, and her father, Eric Sacks, divorced when Behr was eight.

"We (she has an older sister, Saranne) were never allowed to see my father. In every photo of my father, he was decapitated."

He came from a family of eleven siblings, most of whom were shopkeepers. He had a toy company in Johannesburg.

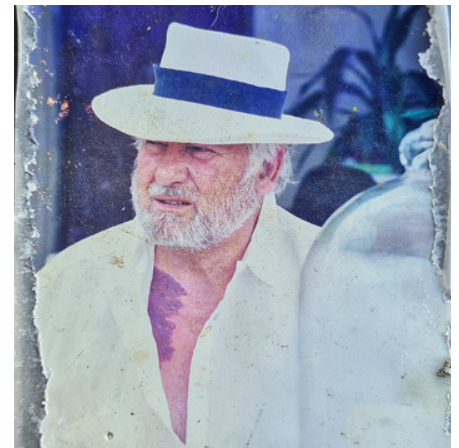
"He was a glamorous figure who rode horses and skied. He was a womaniser and kept a mistress, I'm told, in Milan. He ran off when I was young."

"My mother was very stylish. She used to say, 'Gail is a shopkeeper like her father's side of the family,' which clearly I am."

When Behr's mother remarried, she was sent to a series of schools "because every time my father found us we were sent to another school."



**Bathe in the views**



**Baron Nicolas Behr of Kurland**

The sisters were sent to boarding school at eight, starting at Sacred Heart Convent in Potchefstroom. "I ran away eleven times and was expelled. I then went to Redhill, a girls' school in Johannesburg which I adored. We could keep horses there. Then our father found us and I was sent to an Afrikaans school in Witbank.

"So I did the full gamut of every possible school – fancy, English, Afrikaans, religious – every possible bloody school. It was kind of like a degree in anthropology ... we learnt about every possible type of human."

All her life, Behr dreamt of getting married... "but I changed my mind to become a shopkeeper.

"I longed for independence. That was my escape from a fairly difficult childhood. I knew from an early age that I'd do retail. I had little leaf shops in the garden, selling different sized leaves."

Behr loved life in Johannesburg. "But my mother married a farmer when I was nine and we left Johannesburg and went to live on a farm. I was at boarding school and my school holidays were on this terrible farm in Ogies.

"I missed Jo'burg every minute of that ghastly time. I still think it's the most wonderful place in the world. I miss it and I go there regularly. "The farm was just terrible. When I think of those Sundays, I think about a radio playing off tune and a fly buzzing in the fly screens. There was nothing to do, it was just bleak. I'd lie on the carpet in the sitting room and listen to Swan Lake and dream I was a ballerina."

The girls were adopted by their stepfather and did not see much of their father. "He became a very prevalent fantasy in my life which I think skewed my reality of men. That's why I ran off with older men so often."

After school, Behr "did secretarial school and a few courses".

In Johannesburg, she went into the fashion, clothing and restaurant trade.

She married three times – first at the age of twenty, a marriage which produced two sons.

"Then I ran off with my riding teacher (Bill Johnson) in my late twenties. He was wonderful, but a womaniser, and then I ran off with the love of my life – Nicolas Behr –



A peaceful setting in the lounge

who lived on a farm in Plettenberg Bay.

"He was 17 years older than me. We were friends for many years and we adored each other.

"We were sort of social anarchists. We felt the same way about things even though he was a fascist and I was a tired old commie." She met Baron Nicolas Behr when a friend brought him around for a drink in Johannesburg in the late eighties. "I became his procuress, I was determined to find him a wife and introduced him to the most marvellous women. He lived on this beautiful farm outside Plettenberg Bay, Kurland, and I would fly down with these glorious creatures.

"But we always saw the world on

top of everybody's heads and looked at each other. We got on so well. We shared an irreverence. We ran off a few years later ... and I moved onto his farm." He became her third (and last) husband.

Baron Behr's father, a geologist, was Russian and came from an area of Latvia called Kurland. "They were the white Russians, Teutonic knights, German-speaking Russians. Nicolas's father came to South Africa and married a woman from George. They bought land in Plett, settled there and had two children, Nic and Karina.

"Nicolas was beautifully educated. He did a PPE at Oxford and went to Geneva University. He spoke perfect French. He was a truly international, worldly person who spoke several



## MARULENG AUTO

If you are in the market for a **Sanparks compliant or private game reserve suited game viewing vehicle**

– we can assist.

Select from our stock of **new + used Nissan and Mahindra viewers** or customise a vehicle to your specification – Maruleng Auto in Hoedspruit can help.

(countrywide delivery)

CALL 015 793 0290 OR 082 944 4444 (DERIK) FOR DETAILS + PRICING

languages, loved music and read everything you could read. He had a large attitude, so difficult to find in this petty little world.”

