

Tackling the messenger, avoiding the issues

In “Tackle racism, not messenger” on 26 February, Christine Qunta suggested that “liberals hated” Ronald Suresh Roberts and had subjected him to a “vicious backlash” by way of “a sustained campaign in the newspapers against him”, even a bid “to stop the publishing of the second printing of *Fit to Govern*”, merely because he’d riled them by applying his “phenomenal intellect” to exposing “in such an intelligent and systematic manner” the “intellectual dishonesty” of “liberal traditions”. This is entirely untrue.

Actually the trouble Roberts had over his book arose from the fact that in the words of none other than his own editor, Dr James Sanders, *Fit to Govern* is “the most serious case of plagiarism and literary fraud in South African literary history” – an opinion he formed after reading my critical analysis of the book’s AIDS chapters, *Lying and Thieving: The fraudulent scholarship of Ronald Suresh Roberts* (free online at lyingandthieving.com).

In my book I demonstrate how, apart from massively plagiarizing my own work (and even Mbeki’s writing) and telling many lies about me too, Roberts had fabricated and falsified the history of Mbeki’s political and intellectual engagement with the HIV-AIDS paradigm to portray him as a conventional subscriber to it, like Roberts, Qunta, Tony Leon, and all right-thinking white liberals are – summed up in his now famous opening lie: “Thabo Mbeki is not now, nor has he ever been, an AIDS dissident.”

On 16 July last year the Press Ombudsman’s Panel concurred that Roberts is a plagiarist, dismissing his complaint against the *Weekender* for describing him as such on the basis that its “belief that Roberts was a plagiarist [was] reasonable” in the light of the case made in “Brink’s persuasive book”; and it found that an independent audit of my plagiarism charges “did confirm its belief that Roberts is a plagiarist”, particularly since “Roberts does not confront the issues of cutting where Brink cut, using identical ellipses and making the same transcription errors”.

More importantly, Mbeki himself was so appalled by Roberts's misrepresentation of his "intellectual life and discourse" concerning AIDS that, as Mark Gevisser reported in *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred*, he telephoned him in the month *Fit to Govern* came out to set the record straight; briefed him with an updated, expanded copy of his radical critique of the scientific and ideological foundations of HIV-AIDS orthodoxy, *Castro Hlongwane, Caravans, Cats, Geese, Foot & Mouth and Statistics: HIV/AIDS and the Struggle for the Humanisation of the African*; and explicitly confirmed that it set out his dissident views on AIDS.

In a new chapter in the second edition of *Lying and Thieving*, "How Roberts wrote *Fit to Govern* to order, chopping and changing his manuscript on Essop Pahad's secret instructions, and prostituting his 'intellectual independence' to mining capital", I revealed that Roberts had meekly complied with Essop Pahad's written demand to cut his many sharp criticisms of the Oppenheimer family and its De Beers corporation, even as he pretended to have written the book with a free hand.

It was Roberts's lying and thieving, his misrepresentation of "the former president's perspectives", and his rank hypocrisy as a mercenary writer that attracted all the cover in the newspapers – not his writing about the real problem of liberal racism.

Finally, from the title of her piece, you'd imagine Qunta disapproves of "tackl[ing]" the "messenger" to "silence" him and "stifle ... the debate around" what he's saying. In fact she's all for it. Within hours of the publication of my exposé of Roberts's colossal fraud in his "polemical tour de force", he had her telephoning my European funder to sabotage my research grant (she succeeded) in an attempt to kill me off as a critical, dissident voice (she failed). Nice, eh?

ADV ANTHONY BRINK

Chairman: Treatment Information Group

7 Het Loo, 4 Military Road, Tamboerskloof, Cape Town

021 426 4513, 083 7794174