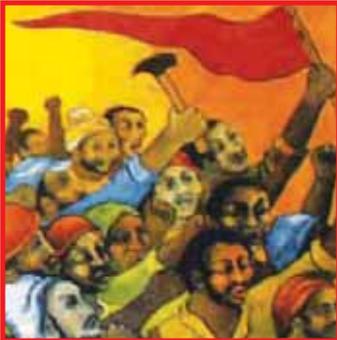


# AMANDLA!

THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN



CELEBRATING PEOPLE'S POWER  
IN THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM  
AND DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AFRICA



education

Department:  
Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



# AMANDLA!

## THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN

ISBN 978-1-77018-225-7

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The Department of Education gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Royal Netherlands Embassy towards the development and distribution of this publication.



Koninkrijk  
der Nederlanden

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# INTRODUCTION

**T**his book was written in 2008, the year of the 90th birthday of the father of our nation, Nelson Mandela. We often celebrate the heroes who are well known and who have a celebrity status, but as Madiba himself said:

*"The time will come when our nation will honour the memory of all the sons, the daughters, the mothers, the fathers, the youth and the children who, by their thoughts and deeds, gave us the right to assert with pride that we are South Africans, that we are Africans and that we are citizens of the world."*  
- State of the Nation Address at the Houses of Parliament, May 24, 1994

This book is a celebration of all those women and men whose names we do not know by heart, but whose sacrifices have all played a part in creating a democratic South Africa. They risked being harassed, being shot at by the police, being imprisoned, being put under house arrest, being detained without trial, being tortured and being assassinated. They did not necessarily become famous or wealthy in the new South Africa. They did not necessarily live to see the liberation of their land. They were women and men, youth, workers, soldiers, teachers, academics, domestic workers, farmers, artists, professionals – fellow comrades all united in the struggle. Their deeds of courage call us all to action now! Like them we must encourage each other, learn as much as we can about the challenges that face us today, grow a vision for the 21st century and play our part in making that vision come true.

■ It may surprise you to discover that it was women who organised the first non-racial, mass action in South Africa. The Bantu Women's League was an important stepping stone in the mostly hidden history of the struggle of women in South Africa. In the chapter, **OUR WOMEN LED THE WAY**, we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Bantu Women's League and the formidable women's movement that grew around it.

■ Another group of largely unnamed heroes are the workers whose mass strike campaigns helped bring apartheid to its knees. In **WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE** we celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Durban

strikes. These historic worker's strikes created a chain reaction of strikes throughout the country in the 1970s and revived the trade union movement, which flourished in the 1980s.

■ In the last days of apartheid, extreme violence both in and outside South Africa reached a peak. In **THE BATTLE OF CUITO CUANAVALÉ** we commemorate the 20th anniversary of an historic battle that ended the dominance of apartheid military forces in southern Africa. This battle was also the expression of a violent civil war in Angola and the Cold War conflict between the USA and the USSR. It is an example of how our struggle for liberation was intimately connected to other struggles all over the world.

■ In the 1980s South Africans from every walk of life joined hands in the final push to destroy the oppressive forces of apartheid. In **FORWARD TO PEOPLE'S POWER** we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF). The UDF brought all sorts of organisations and individuals together in a way that had never happened before. It was a true expression of "power to the people".

■ We do celebrate two famous heroes in this book - two people of the people. In **LIVES WELL LIVED** we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the births of Nelson Mandela and his dear friend Albertina Sisulu. Both had the opportunity to leave apartheid South Africa, but stayed. Their leadership and determination helped nurture the seed that was to become the democratic South Africa we enjoy today.

■ We hope these celebrations inspire you to become more involved. Maybe you will think about becoming an activist, a volunteer, a development worker, a change agent or a trend setter in your community. We invite you to learn more about the power of the people, and the power you have to change history, in the **LEARNING ACTIVITIES** for each chapter on pages 71-86 of this book.

# THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN

*"... The time for the healing of the wounds has come.*

*The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come.*

*The time to build is upon us.*

*We have, at last, achieved our political emancipation. We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination ...*

*We have triumphed in the effort to implant hope in the breasts of the millions of our people. We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity - a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world ...*

*We dedicate this day to all the heroes and heroines in this country and the rest of the world who sacrificed in many ways and surrendered their lives so that we could be free.*

*Their dreams have become reality. Freedom is their reward ...*

*We understand it still that there is no easy road to freedom.*

*We know it well that none of us acting alone can achieve success.*

*We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world.*



Nelson Mandela at his inauguration, Union Buildings, Pretoria, 10 May 1994.

*Let there be justice for all.*

*Let there be peace for all.*

*Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all.*

*Let each know that for each the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfill themselves.*

*Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world.*

*Let freedom reign.*

*The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement!*

*God bless Africa!"*

Extracts from the statement of the president of the African National Congress, Nelson Mandela, at his inauguration as President of South Africa, Pretoria, 10 May 1994

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## Acknowledgements

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Historical consultants: Phil Bonner and Derrick O'Leary.

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Copy editing: Lorraine Kearney.

Cover photograph: Alan Kearthland.

Photo credits: Adil Bradlow; AFP Photo; Africa Media Online; Andy Mason; Associated Press; Avusa Media; Bailey's African History Archives; Barry Iverson; Bongani Nguni; Cedric Nunn; City of Johannesburg; David Sandison; Duggan Cronin; Freedom Park; Free State Provincial Archives; Gallo Images; Gauteng Corporate Communications; Gisele Wolfsohn; Gordon Rainsford; Henner Frankenfeld; Jurgen Schadeberg; Keven Maytham; Linda Martindale; Local History Museum Durban; Lorri Waselchuk; Marty Lederhandler; Mayibuye Archives; McGregor Museum Kimberley; Morris Zwi; Nelson Mandela Foundation; Oryx Media; Pascal Guyot; Paul Valesco; Paul Weinberg; PictureNet Africa; Rodney Barnett; Ruphin Coudyzer; SA Navy; South African History Archives; Shaun Harris; Sisulu Family; South Photographs; Sowetan; Sunday Times Heritage Project; Swapo Party Archives; Sydney Seshibedi; The Mercury; The Star; Themba Hadebe; Time Life Pictures; Unisa Archive; United Nations Photo; Wits Historical Papers.

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## THE WOMEN LED THE WAY

*"The weight of resistance has been greatly increased in the last few years by the emergence of our women. It may even be true that, had the women hung back, resistance would still be faltering and uncertain ... Furthermore, women of all races had far less hesitation than men in making common cause about things basic to them."*

- Albert Luthuli 1962, cited in Gasas 221

**F**emale activists worked together to combat sexism and found common ground with all women regardless of race or class. Women built non-racist organisations long before the men did. They led the way.

Women embraced the idea of mass campaigns long before the men did. They led the way. They organised huge marches protesting all forms of oppression, like the ban on brewing traditional beer, high food prices, high rents and passes for women.

At the beginning of the 20th century women did not have to carry passes. The government tried to force passes on to women to put pressure on them to work as domestic labour. This would mean that women would only be allowed to get a pass and remain legally in an urban area if they could prove that they had a white employer. Women resisted.

*"We women will never carry these passes. This is something that touches my heart. I appeal to you young Africans to come forward and fight. These passes make the road even narrower for us. We have seen unemployment, lack of accommodation and families broken because of passes. We have seen it with our men. Who will look after our children when we go to jail for a small technical offence - not having a pass?"*

- Dora Tamana, a member of the ANC Women's League, at a demonstration in Langa in 1953

The bravery of these women was extraordinary. Women went to jail for their anti-pass protests. They refused to admit guilt by paying bail or fines. They did this long before the men did. They led the way. These efforts delayed the implementation of passes for women by 40 years.

1913, 28 May – 200 women march on the Bloemfontein Town Hall. 80 are imprisoned. 600 march to attend their trial.

1918 – The Bantu Women's League is founded, and led by Charlotte Maxeke.

1918 – Maxeke leads a delegation to meet Prime Minister Louis Botha.

1918 – ANC grants auxiliary status to women. Bantu Women's League joins.

1929, 23 Dec. – Police fire on female protesters in Potchefstroom, killing 100.

1930 – White women are allowed to vote.

1937 – The National Council of African Women is created.

1943 – Women are allowed to become full members of the ANC.

1952 – The Congress Alliance organises a nation-wide Defiance Campaign.

1954 – The Federation of South African Women is created.

1954 – The idea of a Woman's Charter is put forward.

1955, 26 June – Helen Joseph and Josie Palmer read the Women's Charter at the Congress of the People in Kliptown.

1955, October – The government threatens to issue passes to African women from the beginning of 1956.

1956 – 20 000 women with 100 000 petitions converge on the Union Buildings to protest the passes.

1957-1961 – The Treason Trial of 156 leaders of the Congress Alliance (19 of them women) lasts for four years.

1958 – Zeerust anti-pass protests.

1960 – Police kill 69 anti-pass protesters in Sharpeville. State of emergency declared. ANC and PAC are banned.

1963 – The white Congress of Democrats (COD) is banned.

1965 – The ANC in exile establishes a Women's Section Bureau in Tanzania.

1975 – The Black Women's Federation, inspired by Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement, is created.

1976 – Many girls and young women participate in the student uprisings.

1983 – The United Democratic Front is created as a pro-ANC, extra-parliamentary organisation.

1987 – The UDF's Women's Congress is founded and adopts the Women's Charter of 1954.