Life with the Baron was “beautiful but difficult. He’d been alone for many years and had very territorial friends. He had three sons and I had two. Five boys had to all figure it out, which they did.”

The couple lived and worked on the farm until Nic got into financial trouble. Behr then bought another farm down Wittedrif Road, outside Plett, “a beautiful old place for us to go and live on” and she started her shop Homework.

“I thought I was going to be Nancy Mitford living on a farm and growing turnips. I realised there was no money.

“We spent our last years together on this other farm, not the fancy Kurland.”

The pair were married for 15 years.

“He brought out everything in me. I think to be truly loved at some point in your life is so terribly important. He died very suddenly (after an eye operation)... and I buried him in the garden in Plett. I put up a huge fascist tombstone and sat at his graveside for months. I had a magnificent period of mourning and then laced up my boots and kicked on. I built the Grand Café in a fury of grief.

“I have been solo ever since and discovered I was probably designed to be solo. I adore being alone. I’ve grown into it terribly well. I never feel lonely.”

Behr speaks of her love for old hotels around the world - the George V in Paris and a wonderful scabby hotel in Jaipur. “It’s an old family palace. It’s skedonky and wonderful. Dorp reminds me of it. There is a mad American woman with a lovely long grey plait who lives in the garden with the gardener. She arrived and never left. It’s the sort of thing that could happen at Dorp.”

She loves antiques and auctions and has a fascination with pavements. Millennials horrify her. “They are so busy making themselves important. They take endless photos of themselves and put them on the social media and then they doctor the photographs. Selfies drive me completely demented.

“People walk into Dorp and immediately start taking photos. It’s rude.

It is not as if it’s the Union Buildings!”

On beauty: “I cannot stand this whole new thing of perfection where you can’t have a line or a crease or a mark. These botox faces. It’s horrible. This new narcissism is filthy to me. Life has stages ... you can’t be young and beautiful forever.

**“You’ll know if you  
fit the moment you  
arrive. If you don’t,  
simply reverse down  
the drive.”**

“I love watching young people coming up with green shoots of ideas. They often get stamped down by these fucking corporations and copied and mugged for their spark ... it makes me mad. I’m a corporate anarchist. It’s the death of all things civilized.”

Her all-time hero is South African

former ANC politician, Barbara Hogan – “the most humble undersung human in SA. I’m proud to say she’s a friend.”

The hotel, she says, is quiet. “I’d be lying if I said anything else. But you have to keep going. You can’t have a rotten cake in the cake stand. I am an optimist. It will come back. It will take six months. The vaccine is good news and Biden is good news. Even SA seems to be scratching at corruption.”

In January, Behr will start with a further development on the property, to be called Onder Dorp, which will comprise 15 more rooms of a self-catering nature.

“People love our kitchen suites. These will be gorgeous, big, simple, private cottages at the bottom of the property. The guests can wander up to Café Covid and grab a burger or fetch a brown bag of food from one of the lovely delis in Cape Town and sit at a table outside their room eating from what’s going on in the city.”

Behr is handling lockdown’s disastrous economic consequences with some humour. “It’s not funny but then life’s not funny. It’s fucking tough. How else do you do life without a sense of the ridiculous? We have to boot on. I have an enormous dark humour and an enormous sense of truth. The truth is we’re in shit and what can we do but hire a violinist and dance on?”

– Sue Segar ■



**Pool with a view**

## Spar CEO's "undisclosed interests"

**T**HE SAGA INVOLVING SPAR AND THE Giannacopoulos family continues. The family now plans to seek redress for their grievances through legal action against the Spar board and to declare three of Spar's executives delinquent directors in terms of the Companies Act.

Noseweek reported previously (in nose248) that the family, that owns 45 retail businesses under the Spar banner, had won three court cases with costs in the Pietermaritzburg High Court against Spar Group Ltd and the Spar Guild. Spar has since been granted leave to appeal the judgment in respect of one of them.

In the meantime Fluxmans, the family's attorneys, have set out a long list of accusations against Spar and its CEO Graham O'Connor in an 11-page letter that was sent to Spar's attorneys, Garlicke Bousfield Inc. on 15 September 2020. Spar was given 14 days to reply but there has been no response from them so far.

"The next step will be delinquency and derivative action which we plan to take to court by the end of the year," says the family spokesperson, Harry Giannacopoulos. The planned actions are "derivative" in that the members of the family, rather than the companies they control, will seek legal redress.

The Fluxmans letter quotes from Spar's published statements where it has committed itself to the highest standards of ethical conduct and to ethical business dealings and total honesty. "Directors and senior management have a common law duty to avoid any conflict of interest and to act in the best interests of the company at all times, in addition to the duty of disclosure as laid down by the Companies Act." The letter refers further to Spar's duty to disclose "indirect shareholding" in other companies and "family connections", specifically mentioning that "no secret profits" shall be tolerated.

