

125 Founders' Day Feedback – 15 March 2019

Letter by past pupil (E 1994) sent to Principal

Dear RGHS principal,

I have been meaning to write to you for a while but with a full time demanding job and family, my life is pretty full :-)

I matriculated in 1994 and was an Erinville termly boarder so most of my high school life (1990 - 1994), was spent at the school and it is a special place for me.

Thank you very much for the super Founders' Day assembly and experience. I was so impressed by the progressive aspects that I noticed. Some might not be new changes, but I wanted to make special mention of my experience...

How fantastic it was to have the Christian and Muslim prayers! This was such a change from when I was at school, when anyone who was not Christian would leave the assembly, only to return after the prayers. It was so inclusive and beautifully done. A wonderful change.

The guest speaker, Ms Marianne Thamm, was phenomenal, and the standing ovation was very fitting. Her words have stayed with me and it was such an important message.

I was pleased that the school song was not part of the assembly (unlike some alumni who were upset about it). While the school song is part of the school's history, perhaps it is not fitting for the world today. Even in 1994, I found it to be derogatory ("we learn twice one are two!") and probably a bit too much emphasis on the colonial past. I am not sure if it was excluded intentionally, but for me it was quite fitting to leave it out, and the other songs that were sung were beautiful.

I got the feeling that the "RGHS old girls/Alumnae" were assumed to all be of the "old regime" and that is not accurate. I was fortunate to be at school during the transition and change from Apartheid to Freedom and back then, we were so excited for the future and had a very progressive and inclusive outlook.

At school, there were girls from all walks of life. Some came from harder backgrounds than others, not related to race. We all had our own difficulties but we were very close and supported each other, irrespective of race. Perhaps more so in Erinville than the day-girls because we lived together and learned about each other's cultures very quickly.

One Friday afternoon in the early '90's, my friend Lindiwe and I were walking hand in hand, as we often did, from Rondebosch back to Erinville. I recall a lady stopping her car and talking to us through the window. She said she was so excited and encouraged to see us being friends and she has so much hope for the future after seeing us.

I was involved in a community project in 1993 that RGHS had become a part of, where we went into a township (not sure where) and we walked from shack to shack asking the residents what their issues were so that we could choose a design project to help them with. It was an eye-opener for me and an example of how involved and progressive RGHS was at that time... definitely a pioneer in change.

I took African Music as an extramural... We even did gumboot dancing in the Cape Town City Hall at the RGHS 100th anniversary celebrations (1994). We sang Nkosi Sikelel iAfrica in assemblies way before it became the national anthem.

I think that in the history of the school, the progressive nature of the school and the way change was embraced needs to be emphasised. It was a time when there was a lot of fear for the future, but RGHS had a very positive forward-looking approach and I think that is something to be noted by current pupils, and something to be proud of.

I have not been involved much with the school since 1994, but I was really proud to be associated with the school in its current form, and I can see that the school continues to be a pioneer in change and is providing excellent schooling for our country's girls.

From
Proud Rustybug 1994