1990 – The ANC broadens its understanding of liberation to include gender equality.

1992 – The Women's National Coalition (WNC) is formed and drafts the Women's Charter for Effective Equality.

1994 – The Women's Charter for Effective Equality is created.



© Bailey's African History Archive

#### Josie Palmer

Josie Palmer was born in Potchefstroom in 1903, but spent most of her childhood in Sophiatown, Johannesburg. In 1921 she joined the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and moved back to Potchefstroom, where she became involved in local protests. She was a leader in the 1928 campaign against residential permits. She married Edwin Mofutsanyana, a leading member of the CPSA and the ANC. Although she classified herself as coloured, she adopted the surname Mpama. During the late 1920s and 1930s, she wrote for *Umsebenzi*, the CPSA's journal, in which she highlighted the connection between workers' struggles and the general political system in the country. By the 1940s, she was a member of the CPSA's Johannesburg committee, becoming the first black woman to play a significant role in the CPSA. In 1944, she started working with the National Anti-Pass Council.

Josie Mpama played a crucial role in the formation of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) and was president of the Transvaal branch. She was banned shortly before the historic 1956 Women's March to the Union Buildings and she was detained during the State of Emergency that was declared after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960. Mpama died in 1979.

She was awarded the National Order of Luthuli in Silver by President Thabo Mbeki on 16 June 2004, in honour of her role in the struggle for democracy, human rights, nation-building, justice and peace.

On 28 May 1913, a group of 200 women protest in front of the Bloemfontein town hall, which was also used as a bioscope (cinema).

## "WE HAVE DONE WITH PLEADING ...

While women had been protesting the government's removal of their rights for many years, it is the 1913 anti-pass march in Bloemfontein that stands out as the beginning of the women's movement in South Africa.

Women from the Bloemfontein township of Waaihoek had to carry up to 13 permits at a time, including a service book which they paid for every month. Typically these women would earn a living by doing the laundry of white women in Bloemfontein. When they were told that they also had to pay for a permit to use the public bathhouse to do their employers' laundry, they decided enough was enough.

In March 1912, they sent a petition to Prime Minister Louis Botha. When no positive response was received, six women from Bloemfontein travelled to Cape Town to meet Minister of Native Affairs Henry Burton. They presented a petition bearing the signatures of 5 000 women. Burton said it was not the responsibility of the national government and that the women should speak to their provincial government. So the women organised a march to the Bloemfontein Town Hall.

Many men were surprised by this level of female activism. Dr Abdullah Abdurahman, from the African People's Organisation, scolded women "*for acting on their own and not consulting their leadership*" (**APO newsletter**).

On 28 May 1913, a group of 200 women marched on the town hall of Bloemfontein and demanded to see the mayor, Ivan Haarburger. He was not available. On the following day a smaller delegation returned, but were told that the issue was the responsibility of the national government. Tired of being sent back and forth, the women gathered that evening and burnt their passes outside the police station; 80 women were arrested. They refused to admit guilt by paying fines and were imprisoned. There were more women than the jail could hold, so they had to serve their prison sentences in relays. Prison conditions were harsh – cold cement floors and little to eat. Many women were jailed with their babies.



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## ... WE NOW DEMAND."

It wasn't very long before the men saw the power of the women's actions. Some became more supportive. Abdullah Abdurahman changed his view and praised the women saying,

*"We, the men who are supposed to be made of sterner stuff than the weaker sex, might well hide our faces in shame, and ponder in some secluded spot over the heroic stand made by the daughters of Africa ... We docilely accept almost every abject position and submit to every brutality of the white men with little more than a murmur. Not so our women. They have accepted the white man's challenge and have openly defied him to do his worst."*

- Abdullah Abdurahman in **APO newsletter** May 1913

When the arrested women appeared in court, on 6 June 1913, 600 women marched on the court. They were led by a Mrs Molisapoli wrapped in a Union Jack.

*"Six hundred daughters of South Africa taught the arrogant whites a lesson that will never be forgotten ... they marched to the magistrate, hustled the police out of their way and kept shouting and cheering until His Worship emerged from his office to address them, thence they proceeded to the Town Hall. The women now assumed a threatening attitude. The police endeavoured to keep them off the steps of the hall. Sticks could be seen flourishing overhead and some came down with no gentle thrwacks across the skulls of the police. 'We have done with pleading, we now demand,' declared the women."*

- **APO newsletter** June 1913



Women protest against the beerhalls  
The brewing of traditional beer was a way for women to make an income and enjoy some economic independence. The government believed that by controlling the informal alcohol trade through its own beerhalls it could interfere with women's aspirations for financial, social and political empowerment. The 1928 Liquor Act prohibited the brewing of traditional beer and police began raiding homes searching for illegal home-made beer. Not only did women lose their income from selling the home-brew, but they also had to watch their husbands losing their wages in government beerhalls where beer that was less nutritious and more intoxicating was sold at four times the price women were charging.

1929 ICU Women's Auxiliary - pictured at the time of the beer boycotts in Natal.

© Unisa Archives

The Bloemfontein marches triggered other marches across the country, including in Senekal, Kroonstad, Potchefstroom and on the Rand. During the 1919 anti-pass marches in the Transvaal, women were joined by the men – for the first time.

Many women emerged as leaders. One was Josie Palmer of the Communist Party of South Africa who came from Potchefstroom, where women were under extreme financial pressure. If they did not pay their rent the city council would repossess their homes. Women also had to pay a lodger's permit if someone rented a room from them. This made it difficult for them to make some extra cash. Women and men protested on 16 December 1929. Violence erupted between the white residents and the black protesters. One man, Hermanus Lethebe, was killed. The government was afraid that husbands would soon join the women in greater numbers and possibly even organise a labour strike. Within a year the government met the women's demands.

The Natal branch of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) decided to protest the creation of municipal beerhalls. Women joined the protest with a passion. Some actually raided beerhalls beating the drinkers with sticks. Protests by women spread through Natal. But when the ICU was asked to send representatives to the new Native Advisory Board in Durban it was perceived as working with the government and lost popular support. Many people turned to the Communist Party, who linked the beerhall boycott to its pass-burning campaign. When a local Communist Party leader, Johannes Nkosi, and three other workers were beaten to death by black policemen the boycott ended and workers slowly returned to the municipal beerhalls.



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#### Charlotte Maxeke

Charlotte Maxeke, one of the earliest female activists, was born in Ramokgopa, Pietersburg (Polokwane) in April 1874.

She was the first African woman to graduate from a university - the Wilberforce University in Ohio, USA - with a Bachelor of Science degree. On her return to South Africa, she married the Rev MM Maxeke and was instrumental in introducing the African Methodist Episcopal Church to the country. Members of this church were to play a leading role in the founding of the ANC. Maxeke was involved in the early anti-pass marches and later co-founded the Bantu Women's League and the National Council for African Women. In both instances she called for political unity across gender and racial barriers. Her fight for social justice even took her to the courts of Boksburg and Benoni, where she appeared before magistrates on behalf of youths who had been arrested. She died in 1939 and is buried in Kliptown.

Maxeke taught that you could not experience solidarity if your own ego was more important to you:

"This work is not for yourselves - kill that spirit of 'self' and do not live above your people, but live with them. If you can rise, bring someone with you. Do away with that fearful animal of jealousy - kill that spirit, and love one another as brothers and sisters. The other animal that will tear us to pieces is tribalism; I saw the shadow of it and it should cease to be."

- Charlotte Maxeke at the 2nd conference of the National Council of African Women, Bloemfontein, 8 December 1938

## THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

Many scholars agree that the most important result of the women's anti-pass protests was the creation of the Bantu Women's League (BWL) in 1918. In the same year, the BWL leader Charlotte Maxeke led a delegation to meet with Prime Minister Louis Botha. As a result of this meeting some restrictions against women were relaxed for a short time.

In 1918 the ANC granted auxiliary status to women. The Bantu Women's League then chose to affiliate with the ANC. In doing so, it faced the challenge of oppressive traditional patriarchal attitudes. Even though women were active in protests, their status within the ANC was not equal to that of men. As auxiliary members they had no voting rights. Official ANC guidelines stated:

*"It shall be the duty of auxiliary members to provide suitable shelter and entertainment for delegates to the Congress."*

In her book **Women and the African National Congress**, Frene Ginwala explains that for the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women had little political space within the ANC and their role was limited to domestic duties.

In contrast, the Communist Party encouraged female participation and leadership, especially in the trade unions. Through participation in trade unions, like the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), women began to see links between class oppression and gender oppression. Women also experienced what it was like to work in non-racial class-based organisations.

*"Unions brought women into active public life, defying contemporary beliefs that they should accept their political and legal subordination without complaint. Through union activities, women were politicised, introduced to the pressing issues of the time and to a new world of debate, organising and protest. These experiences transformed the women involved, as well as the groups they helped to launch and sustain. Within these new political spaces, some women challenged racist practices and institutions, struggling to interact with one another on a basis of relative equality; they also acquired the skills to launch new groups with gender specific objectives. In all these ways, trade union activism changed women's personal and collective identities, helping to shape the contours of a later South African feminist agenda that would challenge not only the unions, but also political organisations such as the ANC."*

- Iris Berger in **Women in South African History** (2007)

In 1935, Charlotte Maxeke was invited to speak at the All Africa Convention (AAC) as the president of the BWL. The AAC called for the creation of an African Council of Women. In 1937 the National Council of African Women (NCAW) was launched under the leadership of Maxeke as president and Minah Soga as general secretary. Together with the white National Council of Women the NCAW participated in the Joint Council Movement.