It is also claimed that several of Spar's directives to its own attorneys are untrue, and that this is not the first time that the Spar Group has given them "fundamentally dishonest instructions", which violate its commitment to ethics and total honesty. Several examples are given where the Spar Group and its CEO, Graham O'Connor, have made false claims under oath.

Spar's relationship with its retailers in South Africa is structured according to the guild system and the Fluxmans letter alleges that O'Connor and the directors of Spar Group are treating members of the Guild as their personal fiefdom. Spar Group has allegedly also been abusing the Guild's separate juristic personality, precluding its retail members from having a genuine say in the manner in which the Guild operates.

The Giannacopoulos family alleges that the rules and policies set out in the Spar Guild's Memorandum of Incorporation (MOI) have been applied inconsistently and in an unfairly discriminatory manner and that O'Connor has on a number of occasions threatened to "take" the Giannacopoulos businesses "for free".

According to the letter, O'Connor has a financial interest in Numlite (Pty) Ltd, the company that operates Spar's IT, and the Guild is allegedly being abused to misdirect secret profits to this company at the expense of its retail members: "Numlite derives many millions of Rands of revenue in respect of the Spar IT Scheme [enabling] O'Connor to profit handsomely from the scheme paid for by the Spar retailer."

Under the heading "Unlawful objects and abuse of the Spar Guild" it is alleged that O'Connor also has an interest in the retail Spar businesses of the Renckens Group, unethically favouring them with credit, rebate and other

trade terms which are preferential compared to those applicable to all other retail members of the Guild.

The Renckens and the Giannacopoulos families are the two biggest groups of retailers trading under the Spar banner. The final straw was when the Guild gave consent to the establishment of a Renckens-owned Superspar at the new Junction14 shopping centre in the Richards Bay CBD. The shopping centre is within a radius of 800 metres from Harry Giannacopoulos' two Spar and two Tops stores and only a hundred meters away from his Townsquare Superspar.

"My Superspar is three years old, how is this possible?" he asks. "Spar assisted me in obtaining a development loan of R25 million from Wesbank for my store and now they have given the go-ahead to a competitor who is already trying to poach some of my 250 staff members. It is in direct competition with my businesses and other Spar stores in Richards Bay."

Giannacopoulos is adamant that the Spar Guild irregularly authorized the new store for the Renckens Group because of O'Connor's involvement and that no application for Spar retail membership was submitted for the new shop. He says the Guild has "irregularly and surreptitiously" purported to condone the establishment of the new store. "They have trampled on the rights of all existing Spar owners in Richards Bay."

Applications to operate a Spar or Tops are always subjected to a rigorous process which includes ascertaining whether existing retail members of the Guild who are within the proximity of the proposed new shop, have any objections and in particular whether the proposed new shop would negatively impact on the financial viability of the existing members concerned.

These provisions, policies and rules are intended to protect existing retail members' goodwill and the viability of their businesses as they have invested substantial capital and resources to promote the Spar Group.

"O'Connor and Spar in KwaZulu-



---

Natal have showed flagrant disregard of the rules, policies and procedures of the Guild with the intention of misappropriating the businesses and property of the Giannacopoulos family.”

He believes plans for the new Superspar in Richards Bay were in place before judgment was delivered in the Pietermaritzburg High Court and that the new owners signed a binding offer to lease the space and now cannot exit. The developer of Junction14, Schoonies Vier (Pty) Ltd, is already advertising that a Superspar will soon be opening and contractors have been lined up to do the shop fittings.

“O’Connor made arrangements to directly or indirectly establish this new Superspar. He has not disclosed in published Spar Group statements his interest or family connections with

regard to the Junction14 Superspar, nor has he transparently disclosed this to a duly constituted meeting of all Guild directors or any other committee.”

Fluxmans has demanded on behalf of its clients that the Spar Board revoke the consent for the new Superspar and that the store should not be permitted to trade under the Spar brand. They also want the Guild to take steps to recover the secret profits earned by O’Connor via Numlite in respect of Spar’s IT Scheme and that the recovered profits are credited to the retailers’ accounts. They are also insisting that a stop be put to the preferential credit, rebate and trade terms that the Renckens group receives.

So far their demands have fallen on deaf ears.

*Noseweek* sent questions to Spar CEO, Graham O’Connor, asking him why there had been no consultation with other Spar retailers in Richards Bay before a new Superspar was established. We also asked him whether the claim about his financial interest in the Renckens group was correct and if he wanted to comment on the Giannacopoulos planned legal action to have him declared a delinquent director? The message was read but no response was received.

