

# In Memoriam

## Thireshni Chetty: 1972 - 2024



How does one write a comprehensive eulogy of a friend, colleague and amazing human being who touched the lives of so many people and animals way befitting her short life? It's simply not possible....so I will write from the heart...and include snippets from others who have posted regarding their interactions with the beautiful soul and personality that is Dr Thireshni Chetty.

Thireshni (fondly called Tesh by many) and I met in the 90s at Medunsa (Medical University of Southern Africa), then the only veterinary Faculty in SA for aspiring black veterinarians. After qualifying, we always kept in touch. We shared a passion for extending veterinary services to all sectors of SA society, especially in disadvantaged areas and to encourage a new generation and demographic of veterinarians. Thireshni did this on a national and even international level. We also had a common goal in seeking international recognition and reciprocity for the Medunsa veterinary degree that its counterpart, the University of Pretoria degree, received. This, with the help of other colleagues, finally came to fruition in November 2017.

Thireshni and the late, Dr Tembile Songabe, were instrumental in establishing the CCS (Compulsory Community Service) program for veterinary graduates in SA, despite resistance from many in the profession at the time. Initial teething problems aside, this CCS program is appreciated by many graduates who've come through the program and admired by many international veterinary bodies, who desire to emulate it in their countries. Whenever she was in Cape Town, or I was in Pretoria, we'd make time to meet and catch up. She would always speak about what a great loss Tembile was to the profession. Dealing with the effects of the injustices and imbalances of the past (and present) and discrimination was always a topic of discussion, and as we got older, we could appreciate the changes we saw in the newer, younger generation of vets. Yet still spoke about more that needed to be done. Thireshni was at the forefront of positive changes in the profession and would speak her mind, speak the truth and put it into action. I admired that about her.

She was a woman of integrity with a hugely generous heart, always sharing her knowledge and teaching others, but always also learning from others. Words expressed will never be able to fully convey the level of her generosity and passion. This can be seen by the outpouring of love and sadness on social media at the news of her passing.

Many of her past students, who are now colleagues, have expressed how she helped and inspired them. This just goes to further show her generous heart. There is so much more to reminisce and be grateful for.

*When we disagreed, Thireshni showed how to agree to disagree, and still be friends, respectful, caring and loving. Thireshni was what I would call a Warrior Woman. She stood for justice and truth, was caring and had a thirst for knowledge. She practised her profession with passion. She endured a lot of stress, yet still gave of herself during those trying times.*

**To the Chetty family, our heartfelt condolences but also sincere gratitude for sharing your amazing daughter with the profession, and the rest of the world.**

I can see her giggle, give a wry smile, be sarcastic, funny and serious all at once. Thank you for sharing your life in this temporary world with us Thireshni. Until we meet again, love always...

Below are just some quotes from friends, colleagues, and relatives that may give those who never met her, an insight into who she was and how she served in her capacity as a human being, a woman, a veterinarian and a friend...

*"...I found her to be a dedicated, passionate and diligent vet and a kind, caring person. She took the time to text me when I was very ill....I will forever be grateful for that..."* Louween Edwardes

*"...Tesh was so ahead of her time...a beacon of light to us all..."* Preskash Naidoo

*"...she was so easy to talk to, trustworthy and funny....she always laughed despite the challenge being faced....had a passion to make the profession more inclusive and improve the welfare of animals..."* Sharmini Julita

*"...she had a natural presence and was an assertive woman ... mingled easily and got involved in issues that mattered, no matter how uncomfortable or risky they were..."* Baratang Alison Lubisi

*"...she was fiercely independent, extremely intelligent and well versed beyond her years...I remain in awe of her great work..."* Eugene Jackson

*"...I experienced her as a genuine soul with a desire to make the world a better place, without wanting any recognition for it."* Karessa Govender

*"...she was a chatterbox, who spoke her mind...she mixed with everyone...a wonderful person, a lovely lady, gifted clinician and one helluva friend..."* Nick Luckan

*".. compassionate towards every living creature...a passion to share knowledge...an example in standing up for equal rights and fair treatment of all..."* Sunelle Strydom

*".. the power behind that young lady was more potent than dynamite... she broke down doors that were like Fort Knox, she walked down paths alone that nobody dared tread upon...she had nerves of steel but a heart of an angel."* Shashi Ramrajh

*"...your brilliance and witty presence made the time so great....we learned so much from being around you..."* Lisa Pretorius

*"...you were always so encouraging...so empowering...best wit, greatest intelligence, Dominance yet an angelic calmness to you..."* Brunhilda Septer

*"...you taught us resilience and strength...motivating us as women and vets...giving us the opportunity to be confident and realistic..."* Yecinta Naidoo

*Ayoub Banderker*

---