*"Except for the women's church groups, this was the first formidable black women's organisation in South Africa, and it demonstrated their determination and strength. They pledged themselves to serve their race and to liberate themselves from the shackles of humiliation, discrimination and systematic psychological suppression by their own men folk as well as by the state through its legislation and administrative regulations."*

- Ellen Kuzwayo in **Call me Woman** (1985:117)

The NCAW did not survive for long. Male African nationalists were concerned that black women were being radicalised by white women. In contrast the Communist Party thought that the NCAW was not radical enough. Others were concerned that non-racial female solidarity could detract from problems that were specific to black women.

In 1943, women were eventually allowed to become full members of the ANC with rights to vote and participate in all levels of its decision making. The BWL became the ANC Women's League under the leadership of Madie Hall Xuma, the American wife of ANC president Dr Alfred Bitini Xuma. Thanks to the campaign experience of the women and the radicalism of the new ANC Youth League, the ANC now started to become a mass movement. The non-racial NCAW was phased out. Women still had no formal leadership positions in the ANC and their struggle for equality continued.

It took a while for the ANC Women's League to develop its own political strength. It was not allowed to take major decisions. It was expected to help raise funds and increase membership – which it did do. It did not hold its own conference until 1948. It was here that Ida Mtwana was elected as its president.

*"The election of Ida Mtwana invited a new era in the history of the organisation. The structure of the ANC Women's League was overhauled and pattern of the parent body, the ANC Women's League women throughout the country and opened the way for a new and more dynamic leadership, with a broader representation of working class women to come to the fore."*

- ANCWL website

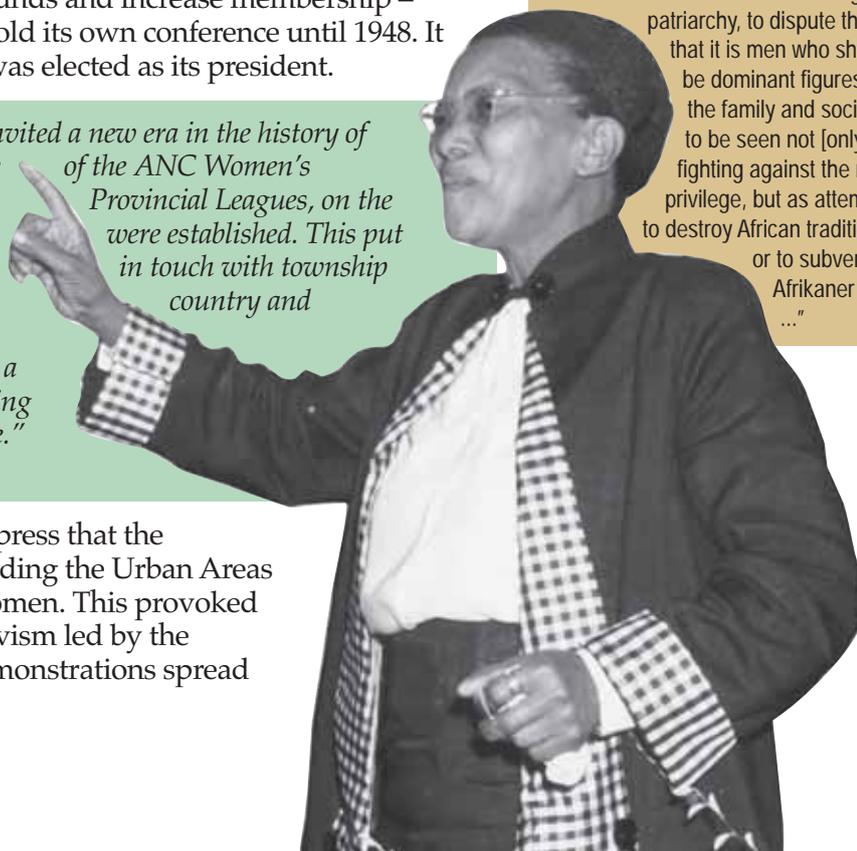
In 1950 it was leaked to the press that the government intended amending the Urban Areas Act to include passes for women. This provoked another wave of female activism led by the ANC Women's League. Demonstrations spread throughout the country.

Racism, classism and sexism

While female activists supported the struggle against white racist rule, they also had to struggle against male domination in their own families and communities. Women experienced discrimination because of the colour of their skin (racism), because of their poverty (classism) and because of their gender (sexism). Women had to deal with traditional attitudes on male authority (patriarchy). In this patriarchal value system, women were often treated as inferior to men. The word "patriarch" refers to the male leader of a family or community. The role of the patriarch has often been linked to a value system that limits the roles of women to being mothers, caregivers, homemakers and sex objects. Patriarchal value systems also regard women as unable to take decisions about their own lives, bodies, education, making a living, relationships and their future. In its worst form patriarchy condones the abuse of women by men and women accept this abuse as normal. Our Constitution does not support patriarchy.

In 1998, the Commission on Gender Equality said that in South Africa patriarchy "is so firmly rooted that it is given a cultural halo and identified with customs and personalities of different communities. Thus to challenge

patriarchy, to dispute the idea that it is men who should be dominant figures in the family and society, is to be seen not [only] as fighting against the male privilege, but as attempting to destroy African tradition, or to subvert Afrikaner ideals ..."



Ida Mtwana delivers her speech at the founding conference of the Federation of SA Women, 17 April 1954.

Testimonies on apartheid abuses - FEDSAW conference 1954

They can kick the door open at any time during the night. The father, mother, children and everyone else in the household has to produce their papers. Fed up of this treatment, we collected our resident permits and returned them to the local authorities. This was our protest against the raids. Give them their papers, so that they do not have to come and bother us, they can just look through the documents in their keeping if they want to know anything about us and our families ... here keep your papers and let us sleep peacefully ... Obviously this created more trouble for us. The raids continued, the harassment did not stop. But we had done something for ourselves.

- Testimony of Florence Matomela

The raids cause anxiety in many households and children are not spared from witnessing ill treatment of their parents. They see the powerlessness of their fathers and the indignities they suffer as a result of the inspection of men's income. Within a few minutes of inspection, a family could be literally ejected into the streets should a man's income be deemed not high enough to cover rent ... this can happen in the dead of night, in the early hours of the morning ... while it is still dark outside, the family is thrown out, their belongings scattered in the street.

- Testimony of Louisa Metswana

## OUT OF THE KITCHEN: INTO THE STRUGGLE

In 1952, the Native Laws Amendment Act made it an offence for any African (including women) to be in any urban area for more than 72 hours, unless in possession of the necessary documentation. The only women who could live legally in the townships were the wives and unmarried daughters of the African men who were eligible for permanent residence.

In response to this the SA Indian Congress and the ANC created a nation-wide campaign in which carefully chosen individuals would openly defy all unjust laws. ANCWL members played an important role in this Defiance Campaign. For example, in the Eastern Cape 1 067 out of 2 529 defiers were women. Hundreds of women were arrested. The Defiance Campaign strengthened the women's movement. The work of the Defiance Campaign grew into the Congress Alliance (an alliance between the SA Indian Congress, the white Congress of Democrats and the Coloured People's Organisation working together with black liberation organisations).

In 1954, The Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) was created as a non-racial women's movement that operated within the Congress Alliance, "to fight for woman's rights and the full economic citizenship of all". At the first FEDSAW conference, on 17 April 1954, 146 delegates, representing 230 000 women from all parts of South Africa, attended. All the catering was done by men to give women more time to debate political issues. In her opening speech, the ANC Women's League president, Ida Mtwana said, "Gone are the days when the place of women was in the kitchen and looking after the children. Today, they are marching side by side with men on the road to freedom". Ida Mtwana was elected as the national president of FEDSAW – a recognition of the important role of the ANCWL. It was here that FEDSAW adopted a Women's Charter, which stated:

*"The law has lagged behind the development of society; it no longer corresponds to the actual social and economic position of women. The law of women and society. has become an obstacle to the progress therefore [an obstacle to] the whole allowed large This intolerable condition would not be to continue were it not for the refusal of sections of our menfolk to concede to us women the rights and privileges which they demand for themselves."*

The Women's Charter also resolved to:

*"... struggle for the removal of laws and customs that deny African women the right to own, or inherit land ... work for change in the laws of marriage such as are found amongst our African, Malay and Indian people, which have the effect of placing wives in the position of legal subjugation to, and giving husbands the power to dispose of wives' property and earnings and to dictate to them all matters affecting them and their children ..."*



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Florence Matomela from Eastern Cape ANCWL at FEDSAW founding conference 17 April 1954.

The Women's Charter called for the enfranchisement of men and women of all races; for equality of opportunity in employment; equal pay for equal work; equal rights in relation to property, marriage and children; and the removal of all laws and customs that denied women such equality. It further demanded paid maternity leave, childcare for working mothers, and free and compulsory education for all South African children.

The demands of the Women's Charter were incorporated into the Freedom Charter that was adopted by the Congress of the People in Kliptown on 26 June 1955. In preparation for the Congress of the People FEDSAW members worked together with volunteers to collect demands for the Freedom Charter. They also had to arrange accommodation for the more than 2 000 delegates. Then at the Congress of the People Helen Joseph and Josie Palmer read the women's demands.



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Women delegates at the Congress of the People, Kliptown, 26 June 1955.