*Noseweek* also asked Mike Otto and Max Oliva, respectively a director of the Spar Guild and the managing director of Spar KwaZulu-Natal distribution centre, for comments. Once again the message was read, but they did not respond.

– Susan Puren ■

---

## Isabel dos Santos steps down

**B**ILLIONAIRE BUSINESSWOMAN Isabel dos Santos has stepped down from the board of Angola’s flagship mobile phone operator Unitel, citing “a climate of permanent conflict” among the company’s directors.

Dos Santos told Portuguese news agency *Lusa*, in a statement on 11 August that it seemed “counterproductive and irresponsible” to allow such a situation to continue.

“After 20 years dedicated to the creation, development and success of Unitel, I chose to leave the position of member of the company’s board of directors,” she said.

The eldest daughter of Angola’s former long-time president José Eduardo dos Santos, Isabel has held a 25% stake in Angola’s biggest private company since her father awarded the company a lucrative operating license in 1999. (See *nose200*: “A most unsaintly president”.) Luanda Leaks revealed that Unitel paid more than \$5 billion in dividends to shareholders between 2006 and 2015. Her share: \$1.25 billion [=R19bn today]. – International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).

[So much for a regime that was installed by communist Cuban troops. –Ed.] ■





## Death and the After Parties – Joanne Hichens

**J**OANNE HICHENS IS BEST KNOWN AS A crime writer, and a good one too. *In Death and the After Parties*, she tackles memoir, and particularly poignantly the death of her mother, the totally unexpected death of her husband Robert Hichens, her father, and her mother-in-law.

Before you decide that this is too grim a topic for a holiday season read, it really isn't. Hichens deals with the death of her mother in great detail, they have time, six weeks to be exact, and what is needed to be said is said. She concludes that death with sadness, but the feeling that she "can do death".

When Robert wakes up one morning with a pain in his chest, and slightly clammy she races him off to Constantiaberg Medical Clinic, they argue along the way, she's going the wrong way, it's just indigestion, all the usual things. But,

it isn't. By the time she has parked her car he is dead. A massive heart attack has turned her into a widow with three children, one very young.

I am a fan of people reading about death and acknowledging it as part of the continuum of life, and so have avidly read the great books about death, Atwul Gawande's *Being Mortal*, which deals with end of life matters was my choice of a book to take to Zanzibar (yes, I got some funny looks). When *Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi a final year neurosurgical resident who chronicles his battle with dying of lung cancer is one of my staple reads.

But, Hichens is not only writing about the shocking fallout of her husband's death. She goes on to examine her childhood, one spent circling the globe following her diplomat father. She paints an honest picture of growing

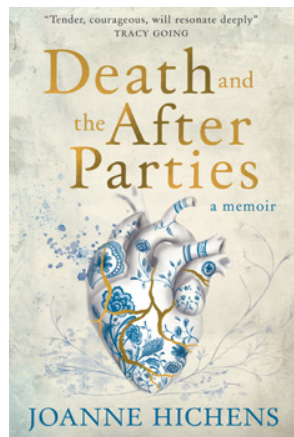
up with siblings, of a sense of constant displacement, but generally speaking still a fortunate child.

She is also open about not coping, of making her two daughters fed up with her for drinking too much and taking too many pills to make life liveable. She is the widow – the marked, as she sees it.

Parts of the book are incredibly funny, there is no magic solution to how you survive death or the after parties, you live through it one step at a time, and sometimes it fades and sometimes it ambushes you.

I gulped it down in a night, this is a book that talks about ordinary life and loss. There are some lessons along the way about how to fall out with all your siblings more or less when you split up your father's belongings after his death. All bets are off when items become things that you need to prove you were the best loved.

Perhaps two things that really struck home was that we invite death formally as a partner in our lives when we marry, and that it is part of us from our cradle to wherever our grave may be. A phenomenal read. ■



DEATH AND THE AFTER PARTIES  
BY Joanne Hichens  
(Karavan Press)

## The Autumn of the Ace – Louis de Bernières

**D**ANIEL PITT IS A TWICE decorated flying ace, having served in both world wars. He's also a man of unusual habits. In love with Christabel, who is in love with her woman friend Gaskell, the three muck along quite happily. Not unexpectedly, Daniel's wife Rosie has turned into an unhappy woman, who has poisoned his own son against him.

But Daniel is determined to live his life to the end. There are journeys back to

India to bury his brother's bones, a motorcycle trip across the US to Canada.

The love of family and friends. Louis de Bernières, author of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, tells a rattling tale of a life well lived.

