

# KATHY THE CHILDRENS' MAN

His life cut short at the age of 33, when he was arrested in the raid on Liliesleaf on 11 July 1963 meant the end of any hope of a normal life for Kathy and certainly the end of the possibility of fatherhood. Although he and his colleagues expected the death sentence, they were sentenced to life imprisonment less than a year later. But it was at a time when life meant "life". The possibility was that they would die in jail.

Prison means deprivation. It does not stop at the deprivation of freedom. There are restrictions on visits, letters, food, privacy, studies. But the most severe deprivation of all, according to Kathy, was the deprivation of children. Children under 16 were not allowed to visit, only small babies could come with their mothers, but then again contact visits were not allowed. Deprived of children, Kathy and his colleagues began to just yearn for the sound of them. So severe were the restrictions that when the Robben Island staff's children returned for the holidays and ran around as children do, they were chased away long before the prisoners could have sight of them. "You come to a stage where you want to hear a child cry," said Kathy.

Kathy's first God-child was born in 1953 and when he was in prison he was asked to be God-father of a number of others. The daughter of his great friend Amien Gajjee has the honour of having

had her name being chosen by Kathy in 1964. He sent "Diamilla", the name of an Algerian freedom fighter for her all the way from Robben Island.

Kathy kept in touch with grand-nieces and nephews through the heavily-censored letters written from prison, which initially were allowed only once every six months. It would be 20 years before he saw or touched a child.

His lawyer once brought his little daughter in for a consultation with Kathy in 1983, months after he had been transferred from Robben Island to Pollsmoor Prison on the mainland.

**"There was no more legal consultation because you can imagine here's a thing that has not happened for 20 years, here's me with this child sitting on my lap."**

He recalls that the first time he had to hold a baby in prison was through the insistence of his nephew's wife who would not take no for an answer and plopped her new-born onto him. Luckily for Kathy, his colleagues who were already fathers and grandfathers showed him how to practice by using a pillow instead of a baby. And he remembered having once seen Prince Andrew on television holding a baby.

**"With infants, I don't touch. I still don't touch, they are too fragile,"** he said.

But one of his newest 'grand-children' is Mateo, the son of his friends Kim Worthington and Henry Vilca Yupanqui. He was afraid of him too, as a baby but has grown so attached to "the little chap" who calls him "Mr Kai" and who visits and then talks to him on the phone from Australia **"but 90 percent of the time we don't know what he is saying".**



Kathy with Mateo



Kathy with Diamilla



Salma Said consoling with Kathy during his imprisonment



Kathy at a family get together in Lenasia