Albertina Sisulu →



© Bailey's African History Archive

In October 1955, the government announced that it would issue passes to African women from the beginning of 1956. On 27 October 1955, an anti-pass demonstration of 2 000 women of all racial groups converged on the Union Buildings in Pretoria (Tshwane). They had asked to meet with Dr. HF Verwoerd (then Minister of the Non-European Department), but he never arrived. Based on the successful turnout, FEDSAW decided to organise an even bigger march in 1956.

Helen Joseph, in her autobiography **Side by Side** (1986), explains:

*"The senior Congress leaders became apprehensive, doubting our ability to handle the situation. Lilian and I were summoned to a secret meeting of the Congress leadership, mostly banned people, and asked if we knew what we were doing. Had we realised the enormous responsibility of gathering thousands of women together in the face of possible police interference? What would we do if all the leaders were arrested? Lilian replied that if that happened, other leaders would take our places. The women would know what to do and we had confidence in them."*

Lilian Ngoyi, of the ANC Women's League, responded to the men's questions saying, "We don't want men who wear skirts under their trousers. If they don't want to act let us women exchange garments with them".

#### Women and Bantu Education

In 1953, the government decided to give our children what they call Bantu Education. We as women wouldn't take this. We organised other women against the Bantu Education and we closed the schools. We thought of forming an organisation that will put all the women together, so that at least our fight will be easy if we speak with one voice. Now we formed an organisation which was called Federation of South African Women in 1954. In 1955, we joined, as Federation of South African Women, the launching of the Freedom Charter in Kliptown. In 1956, we organised twenty thousand women to go to the Union Building and protest against Bantu Education to our children. Having closed the school, we decided to have volunteers that are going to teach the children. We gave out some rooms in our houses to be classrooms. This first room was one of the classrooms of Grade One. But that failed because the government wouldn't register our schools. That now meant that the two years are wasted because the children would not be examined at the end of every year. Now we gave that up. Bantu Education was introduced to the children.  
- Albertina Sisulu ([http://www.anc.org.za/people/sisulu\\_a.html](http://www.anc.org.za/people/sisulu_a.html))

### Lilian Ngoyi

Masediba Lilian Ngoyi was born in Pretoria in 1911. Writer Ezekiel Mphahlele describes her as, "The woman factory worker who is tough granite on the outside, but soft and compassionate deep down in her." Her activism started in the Garment Workers Union in 1952 and grew with her participation in the Defiance Campaign. Within a year of joining the ANC she became the first black woman to serve on the executive. She also became president of the ANCWL and president of FEDSAW. She was one of the leaders of the 1956 Women's March and was arrested as part of the infamous Treason Trial. She was set free but in 1962, and then again in 1972, she was banned and confined to Orlando.

Lilian Ngoyi was also committed to freeing women from the tyranny of their own male partners and said, "The husbands speak of democracy but do not practise it at home." (Zihlangu Papers). A commemoration in Sechaba magazine (1982) said the following about Ngoyi:

"As a Black woman in South Africa, Lilian Ngoyi found herself – as do millions of Black women across the land – the victim of both race and sex discrimination. As a person she demonstrated that it was possible not only to transcend the limits imposed on her in this way, but that the struggle in South Africa could not be successfully waged unless women and women's issues constituted a central part of liberation strategy."

Lilian Ngoyi speaking at a Women's league meeting in the 1950s.

Lilian Ngoyi received the ANC's highest award – Isitwalandwe/Seaparankoe.



Isitwalandwe courtesy ANC website.

## THE WOMEN OF AFRICA ARE OUTSIDE

The 1956 Women's March to the Union Buildings is legendary - 20 000 women with 100 000 signed letters converged on the Union Buildings. They achieved this in spite of the government's attempts to stop trains and ban key leaders, in spite of possible police violence, and in spite of the anxieties of the male leaders of the Congress Alliance. There were even domestic workers who came with their white employers' babies strapped to their backs. Large public protests were illegal. So the women claimed that this was not a group protest but many protests by individuals each carrying their own letter of protest.

Lilian Ngoyi led the representatives, Rahima Moosa, Sophie Williams and Helen Joseph, to the office of Prime Minister Strijdom.

*"She caught sight of her own daughter crying and thought it might be the last time they saw one another. A barrage of photographers met the delegation inside and pointed the women to the right door. When Ngoyi knocked, a voice from behind the door told her she had been sent a letter saying she was prohibited from coming there. She answered, "The women of Africa are outside. They built this place and their husbands died for this."*

- Wells (1993:112)

They were refused entry and left the letters of protest at his door. Ngoyi and the representatives returned to the crowd and cried out *iAfrika!* The women responded *Mayibuye!* Then the women stood silent for 30 minutes. Speeches would have made the gathering illegal. After the silence Ngoyi said, "*Strijdom is too much of a coward to meet with us.*"

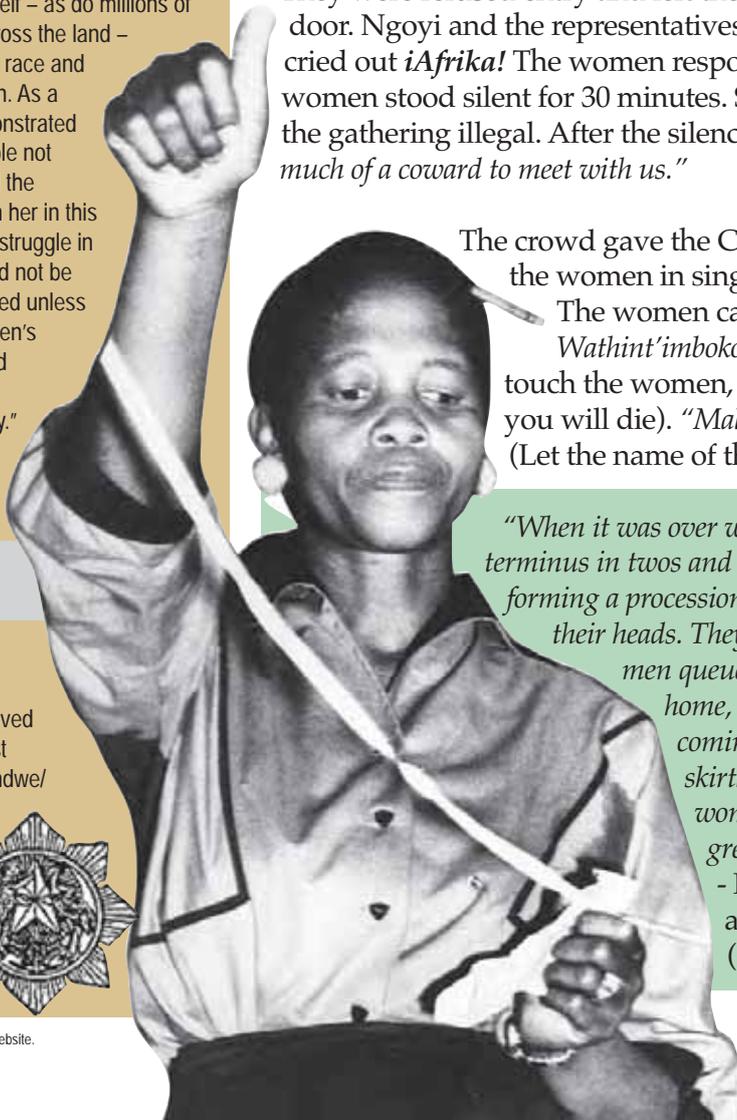
The crowd gave the Congress salute and Ngoyi led the women in singing *Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika*.

The women called out, "*Wathint'bafazi.*

*Wathint'imbokodo. Strijdom uzakufa*" (You touch the women, you touch the rock. Strijdom you will die). "*Malibongwe! Igama lamakhosikazi*" (Let the name of the women be praised).

*"When it was over women walked back to the bus terminus in twos and threes, singing now, never forming a procession, babies on backs, baskets on their heads. They reached the buses as African men queued after work for their transport home, but when they saw the women coming, in their green blouses and skirts, they stood back. "Let the women go first," they said. It was a great tribute from weary men.*

- Helen Joseph in her autobiography *Side by Side* (1986)



© Bailey's African History Archive

The petitions were later used as evidence at the infamous 1956 Treason Trial, in which 156 leaders of the Congress Alliance were charged with plotting to overthrow the government. Among those detained were leading women such as Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Annie Silinga and Francis Baard. The Treason Trial lasted for four-and-a-half years. During this long period the women of FEDSAW and the ANCWL organised support for the treason trialists and their families.

### Police violence intensified

Anti-pass protests continued throughout the country. In March 1957, the Reference Book Unit came to Zeerust to give women their passes. Only eight women, from a black population of 4 000 turned up to buy reference books. Prime Minister Verwoerd had sent a message to one of the local chiefs, Chief Moilwa of Dinokana, ordering him to tell his wife to carry a pass. Chief Moilwa responded:

*"Who the hell is this Verwoerd? I have never heard of him before. Why is the government interfering with other people's wives?"*

The government's attempts to depose Chief Moilwa led to a series of violent clashes between police and villagers, most of whom were women. Their men were far from home working as migrant labourers. These women were brought to the Zeerust jails by the hundreds, singing *"Open wide the doors of the prison, Commissioner. The women of Lafurutse are ready to come in."* In response to ongoing police harassment, villagers engaged in acts of sabotage against the police and government sympathizers. In response, the police organised themselves into a large group that staged night raids throughout the district, beating those who protested against the reference books. This ruthless group of police acted like an army of occupation, camping in the villages, demanding animals for food and women for services. Many villagers fled their homes in terror moving, over the border into Bechuanaland.