Daniel's story is one of redemption and of finding pleasure in the simple things, while acknowledging the horror of war, and the loss of love. A tour de force of a novel, ideal for a holiday gift, readable and human. ■

## Written in Blood – Chris Carter

**I**F YOU'RE LOOKING FOR a twisty thriller, look no further than *Written in Blood*, a detective Robert Hunter novel.

Angela is an ethical pickpocket, she only steals what she needs for a day, but she picks up more than she bargains for when she steals a briefcase that carries a dreadful secret.

Fast and pacey, Chris Carter has the ability to keep his readers on their toes, while writing really

well. When Angela becomes the hunted prey of a serial killer with a sophisticated plot, she forms an alliance with Detective Hunter.

There are twists and turns, and lots of clever manoeuvres that reach a satisfyingly unexpected conclusion; lots of killing, but also psychological drama that elevates this from a mere thriller to a deeper book. Comes with warning: may keep you up all night. ■



## Corona blessing in disguise

**T**HERE IS AT LEAST ONE GOOD THING that can be said about this Coronavirus thingy. But before I get to it, let me just say I hope that by the time you read this the pandemic will have been brought under control and you will all be well.

Now then, what is the one thing I can say about this pandemic? Simple: it's a reminder to mankind as to who wields the big stick on this here mother earth, and that my friends is mother nature or for those that are of the religion loving types, the Almighty, whether you refer to the great one as God, Allah or whatever, and certainly not some "superpower" governed from Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington DC, and certainly not from the Kremlin or Beijing.

Speaking of the USA, who would think that it now has a leader who thinks the woes faced by this historically welcoming nation are caused by immigrants seeking a better life!

As karma would have it, the US faces one of the highest infection and death rates from the Coronavirus which was reportedly brought into the US by legal travellers, and not by illegal immigrants. Go figure. I am surprised el Presidente a los Estados Unidos, Trump, has not tweeted blaming the spread of the virus in the US on the like-named Mexican beer brand.

As long as we share this place called mother earth we are all tied at the hip and nothing could have reminded us of this reality better than this Coronavirus. Yes, we all know why the world can truly be called a small place: industrialisation, air travel and the ever increasing migration of people whether the man in that White House likes it or not or whether we here in Mzansi shamefully attack our African brothers and sisters in the

name of xenophobia, yes, whether we like it or not, mankind is tied at the 'hip' and frankly speaking has always been, by mother nature of course.

Now this pandemic should be used to do some serious introspection. It has made it clear that we need to take a hard look at what is really important. Should it be only looking after our self-interest, be it national, as exemplified by US prez Donald Trump, political, as in parties, or racial, as in the likes of Afri Forum? The virus has loudly and viciously



said no, we should always prioritise the human condition, the well-being of our fellow man and the well-being of – and respect for – mother earth.

In doing so, we need to prioritise things like health care, access to clean water and generally a clean and safe living environment for all. Living conditions such as those that exist in places like Alexandria, Diepsloot and scores of other shack communities around the country need to be eradicated; the downtrodden need to be given shelter off the streets. Corona has shown us that their "misfortunes" affect us all. Yes indeed Corona is a wakeup call.

I know I am echoing what many people have already said, so there is nothing special about these words but they are certainly words that need to be said over and over again.

Once again, if anything this pandemic should be used as an opportunity to reflect on the frailty of mankind, our dependence on the health of mother earth, the threats we face as a species and use that as a guide to addressing our many faults – many that we may until recently have been unaware of.

Not too long ago I wrote a piece 'making fun' of the quacks, the street preachers who have been telling us for many years that the world is doomed; yes that was columnist satire, but it was also highlighting another serious matter that is a real threat to mankind: climate change.

That and this virus, I admit, did bring their words of doom to mind.

Unfortunately South Africa has a large sector of the population that is more hard headed than the macadamia nut and, at least from what I have seen in my community, they are not adhering to the simple request to maintain "social distancing".

But the question must be asked, how can they when their living conditions, tightly packed Townships, and ridiculous public transport in those so called taxis, do not afford them that distance?

Well at least this time around our government is not listening to denialists and telling us we will be ok if we just eat the African potato.

In the words of a song by 70's American soul band, Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes:

*"Wake up everybody no more sleepin' in bed*

*No more backward thinkin' time for thinkin' ahead".*

Be safe. Happy Christmas! ■





## Laughter and Forgetting

HERE'S A WEIRD VIBE IN THE AIR IN NYC. Kinda like the pandemic is 'old news'. A big 'pandemic, yawn'. Or, 'oh yeah, the pandemic, is that still happening?'

