

Fighter for the underdog

Tribute to a stalwart of the battle for justice and tenants' rights

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DAVID (Jack) Basil Nagayah, an executive member of the Organisation for Civic Rights (OCR) was buried last Thursday.

He was active and alert at 80 and committed to OCR for 25 years.

David Jack was part of the residents' grouping who resisted the apartheid (group areas) evictions and joined people such as the late Billy Nair in forming the OCR to challenge the then government in 1984.

A few years later, he organised a tenants' committee in his building in Wills Road, Warwick Avenue to take up the plight of fellow tenants.

In his heyday he was a professional boxer and a skilled soccer player for Aces United and Crimson League.

In musical matters, his managerial expertise was profound and he was instrumental in getting the Star Dust band and Sam's Latin Kings to participate in the first non-racial competitions, taking first place in 1956 and 1959.

In the 1990's David Jack participated in OCR's anti-drug and anti-crime campaigns in the Warwick Triangle.

This was one of the most turbulent periods when notorious gangsters waged an all out war to stop the OCR.

I remember vividly David Jack's comforting words that he would not allow anyone to harm me and my family. It was a time when guns were literally drawn and attempts were made to burn the outbuilding we were renting.

The harassment from the security branch only added to the excruciating pressure.

David Jack and Billy Nair were the pillars of strength that helped me, my family and the OCR steer successfully and safely through the murky waters of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

For the past 12 years, David Jack served on the OCR's executive.

At our recent executive meeting, he expressed concern about an incident in his building where racism was still rife.

He said that it would appear that people in sectional titles schemes found it hard to adjust to a multi-cultural, non racial communal environment.

It was this building which he relocated to a few years ago that witnessed an acrimonious struggle between certain members of the body corporate. The ensuing enmity and disagreements eventually led to one old man killing another that shocked the citizens of Durban.

We salute David Jack, and pray for comfort for his family in their bereavement. His death is a great loss to the OCR and the poor it represents.

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For tenant's rights' advice, contact Pretty Gumede or Loshni Naidoo at 031 304 6451

Pic – David Jack receiving an OCR award presented to him on behalf of Dr. Lindiwe Sisulu by her personal secretary Mr. Moodley in 2007