After the 1957 pass protests in Zeerust, the ANC leadership was concerned that women's confrontations with the government could get increasingly dangerous, so they encouraged the women to focus on educational campaigns. Helen Joseph commented:

*"... we were disappointed and a little angry at first, but we were also disciplined and we were part of the whole liberation struggle. There was no room for any rebellious spirit on our part and there was none. Bail and fines were paid and the women returned to their homes."*

Women still had no leadership positions in the ANC and the relationship between FEDSAW and the ANC was growing uneasy. FEDSAW had collected an astonishing 500 000 anti-pass signatures in preparation for another march. To prove its allegiance to the male-dominated ANC, it left the choice of date for the next march up to them. That march never happened.



© Bailey's African History Archive

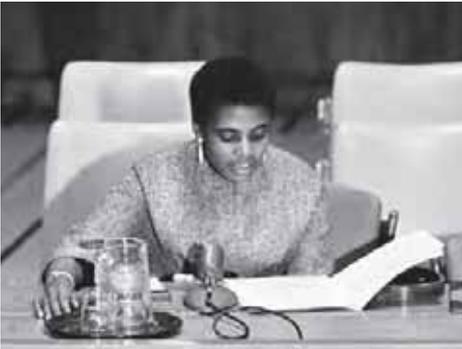
Helen Joseph in the 1950s.

### Helen Joseph

Helen Beatrice May Fennell was born in Sussex, England on 8 April 1905. In the late 1920s she worked for three years in India where she witnessed the resistance led by Mohandas Gandhi. In 1931 she married a dentist, Billie Joseph, in South Africa. During the Second World War she served as an information and welfare officer in the Woman's Auxiliary Air Force. In 1951, Helen Joseph began working for the Garment Workers Union. She was a key founder of FEDSAW and a founder of the Congress of Democrats, which led local white resistance against apartheid during the 50s and early 60s. She was one of the leaders of the 1956 Women's March and was arrested as part of the infamous Treason Trial. She was banned in 1957, and in 1962 she became the first person to be put under house arrest under the Sabotage Act. She was not allowed to meet more than one person at a time and was not allowed contact with any other banned person – although she secretly did. This continued until she was 80 years old. During this time she wrote three books. Upon her death, she was buried next to her dear friend, Lilian Ngoyi, in Avalon Cemetery, Soweto.

Helen Joseph received the ANC's highest award – Isitwalandwe/Seaparankoe.





Courtesy United Nations

Miriam Makeba reading a statement to the Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa, in the United Nations building, New York, in 1963.

#### Miriam Makeba

Miriam Makeba is a good example of an activist in exile, where she used her musical talents to raise awareness about injustice in South Africa. In 1959, she starred in the anti-apartheid documentary *Come Back Africa*. In 1963 she gave an impassioned testimony before the United Nations Committee Against Apartheid. Her records were banned and the South African government revoked her citizenship and her right to return. She stayed in the USA and married Stokely Carmichael, a Black Panther leader. Three years later she received the Grammy Award for Best Folk Recording, together with Harry Belafonte, for *An Evening With Belafonte/Makeba*. This album, released in 1966, dealt with the plight of black South Africans under apartheid. She stayed in exile in countries such as Guinea and Belgium, before Nelson Mandela persuaded her to return to the country in 1990.

Students and teacher during the 1976 student uprising in Soweto.

## THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

In 1960, police killed 69 anti-pass protesters in Sharpeville. The government declared a State of Emergency and banned the PAC and ANC. The liberation movement was driven underground. This interrupted the formal development of women leaders. FEDSAW leaders Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph and Florence Matomela were banned. Some FEDSAW members went into exile and worked for the ANC from outside the country. In 1963, the white Congress of Democrats (COD) was also banned. This was another blow for many politically active women. In the next few years more of the leading women were removed from office by government orders and arrests. By the mid-1960s FEDSAW had no leaders on the ground to maintain its structure. Female solidarity continued through church groups, burial societies, stokvels and other community organisations.

In 1965, the ANC established a Women's Section Bureau in Tanzania and it was given the job to make contact with all women in exile and in South Africa. The loyal service of these women convinced many in the ANC that it was time to review the official role of women. In spite of this progress, many women and young girls were still exposed to sexism and suffered humiliation, degradation and sexual molestation, even at the hands of some ANC military commanders, instructors and administrators.

The role of young women in the 1976 student uprisings cannot be underestimated. These uprisings played an important role in revitalising the liberation movement and in the revival of women's political organisations in the 1980s. In 1987, the UDF's Women's Congress was founded and it adopted the Women's Charter of 1954 as a source of inspiration.

In 1990 the ANC expanded its conception of liberation to include gender equality as one of its central goals.

In 1992 the Women's National Coalition (WNC) was formed as an independent organisation to articulate the interests of all South African women. Frene Ginwala, co-convenor of the WNC, argued for broad consultation. She urged the WNC to:



© Bongani Mnguni

“... grow ‘big ears’ that reach the farthest corners of our land. Let us encourage women to speak of their problems and how they understand and experience gender oppression in their daily lives”. (Ginwala 1992)

The WNC agreed to create a new charter, through a process known as Operation Big Ears. Women’s concerns were collected from all over the country in order to make a contribution to the drafting of the new Constitution of South Africa. However, tensions between the WNC and the ANCWL as well as ideological differences in the WNC itself, delayed the process. By the time the new Women’s Charter was agreed upon it was too late to add to the constitutional negotiations.

The ANCWL decided that the WNC had completed its work. The WNC had ensured greater representation of women in political structures and had developed the new Women’s Charter. It saw no need to continue the WNC and encouraged ANC members and branches to withdraw their participation in the WNC. The demise of the WNC happened at the same time as many of its leaders entered government. Frene Ginwala, for example, became the first Speaker in the new parliament. Ellen Kornegay (a member of the WNC Research Supervisory Group) became the first head of the Office on the Status of Women. Pregs Govender (project manager of WNC) became a member of parliament.

“Power and politics have traditionally been the domain of our fathers and grandfathers. I stand here today in my grandmother’s sari ... I decided to wear it to honour her power, and the power of all our grandmothers, mothers and sisters who tried to enter the ‘traditional’ domains of power outside their homes. Women who had tried to do this while remaining whole and intact – in a world that has very little respect for women, especially poor and working class women ... It is critical for each one of us to recognise, to value and to respect our own agency, our own power and each other’s power; and to redefine power: not as the power of fear and hate, but as the power of love and courage. Not to be afraid to believe that we can silence the patriarch in our own minds and hear ourselves think and be.”

- Pregs Govender, an extract of one of her speeches recalled in her book **Love and Courage** (2007)

Liberation movements often welcome women to the fight for liberation, but ignore women’s rights after liberation has been achieved. Fighting against racism, alongside men, does not always guarantee that men will fight against sexism alongside women. By taking gender seriously, the ANC did what many liberation movements in other parts of the world failed to do. Shortly after coming to power, the ANC adopted a national strategy for advancing gender equality. This is not the end of the struggle against sexism, it is just the beginning. It is each individual’s responsibility, male and female, to free themselves from sexist attitudes and practices.

Zapiro cartoon questions the value of anti-sexism ‘paper’ policies.



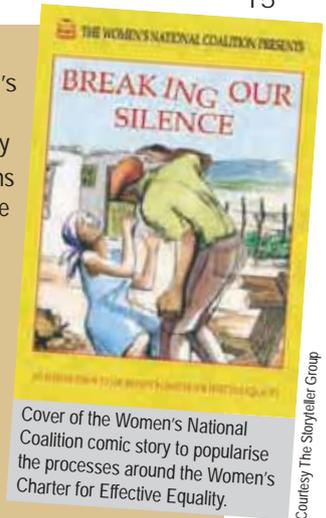
An extract from the 1994 Women’s Charter for Effective Equality

As women, citizens of South Africa, we are here to claim our rights. We want recognition and respect for the work we do in the home, in the workplace and in the community. We claim full and equal

participation in the creation of a non-sexist, non-racist democratic society. We cannot march on one leg or clap with one hand. South Africa is poorer politically, economically and socially for having prevented more than half of its people from fully contributing to its development. Recognising our shared oppression, women are committed to seizing this historic moment to ensure effective equality in a new South Africa.

...  
At the heart of woman’s marginalisation is the patriarchal order that confines women to the domestic arena and reserves for men the arena where political power and authority reside.

...  
We want shared responsibility and decision making in the home and effective equality in politics, the law, and in the economy. For too long women have been marginalised, ignored, exploited and are the poorest and most disadvantaged of South Africans. If democracy and human rights are to be meaningful for women, they must address our historic subordination and oppression. Women must participate in, and shape the nature and form of our democracy.



Courtesy The Storyteller Group

© Jonathan Shapiro



50th Anniversary of the Women's March  
**AGE OF HOPE**  
 through struggle to freedom

Department of Arts and Culture's 50th anniversary logo in celebration of the Women's March to the Union Buildings.

Courtesy Department of Arts & Culture

## MEMORIALISATION

After the courageous 1956 Women's March the Congress Alliance decided that 9 August would from that day forth be celebrated as Women's Day. It is now commemorated each year as a national holiday.