People are over it. Pandemicked out. And New York is slowly re-awakening too. The florist, the liquor store and the coffee shop across the street have all re-opened. And most restaurants in my hood are all doing take-out and delivery. There are definitely a lot more people on the streets and in the park. And I haven't heard an ambulance siren in quite some time. Thank God. Only 48 people died in New York in the last 24hrs. And all hospitals are reporting manageable admissions. So after all that, it's sorta come down to 'ok so wear your mask, wash your hands, don't touch your face, stay 6ft apart and best of luck'. Oh, how could I forget to tell you? This is big news worth sharing. My Pod mate Max has booked his flight back to L.A. I'm feeling very sad about it. He was an original Pod mate. So I thought for my final entry on the day he flies out, I'll ask Pod Mate Judy to help me produce a Facebook Live Farewell Event. Maybe we can turn it into a chat sesh slash cocktail party and throw in a Bollywood ending. All ideas welcome. Peace. Out.

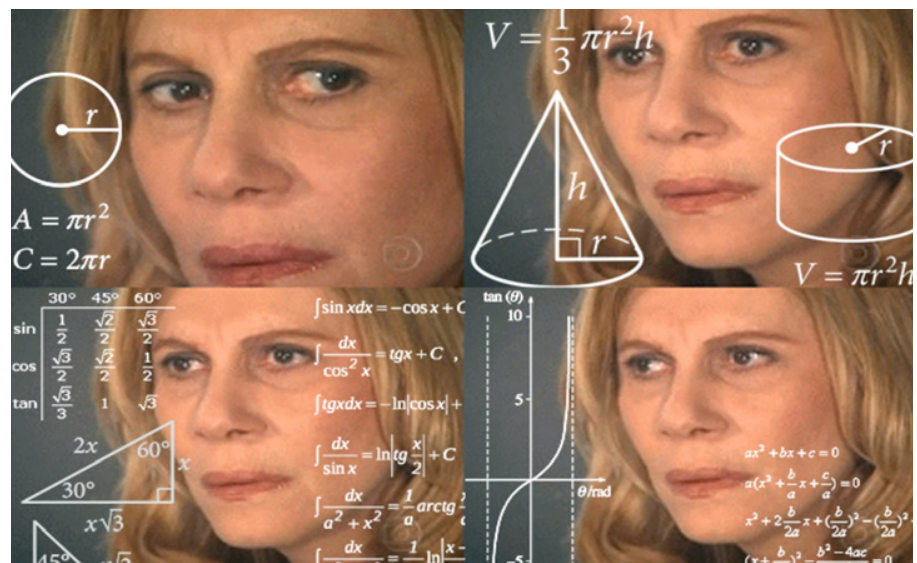
[A few days later:] The Pod Disperses. Pod mate Zoe took off with a friend to the beach for the weekend. Pod mate Max went to stay with two college friends in the posh burbs. And my friend Sasha picked up Pod mate Judy and I and drove us to her parent's 1820 farmhouse 2.5 hours north of Manhattan in Massachusetts. And it's glorious up here. We're surrounded by tall trees and rolling hills. Large expanses of green lawns and pastures. Lots of annoying bird squalls and fucking weird whistles. But lovely. And all I have to worry about now is Lyme Disease. Which is such a refreshing change. I keep questioning myself these days, what has the pandemic taught me?

What now? How will the pandemic change the course of my life? What's my pandemic pivot going to be? Will I become a contact tracer? Does that come with a uniform? So many questions to ponder sitting up here in this Adirondack chair on the front porch watching Ziggy happily rolling in the fresh, tick infested grass. He's not sleeping with me tonight. The countryside pandemic is such a different pandemic to the one I'm from. It's gracious pandemic living up here. I hear the wind calling my name. And everywhere my eyes look they see softness. And nature. And no people. It's perfect. I never want to go back. Yes I know what I said yesterday but on the coronacoaster things change fast. You're laughing one minute. You're screaming the next. It's Black Mirror – the full immersive 4D experience. It is nice sitting outside without a mask on. We're here until Monday. I'm not going to be on my phone. I'm going to disconnect from all the news and social media and spend my time in bed with my now favorite series Normal People. Nothing brings out the romantic teenager in me more than this show. It's poetic. Excellent writing. Perfectly cast. I'm hooked. First love is such a

beautiful, painful, tortured thing isn't it?

[More days later:] "I had a dream my life would be / so different from this hell I'm living"

Cross-Podulating x 3 (+ 4). It's starting to worry me. We are here lounging in Sasha's pod. Max is in his friend's pod. Zoe is with another family's pod. Who had lunch with another family so that's a two pod cross-podulation. And of course when we went to the beach last weekend we cross-podded with that family. Who had themselves cross-podded with two other families. Which means if you add it all up, when my pod gets back together tonite we will be bringing a total of 7 pods to dinner. No wait, 8 pods because Sasha cross-pods with her parents too. Yikes. We're playing a high-risk game of corona roulette here. It's not funny. Covid has not gone away. Okay so good, I'm not so relaxed anymore. Plus I may have ticks. And I'm damn sure Ziggy is bringing a few home too. So really, was this weekend in the countryside worth it? I don't know. Is my throat sore? Do I have a temperature? Why is my scalp itchy? It's all so miserable. *Les Mis* I tell ya. *Les Mis*. ■



