An inspiration and role model

Y
OU would have to be Tembi Maloney Tshaiwa to appreci-
ate the effort it took to go from one end of South Africa to
the pinnacle of academic achievement.

A foreigner in South Africa (a land too often unkind to African students) who, after working off gargantuan ambitions, he set his
toll still after arriving from Cam-

beria in 1967.

He had said what he calls a “big dream” – a head full of desire and
nothing much else. Against the
credentials, Tembi Tshaiwa did it.

Now a lecturer at Walter Sisulu
University, the 36-year-old graduat-
ed this week at University of Kwa-
Zulu-Natal with a doctorate in phi-
losophy firmly in hand.

His story was placed on our front
page yesterday intentionally, not
just as an antidote to the terminally bad media the newspaper ap-
deas but chieftly as an acknowledge-
ment to human endeavour.

Imagine for one moment his drive.
A young man, with high school ed-
ucation, taking the tertiary study by guard ing cars.

Slowly, circumstances improved when he found himself as a hotel security
officer and then a porter.

All the while his eye was on the big dream – completing his education.

Not even a bereavement halted his march.

“During that time, on the first an-
niversary of my arrival in South Afri-
ca, I lost my mother,” he told The
Times.

“This became more difficult because I could not concentrate and the fees were so high. But I never gave up.”

Ours is a nation that for 20 years at least has heard the refrain of
what enormous potential we pos-
sess.

And, indeed, we do. Countrymen striving for work and education, a
landscape rich with minerals and
agricultural opportunity, ever-mod-
ern enterprises, and communications . . . and more.

Yet sometimes it seems that what we have is not the physical or the monetary, but something innate.

What we have, don’t collectively

speaking, is spirit. Where is our}

characteristic? Where is that spirit?

To do what Desmond Tutu so famously said in a rousing TV advert a few years ago.

“Rise,” Tutu cackled, arms raised on a mountaintop.

“Perhaps the absence of this hard-to-
define quality can be traced to our
lack of national identity. We are still searching for our post-democratic soul. And, indeed, we do. Countrymen striving for work and education, a landscape rich with minerals and agricultural opportunity, ever-modern enterprises, and communications . . . and more.

Yet sometimes it seems that what we want is not the physical or the monetary, but something innate.

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