A plaque inscribed with the words "The Mother of African Freedom in this Country" was unveiled by the SA Heritage Resources Agency at Soweto's Nancefield Road Cemetery on 14 September 2006. The plaque pays homage to Charlotte Makgomo Maxeke and the contribution other women made to the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.

The SAS Charlotte Maxeke, a type-209 Submarine, arrived in Simon's Town on 26 April 2007. Minister of Defence, Lekota, said:

Kevin Maytham © SA Navy



SAS Charlotte Maxeke on manoeuvres in False Bay.

*"Often referred to as the 'Mother of African Freedom', Charlotte Maxeke was a formidable woman and a leader of national standing. Inspired by a vision of creating a better life for all, she participated in many sectors of society where oppression was at its most rife; all without expectation of reward ... It is fitting therefore, that the SAS Charlotte Maxeke should bear the name of a woman who authored so important a part of South Africa's history."*

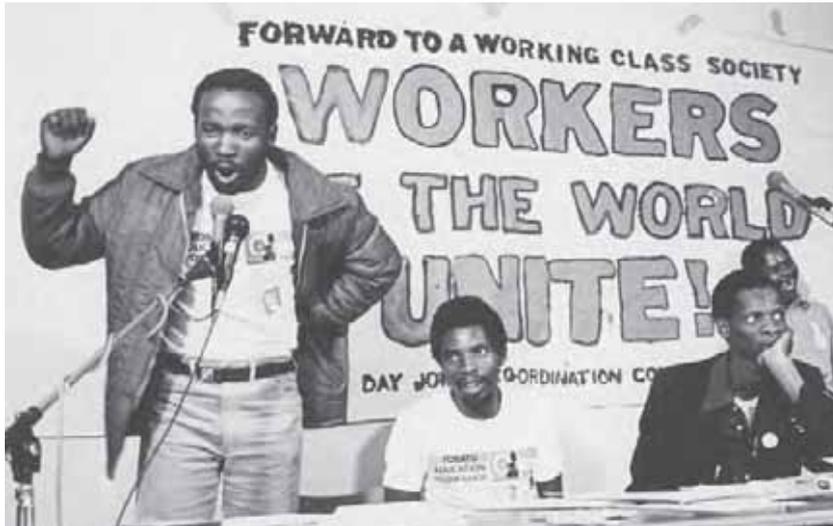
Helen Joseph Hospital in Johannesburg is famous for its leading HIV / AIDS treatment programme. It is interesting that this hospital was previously called JG Strijdom Hospital, after the apartheid leader to whom Helen Joseph delivered petitions in the 1956 Women's March.



Sydney Sechibedi © Sunday Times

An unusual celebration of the life of Lilian Ngoyi is an artwork by Stephen Maqashela, in the form of a bronze sewing machine made from car parts. It is built into the wall around her home in Nkungu Street, Soweto. This is where Ngoyi made a living from sewing during 18 difficult years of house arrest.

Artist Stephen Maqashela's Lilian Ngoyi memorial at her Soweto home.



*“All over the world, trade unions play a vital role in the struggle for democracy and broadening democratic space ... society cannot rely on political parties only to deepen democracy ... Power in a class-based society is uneven, even if people have the vote. If ordinary people do not organise - if workers in particular do not organise to engage on key strategic issues - the democratic space will be monopolised by the rich and wealthy. In short, trade unions are critical in a functional democracy because they give workers – the majority of our people – a voice. Workers and trade unions have a stake in the shape and direction of society, especially one as unequal as ours.”*

- Zwelinzima Vavi, COSATU general secretary, 2006

The power of workers, united behind a cause, can be seen in the wave of strikes that spread throughout South Africa in the 1970s. Workers initially organised strikes to raise wages and improve working conditions, but their activism soon embraced the broader issues of apartheid. Workers' strikes were one of the key factors that brought the apartheid system to its knees.

A strike is a form of protest in which a large group of workers decide together to stop work. A strike usually takes place when employees are unhappy with pay or work conditions and their employer does nothing to change these. Strike action is still illegal in many parts of the world, but democratic countries tend to recognise the right of the worker to strike.

In South Africa in the 1970s, the Bantu Labour Act made it illegal to strike, but in 1973, 61 000 black and Indian workers from all over Natal took the risk and went on strike. 11 people had already been killed by the police during transport strikes in Port Elizabeth and Natal in 1970, but the dangers did not stop workers. What makes the 1973 strikes so unusual is that they were not coordinated by an organisation. Neither the government nor employers were ready to deal with such mass action. The success of the strikes helped to reorganise the trade union movement, which had come undone by the end of the 1960s.

1922 – 25 000 white mine workers go on strike. Government forces kill 153.  
 1928-1932 – The Garment Workers Union (GWU) leads over 100 strikes. Brings clothing industry to a standstill.  
 1946 – The African Mine Workers Union (AMWU) tries to negotiate better working conditions with Chamber of Mines. When this fails they call for a strike. Police attack, killing 12 and wounding 1 200.  
 1956 – The Industrial Conciliation Amendment Act makes non-racial trade unions illegal.  
 1958 – The Amato Textile Mills strike is suppressed by police attacks.  
 1960 – After the Sharpeville massacre Albert Luthuli calls for a one-day stay-at-home which turns into a prolonged strike.  
 1970 – Bantu Labour Act makes striking illegal.  
 1970 – 11 killed in the Transport Strike.  
 1972 – PUTCO workers go on strike and receive 30% increase.  
 1973, 9 January – Black employees at the Coronation Brick Tile Company go on strike in Natal, triggering strikes all over the country. In January 1973 alone, 61 000 blacks and Indians go on strike.  
 1973, September – Police shoot 12 mine workers during a strike at Western Deep Levels in Carltonville, Johannesburg.  
 1978-1981 – Wiehahn Commission convinces the government to allow registration of black trade unions.  
 1979 – Formation of the non-racial Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) supports a wave of strikes across the country.  
 1981-1985 – A series of conferences is held to discuss the unity of trade unions against apartheid.  
 1982 – Neil Aggett, secretary of the African Food and Canning Workers Union, dies in detention; 100 000 workers go on strike in response.  
 1983 – Trade unions unite together with political and social organisations to form the United Democratic Front.  
 1984 – 800 000 workers support students in a strike against Bantu Education.  
 1985, November – Unity discussion leads to the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).  
 1987 – COSATU adopts the Freedom Charter, joins the UDF and creates the maxim, “Forward to Mass Action”.  
 1987 – After the Labour Bill legalises unfair dismissals and retrenchments, 3 million workers go on a three-day strike costing industry owners R500 million.

## ENTERING THE 1970s

### Economic boom

During the 1960s South Africa experienced an economic boom. Between 1960 and 1970 the South African gross national product (GNP – the total values of the goods and services produced within a country and overseas by locally based companies) increased from about R5 200-million to R12 400-million. The average annual growth rate of the economy was 6%. Together with Japan, the South African economy had the highest growth rate in the world. The growth of the economy increased the size and the power of the working class. More black people were able to find employment and in this way black families had access to more money than before.

#### Monopolies

When one company controls access to a particular service or product it is said to have a monopoly on that service or product. This control is usually achieved by buying all or most of its competitors. It can also happen if the government only allows one provider. Without significant competition a monopoly is able to control the price of its services and products. Monopolies are often criticized as an obstacle to fair competition.

Monopolies also grew in the 1960s, when 5% of companies controlled 60% of the market. This meant that workers in different factories and different parts of the country could unite and challenge the same boss.

The growth of the South African economy in the 1960s was capital intensive. In other words, industries were developed through the investment of large amounts of money (capital) in factories and machinery. A lot of this money was foreign investment. As much as 40% of the South African industry was controlled by foreign interests (especially chemicals, oil, computers and the motor vehicle industry). The increase in factories that relied on sophisticated technology meant that demands for semi-skilled workers and supervisory labour increased.

All these conditions made it easier for workers to organise themselves into a strong collective that could put pressure on their managers and industry owners. Workers began to see that unions with strong factory floor structures, organised democratically in the large factories, connected to workers from the same company all across the country, could demand a far bigger share of the profits of the monopolies and of the economic wealth of the country as a whole.

#### The working class

The idea of social classes represents society as layers of people who have more or less control over their lives. The working class is usually seen as a class of people in industrialised society who earn low wages in jobs that involve some form of physical labour. Unlike the middle and upper classes, they are not highly educated and do not own businesses. The working class is often referred to as “the workers”. Although there may be many different kinds of workers, like miners, factory workers and domestic workers, the concept of a working class as one group of people with common interests is an important one for organising workers into a force for social change.

From the 1920s it was difficult to create non-racial trade unions for workers in South Africa, because white workers were treated as “insiders” with effective representation within the industries they worked in, while black workers were “outsiders” without a voice.