# Last Round

VIV VERMAAK



## The magic lamp

**S**AMSON USED TO ARRIVE AT MY gate after dark, drunk and belligerent. “Veevjaan!” he shouted, “Maak oop!” The bastard, I’d told him a hundred times to go and sleep under the bridge with the other hobos. “Veevjaan ... Veevjaan!!!!” he bellowed. I unlocked the gate as quickly and quietly as possible. The ordeal was just over quicker that way. “Shut up, Samson, you’ll wake my sister...”

When I had to be at work early, I had to get him out of the zozo beneath the mulberry tree where he was squatting and get him out of the property before sunrise so I could lock the gate.

I used to marvel how it could take him 45 minutes to travel the 50m from the shed to the back stoep where his 1-slice and morning coffee awaited him, cold by now, with the dogs eyeing the bread greedily.

Part of the problem was that his Air BnB had no electricity and he had glaucoma. Throw some cheap brandy into the mix and you hear him knocking around the corrugated iron walls of the shed for up to an hour. “Boing! Boing! Ding-a-ling! Crash!” My sister called this performance ‘the Pinball Wizard.’

Samson used candles as light. There is nothing wrong with candles. I like candles. They are cheaper than

battery operated devices and Samson was used to them; it is what they used while he was growing up in Heilbron, on the farm in the Free-State.

But watching him wrestle the matches out of the box with his arthritic hand and lighting the candle stubs in a hit-and-miss game could become excruciating, especially when you are late for a date or a meeting. There was also the real concern that the Pinball Wizard could set the whole place alight.

Then I discovered Consol solar powered jars. It’s those same glass jars my mom used to store homemade mulberry jam in. They look like dinkum lanterns from back-in-the-day. Gorgeous, iconic items. And they work like a bomb. It has a simple lever to switch it on and off and you recharge it by leaving it in the sun.

I forced one on Samson one night when the evening pinball got out of hand. I wrapped my hand around his rheumatic claw and showed him how to switch the thing on and off. He took to it instantly, disappearing into the shed, switching the lamp on and off, without so much as a ‘thank you’ or ‘that took you long enough.’

The next morning, he wanted to know how this magic light-storing jar worked, as he could not see the batteries. I tried to explain that it was

solar powered. The conversation was a bit more engaging in Afrikaans, but it went like this:

“What, Veevjaan? You catch a bit of sun every day and you keep it inside here?” he asked. “Yes, basically,” I replied. He looked at me quizzically, even suspiciously. “When did you learn how to do this? When did you go to the sun to learn this?” I say I did not go to the sun myself, I learned this from other people. It seemed to make sense to him that I could not possibly have figured it out by myself, so he added to my education. “Did you know, the sun is they eye of God. It shines on everything. It sees everything, even when there are clouds.

There is nothing you can do in the daytime that God cannot see, because the sun shines on everything. Did you know that?” I reply that I did not know that and challenged him: “So I can basically do what I want at night, can’t I? Because then God is blind?”

Samson shook his head, dipped his bread into his coffee and slurped: “No, because the moon is God’s ear. At night, he can hear everything.”

That conversation comforted me. Now I know there will be no rest for the wicked, because ‘The Nose’ not only sees and hears, it can smell fraud as well. From a mile away. ■

**KEN FORRESTER VINEYARDS**  
GRANTED 1689

Cellar Door open  
Monday - Friday 09:00 - 17:00  
Saturday 09:30 - 15:30

After Hours  
tasting at  
96 Winery  
Road

Cnr of R44 & Winery road, between Somerset West & Stellenbosch | GPS: 34° 1' 39.06 " S 18° 49' 12.83" E  
Tel +27 (0)21 855 2374 | info@kenforresterwines.com | [www.kenforresterwines.com](http://www.kenforresterwines.com)

Smalls ads must be booked and paid for online. Book at:

[www.noseweek.co.za](http://www.noseweek.co.za)



**HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION**

**Klein Bosheuwel** Bishops court, Klaassens Road, 200m from Kirstenbosch Gardens Rycroft gate. Tranquil B&B in an acre of gardens. Call 021 762 2923; [www.kleinbosheuwel.co.za](http://www.kleinbosheuwel.co.za)

**Dordogne, France** A beautiful cottage for holiday rent in France's most lovely walled village. Email [linda@thehoustons.co.za](mailto:linda@thehoustons.co.za) or call 082 390 6065.

