

Carl Niehaus - Om te veg vir hoop

When reading this piece of work by this well-known political activist, one is quickly struck but that experience of suffering in life. Fight from early age it becomes clear that Niehaus wasn't born with a silver spoon in his mouth. One experiences how hard it was during his youth as both his parents and grandparents battled to make ends meet. The confidence that he saw or detected from them through the hard times, the way he exposes them and underlines them, according to Carl Niehaus, never deterred them from holding on; hence "Om te veg vir hoop". Thus against odds life must go on.

It was also during the early years that, according to him, he started to realize the social divide between black and white while his father was working as a railway foreman. This is also where he started to taste the notion of "ons en hulle". In this case categorization means "ons" being whites and "hulle" being blacks. The situations aroused curiosity within him. He did see the colour divide but save for that other physical features were almost the same. According to him attending church in the townships particularly, Soweto, watered the germinating seed of curiosity, which was further enhanced by his association with his wife Jansie that he met at the Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit when he used to accompany her to art galleries.

When reading chapters 3, 4 and 5 one then really detects the consolidated curiosity and most of all the wish and hope to find the answers to the complex social question that he Carl Niehaus found in the midst of the South African Society. Despite the alienation at RAU and the arms length attitude he experienced at home, one still detects the determination with which Niehaus wanted to find the answers, hence, "om te veg vir hoop". Despite, the intimidation and the danger he faced from his own Afrikaners the determination grew more.

Niehaus is also not reluctant to expose how that hope was even galvanized by people such as Doctor Beyers Naude and the late Helen Joseph. In chapters 6, 7 and 8, Niehaus also shows that against odds, as long as friends are there hope is there in life. Despite detention, the friends and the fact that Jansie was also there for him, with his family persuading him to denounce his views, Niehaus had that hope that one day things would change. This, one understands better in this theme "Hey broer, have moed". Thus, hope and determination remain the cornerstones of this piece of work. Niehaus also shows in chapter nine that the basic rights are not only those that are common, such as right to speech, movement, etc. He chooses to underline again the theme of his work, "hope", which was what he was fighting for.

In summary, Carl Niehaus, is trying to show how his world outlook and attitudes experienced evolution throughout his youth until his political career. And above all, this evolution carries through it the message of hope that he carried from his grandmother when she lost her husband to his parents when his father was moved from his job. But all the same

the "hope" remained with them. As such, I feel that Carl Niehaus was able enough to expose his experiences using this theme "Om te veg vir Hoop" throughout his book.

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