## The plight of the worker

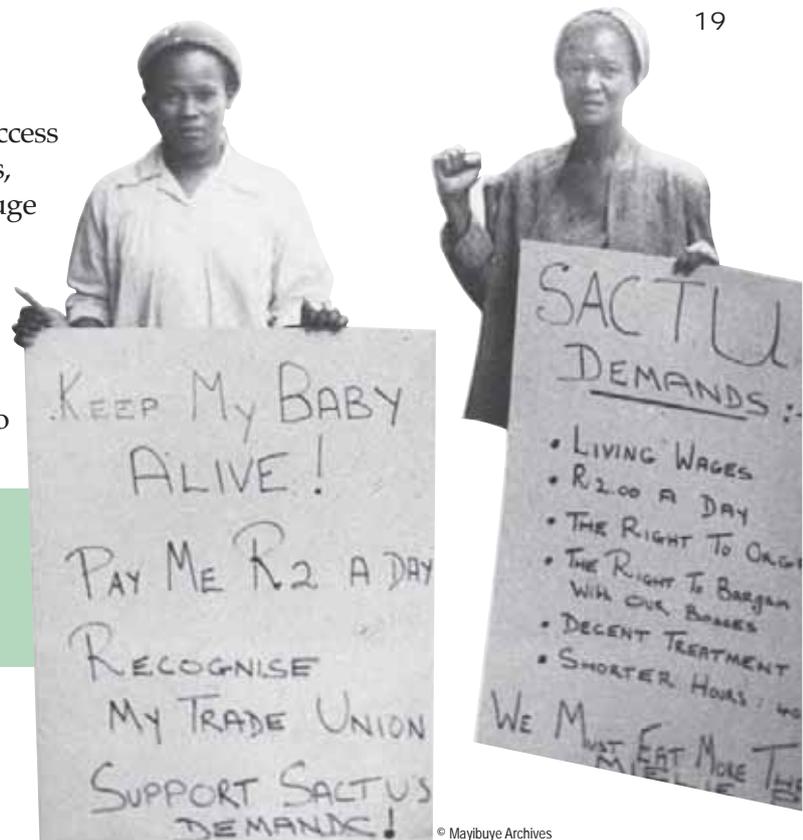
The wealth of industry owners relied on their access to cheap and obedient black labour. In the 1960s, black workers did not benefit much from the huge profits enjoyed by industry owners and white management. A sharp increase in the cost of living had made low wages unacceptable. Between 1971 and 1973 the cost of living of the average black family rose by 40%. By the early 1970s, workers were no longer prepared to accept this.

*"Although I make blankets for Mr. Philip Frame, I can't afford to buy blankets for my children."*  
- A worker's comments at a Textile Workers' Industrial Union meeting on 3 February 1973

At this point in South African history, workers did not have any effective mechanisms to voice their needs. There was the white dominated Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA), but this was not an option for most black workers. Until 1962 black trade unions were excluded from full membership of TUCSA. Black trade unions could consult with TUCSA, but only registered members of TUCSA could negotiate with management on behalf of black unions. When TUCSA eventually allowed black unions to become members in 1962, only seven with a total membership of about 4 000, joined. In 1969, TUCSA changed its mind and expelled all its black members.

The South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), formed in 1955, tried to encourage the formation of non-racial trade unions. SACTU aligned itself with the Congress Alliance and the ANC. It was criticised for combining a class-based struggle for black workers and a non-racial national struggle for democracy. By 1961, however, 51 unions, representing 53 000 workers, had affiliated themselves with SACTU. In the mid 1960s the apartheid government's state of emergency led to the arrest of many union leaders. Some died in detention. Some who were suspected of working with the military wing of the ANC were executed. Others went into exile. The apartheid government almost completely destroyed the non-racial trade union movement. In the late 1950s there had been an average of 76 strikes a year organised by trade unions; by the early 1960s this average was reduced to about 16 strikes a year.

In 1972 the General Factory Workers Benefit Fund (GFWBF) was formed in Natal. The GFWBF was not a trade union. It provided funeral benefits (like a *stokvel*) and educated workers about economics through a newspaper called **Isisebenzi**. Black workers started to question their low wages and working conditions. The work of the GFWBF helped to turn workers into a group of determined activists.



© Mayibuye Archives

Rita Ndzanga and another SACTU official protesting in the Johannesburg CBD in 1955.

From a Food and Canning Workers Union document from the 1950s:

*"Let us not forget that our union branches have a great deal of work to carry out, not only in their main task of protecting the interests of the workers in the factories, but also in improving the general standard of life and culture. Our aim must be to make every branch a leader of the community and a centre of social activities ... Our union must become a means to a new outlook; a way of fighting poverty, disease and drunkenness, of spreading knowledge and enlightenment and so strengthening the class in its struggle for justice and democracy."*

- LACOM (a project of SACHED), 1986, *Freedom from Below: The Struggle for Trade Unions in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers

## MAN IS DEAD, BUT HIS SPIRIT STILL LIVES

The Durban strikes began in early 1973 and spread across the whole country. There were a number of strikes but the one that appears to have triggered the wave was the strike at the Coronation Brick Tile Company.

Courtesy Local History Museums Collection, Durban

Striking workers crowd around a management representative to hear him speak.



Early on the morning of 9 January 1973, 2 000 workers assembled in a peaceful demonstration on the football field, demanding an increase in the minimum cash wage from R8,97 to R30 per week. They chanted together *Filumuntu ufesadikiza*, meaning “man is dead, but his spirit still lives”.

Management condemned the action, blaming it on “communist agitators” and “intimidation”. They also threatened that “the ring leaders” would be severely punished. Organising the strike was difficult as few people wanted to be identified as strike leaders and suffer victimisation from their employers. (There was no official procedure for worker representation and mechanisms resolving conflict. Black workers were not even regarded as “employees” before the law.)

### Learning their strength

In an article titled “Learning their strength” Mayibuye (29 February 1973) reported on the strike.

The most dramatic newspaper picture published in South Africa this month showed an army of striking black workers marching behind a red flag in Durban. Just over a year ago, South Africa’s Minister of the Interior warned his countrymen that unless the vast gap between African and white wages was narrowed, there was bound to be bloodshed. Disavowed by his colleagues in the cabinet, Mr Theo Gerdener resigned shortly afterwards in disgrace. But his warning that “murder and violence” were inevitable if African living conditions were not improved is now coming home to roost.

... “There is no doubt that the tempo is accelerating and that instances of industrial unrest and the degree of action being taken is becoming serious,” says the general secretary of the Trade Union Council, Mr Arthur Grobelaar.

... Ministers are now urging that African wages should be raised, and raised quickly. The wage ration between average white and black earning in the mining industry is now a staggering 20:1, and in the overall economy the gap is still widening.

... “Africans have suddenly become aware that they are being underpaid because they are black,” said Miss Lucy Mvubela, the general secretary of the Clothing Workers Union. “They are beginning to realise that they must stand together.”

Nathaniel Zulu led an 11-man delegation that was elected by the workers. They rejected the company’s offer of a R1,50 per week increase. Before making its second offer the company isolated the workers on each plant, preventing a mass gathering. Company officials were escorted by police in Land Rovers and riot trucks. Using this “divide and rule” tactic, the company officials made a second offer of R2,07 to each plant. Restricted from bargaining as a collective, workers reluctantly accepted this offer, bringing the minimum wage to R11,50 per week. This strike triggered a wave of other strikes.

Many of the strikes that followed the Coronation strike failed because of threats by management. Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi criticised those employers who dismissed their striking workers: “Firing people in these circumstances points to the insecurity of black people in general. This kind of insecurity is dangerous because blacks might ultimately ask, what have we to lose?” (**Sunday Times**, 14 January 1973)

One of the first successful strikes was that of workers at the tea-packing firm of TW Beckett and Co. The management called the police and dismissed all those who refused to work. Management announced that it would only reinstate the dismissed workers at the old pay level. Most of the workers patiently held their ground and refused to return. Two weeks after the strike began the firm announced a R3,00 per week increase for all workers and provided a second opportunity for dismissed workers to return.

Strikes spread like wild fire and were the major daily news story in nearly all South African newspapers. According to the **Natal Mercury** 29 firms had been affected by the strikes during January 1973.

*“The strikes in Natal follow a pattern from which it is clear that it is not merely a question of high wages ... There is every indication that this is a planned action and strikers are being used to achieve more than an increase in wages ... The action and unwillingness of the workers to negotiate shows undoubtedly that the agitation for trade unions is not the solution and is merely a smoke screen behind which other motives are hidden”*

- Minister of Labour quoted in **Natal Mercury** 2 February 1973

Not everybody believed the government’s conspiracy theories. The Durban Chamber of Commerce and the English-language press blamed the strikes on poor wages.

By February 1973, 16 000 black and Indian workers of the Durban Corporation went on strike, affecting road works, drain works, the cleaning department and electricity. They were demanding a R10,00 per week increase on their average wage of R13,00. The Durban Corporation strike had a dramatic affect on life in the city. Rubbish began to pile up. Grave diggers went on strike. The abattoir stopped working. Railway trucks carrying fresh food remained unloaded and the food markets came to a standstill. With the supply of perishable foods threatened, white volunteers had to provide labour for the food markets and remove rubbish from the streets.

The strikes soon evolved into protest marches, and Riot Squad police were flown in from Pretoria. On Tuesday, 6 February, 1 000 workers marched through Durban. They were stopped by riot police armed with Sten guns, FN rifles and batons. The crowd refused to disperse and the police staged a baton charge. In all, 106 workers were arrested and convicted of “causing a public disturbance”.

By Wednesday, 7 February, 30 000 workers were on strike, including the 16 000 municipal workers. Strikes also began in other parts of Natal as far as Pietermaritzburg and Port Shepstone.

The worker strikes soon spread to other provinces. In September 1973 police opened fire on black miners at the Westen Deep levels mine at Carltonville near Johannesburg, killing 12 mine workers and wounding 38. Strikes on the mines were probably the most violent. Between 1973 and 1976, mine workers went on strike many times. In that time nearly 200 miners were killed and over 1 000 injured in clashes with the police. Mine workers also attacked buildings and other symbols of their employers’ power.