**Cederberg.** Wide open spaces of pristine wilderness. Escape city stress and relax at Cederberg Chalets. [www.cederbergchalets.co.za](http://www.cederbergchalets.co.za)

**LOCAL PROPERTY FOR SALE OR RENTAL**

**Nosing around for property** in Langebaan or the West Coast? Call Melanie Mouton-Creugnet on 079 378 0000 or [melanie@sothebysrealty.co.za](mailto:melanie@sothebysrealty.co.za)

**Rondebosch, Cape Town** – characterful bedsit w kitchenette, shower-basin-loo, separate courtyard entrance, off-street parking, adjunct to Victorian house in leafy Rondebosch, easy access UCT, top schools, Silwood & RedX hospital, 6-12 months lease. Cld be ideal LU&G for commuting Jhb business person. Call Sue on 083-3007558

**FOR SALE**

**Tinus & Gabriel de Jongh** paintings bought, sold and valued for estates and insurance; 021 686 4141; [dejonghartgallery@gmail.com](mailto:dejonghartgallery@gmail.com); [www.tinusdejongh.co.za](http://www.tinusdejongh.co.za)

**Plastic pallets** bought & sold. (New international legislation for exporting on wooden pallets! ISPM15); [www.premierpallets.co.za](http://www.premierpallets.co.za) or 083 756 6897.

**Tent Pro your 1-stop** shop for new Tents, camo Gear & Outdoor Equipment. Shop online or instore. Go to [www.tentpro.co.za](http://www.tentpro.co.za)

**LEGAL, INSURANCE & FINANCIAL**

**Dodgy signatures?** Suspicious changes to contracts? Distressing anonymous notes?

Forensic investigation by handwriting expert Cape Town. [www.fdex.co.za](http://www.fdex.co.za)

**Jurgens Bekker Attorneys, Alberton, Bedfordview, Cape Town, Kempton Park, Pretoria:**

Commercial and litigation. Call 083 294 9995 or email [jurgens@jurgensbekker.co.za](mailto:jurgens@jurgensbekker.co.za) [www.jurgensbekker.co.za](http://www.jurgensbekker.co.za)

**Lawyer.co.za** is a new website for members of the public with extensive information about lawyers

and the law in SA. Research the law, or find a law firm. Also available in Afrikaans at [www.prokureur.co.za](http://www.prokureur.co.za)

**SERVICES**

**French lessons** (Jhb) or translations (country-wide). Sorbonne-degreed native French speaker from Paris. For more information call 071 356 8279; or email [christine.vaissiere@icloud.com](mailto:christine.vaissiere@icloud.com).

**Persuasive writer for hire:** Highly experienced former big agency copywriter available for professional writing assignments. Commercial, environmental, social issues, research, marketing, advocacy campaigns. Email: [info@greenedge.co.za](mailto:info@greenedge.co.za)



**SMALLS ADS**

The deadline is the 24th of the month, two months prior to publication.

Ads are prepaid at R200 plus VAT for up to 15 words, thereafter R15 per word plus VAT.

Please note that multiple (long-term bookings) are now available online.

**BOXED ADS**

Boxed ads are 6cm (1 column) wide, and are charged at R900 for the first 3cm and R250 per additional cm (length) plus VAT. Payment is due within 30 days of invoicing.

Please contact [ads@noseweek.co.za](mailto:ads@noseweek.co.za) to book or phone 021 686 0570.

**DISCLAIMER**

Although Noseweek does reject obviously questionable ads, it can't run checks on every ad that appears in the magazine. The magazine doesn't endorse the products or services advertised and readers are urged to exercise normal caution when doing business with advertisers.

**IT'S EASY TO SUBSCRIBE**

Never miss an issue...Free delivery...Enjoy big savings

**ONLINE** Subscribe at [www.noseweek.co.za](http://www.noseweek.co.za) or email [subs@noseweek.co.za](mailto:subs@noseweek.co.za)

**PHONE** Call 021 686 0570 with your credit card or fax 021 686 0573 or 0866 773 650

**PLEASE NOTE:** Cheques are no longer accepted in payment.

**Do you have a business?**  
**Are you against corruption?**  
**Support investigative journalism by placing an advert with us today**  
**Contact us now at [ads@noseweek.co.za](mailto:ads@noseweek.co.za) for rates and more info**  
**noseweek**  
NEWS YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO KNOW

# QUALITY PUBLICATIONS CHOOSE A QUALITY PRINTER

## COLOURTONE ARIES PRINTERS OF CHOICE

For all your printing, packaging and display requirements  
contact colourtone aries on 021 929 6700 or

[www.colourtonearies.co.za](http://www.colourtonearies.co.za)

[info@colourtonearies.co.za](mailto:info@colourtonearies.co.za)



@colourtonearies



Colourtone Aries



COLOURTONE ARIES

print | packaging | display