The wave of strikes that began in 1973 continued throughout the 1970s. In 1973 alone, over 98 000 workers went on strike. This figure decreased to about 17 300 in 1979, but rose again in the 1980s.

Durban - incubator of South Africa’s democratic trade union movement  
Durban has been the cradle and the continuous incubator of South Africa’s democratic trade union movement. Starting from the Durban strikes of 1973 and continuing to this date, trade unionism in all its forms, white-collar, industrial, general, has been shaping popular experiences in the city ... Durban is a complex city in constant expansion outwards, eating up the countryside that surrounds it, and linking up with villages and traditional settlements inland. And since 1994, it has regained its hub as the largest harbour in Africa. Through it flow all the trading winds to Johannesburg and back, and to it flow all the disposed or wage-hungry people from KwaZulu-Natal’s hinterland.

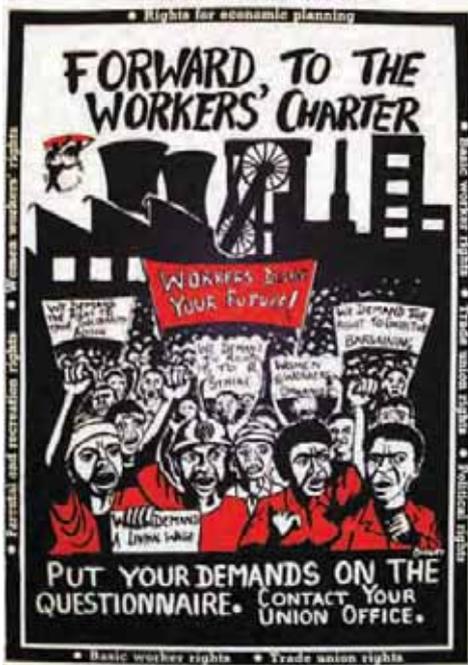
Since 1960, the formal records show the city expand by 165%. (African Studies Institute:1996) It has become an exemplar of the interface between global and local dynamics.

- Ari Sitas in *The New Poor and Social Movements in Durban*  
Former chair of the Research Advisory Committee for Urban Strategy in the New Durban Metro

Courtesy Local History Museums Collection, Durban



Police monitor strikers’ march through Durban, 1973.



Lessons from the 1973 strikes  
The extraordinary thing about these strikes was their spontaneity. They had been organised from below – by the workers themselves.

“There are a number of important lessons for the new social movements in South Africa that can be learned from the trade union experience in Natal. While we most certainly do not face the levels of repression experienced under apartheid, there are tremendous benefits in organising strong democratic organisations based on the local level, but co-ordinated with one another.

Such organisations:

- ☛ are dependent upon the widespread education of members to ensure that ‘ordinary’ members are kept informed and conscientised;
- ☛ can win immediate gains which consolidate organisation;
- ☛ allow members to link immediate demands with larger political concerns;
- ☛ and develop durable forms of organisation based upon multiple layers of activists and political education.

This creates a solid base for growth, centred on an organisational form that avoids the pitfalls of dependence on charismatic leaders, and on maximising participation within a democratic political culture.”

- Ulrich, Nicole. 2005. “The 1973 Strikes and the Birth of a New Movement in Natal”. *Khanya: A Journal for activists* No: 8 May 2005

## THE RISE OF NEW UNIONS

In April 1973, the General Factory Workers Benefit Fund (GFWBF) assisted in forming the first union to grow out of the Durban strikes – the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU).

Many unions chose to become part of an umbrella organisation or federation. The unions that emerged from the GFWBF, for example, formed the basis of the Trade Union Advisory Co-ordinating Committee (TUACC). By the end of 1974 it had 22 000 members, and by 1978 it had extended into the Transvaal. One of the most important of TUACC’s policies was that only “open” trade unions, that accepted all workers “...regardless of race, religion or sex”, would be allowed to join. This challenged the racial segregation that was promoted by the government.

A major breakthrough occurred in 1974 when the management of the Smith and Nephew plant in Pinetown agreed to recognise and bargain with the National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW). Smith and Nephew allowed the NUTW, still an illegal union, to elect shop stewards that would be recognised by management. This gave the NUTW the opportunity to build a permanent democratic organisation right on the factory floor. In the past, bargaining had taken place in Industrial Councils, now new trade unions were signing formal agreements with individual plants (factories). These plant agreements gave the open trade unions a way to get around the legal limitations placed on unregistered trade unions but still allowed them to represent workers’ interests.

Most industry owners claimed that unregistered trade unions were illegal. Industry owners tried to undermine the power of the new unions. They refused to recognise the unions even if they were supported by large numbers of workers. They refused union organisers access to factory floors. They victimised workers belonging to a trade union. They also tried to create official liaison committees (according to the Bantu Labour Relations Act) that they were prepared to recognise, but workers saw the liaison committees as managements’ attempt to control the negotiation processes.

Unions suffered severe defeats, like the Metal and Allied Workers’ Union (MAWU) at the Heinemann factory on the East Rand. In March 1976, 20 striking workers were fired. When they demanded to talk to the managing director, police attacked them, injuring 28 and arresting leaders for inciting workers to strike. Only workers who supported the liaison committees were allowed to return.

The 1976 student uprising got a lot of support from trade unions. In a stay-at-home strike, on 23-25 August 1976, in support of the students, 75% to 80% of all workers in the Johannesburg area participated. The 13 to 15 September stay-away strike involved Cape Town workers as well. After the 1976 uprisings many union officials were arrested and by November 1976 the government had banned 26 union officials for five years. Five SACTU leaders were imprisoned for life and another four for up to 18 months.

In the same year, the government appointed the Wiehahn Commission to evaluate labour laws and the rights of black workers. The government then tried to dilute the power of the unions by instituting certain reforms. The new labour laws passed between 1978 and 1981:

- recognised black people as having the legal rights of “employees” for the first time;
- gave black workers the right to form registered trade unions and access to legal bargaining structures (including industrial councils);
- retained the liaison committees but allowed them to become multi-racial;
- allowed blacks to apply for jobs formerly reserved for whites only;
- retained the legal right to strike if certain conditions were met;
- established an industrial court.



All posters on this page courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)

Some unions registered. Others did not want to surrender to government’s limitations on black unions.

In 1979 talks between the TUACC, based mainly in Natal; the Consultative Committee of Trade Unions in Johannesburg; and a number of coloured unions in the Cape, resulted in the affiliation of 12 unions to form a new federation - the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). FOSATU claimed a membership of 45 000. It was the first federation of mainly unregistered trade unions since the mid-1960s. As the federation attempted to come to terms with the rapidly changing political climate, its members built on the practices and policies that it inherited from the early trade union movement in Natal.



#### Consumer Boycotts

Not all unions belonged to federations. The Food and Canning Workers’ Union (FCWU) was an independent union that is famous for its use of consumer boycotts as a tool of protest. In April 1979, workers at a Fattis and Monis mill in the Western Cape were fired after asking their management to recognise FCWU. When other workers went on strike in solidarity they were also fired. FCWU then launched a consumer boycott against Fattis and Monis products. African traders in the Cape supported the boycott. Sales dropped dramatically and the workers were reinstated.



## TRADE UNIONS IN THE 1980s

### **Worker activism beyond the factory floor**

One of the most important features of unions in the 1980s was that the activism of the worker extended beyond the factory and into the community, identifying with broader political struggles.

The economy of South Africa was in the middle of a recession. Unemployment, food prices and rent were rising. The government was also becoming increasingly isolated through economic and cultural sanctions. Low wages and the lack of infrastructure in the townships continued to frustrate workers. The presence of the police and army in the townships turned them into war zones.

In 1982, FOSATU changed its constitution to include shop stewards' councils in its structure. These shop stewards' councils became the heart of FOSATU, taking the lead in fighting for workers' rights in and outside the factory. In 1983, a number of trade unions and political groups came together in organisations like the National Forum and the United Democratic Front. Student leaders recognised the power of the unions and approached them for support in their protests against the poor quality of Bantu Education. An example of this is the 1984 stay away campaigns in the Transvaal in which over 800 000 workers stayed away from work. Many union officials were arrested.

### The challenge of unity

This broader political activism highlighted political differences between unions and they had to overcome many disagreements in order to work together. There was often disagreement on whether to focus energy on local or national demands; whether a union should agree to register with the government or not and whether unions should be led exclusively by black workers or whether they should be non-racial.

In 1980, most of the black-only unions came together to form the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA). Many unions that had not joined FOSATU joined CUSA.

In 1982, CUSA launched one of South Africa's most effective trade unions – the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). The NUM succeeded in getting the government to scrap job reservation laws on the mines. It also fought for workers' rights to health and safety on the mines. Mining is a dangerous industry. During the 1980s an average of 600 workers died in mining accidents every year. In 1984, the NUM broke away from CUSA, insisting that CUSA's focus on black leadership only meant that it was not committed enough to worker unity.

The death of the union official in detention, Neil Aggett (the general secretary of the African Food and Canning Workers Union), in 1982 sparked protests in which registered and unregistered unions united for the first time - 100 000 workers laid down tools.

Some of the issues that workers fought for in the 1970s and 1980s include:

- ✓ the right to strike
- ✓ the right to safe and healthy working conditions
- ✓ the right to have a say over retrenchments
- ✓ the right to have access to company information
- ✓ the right to protection from hazards to pregnancy
- ✓ the right to attend clinics before and after pregnancy
- ✓ the right to control pension contributions
- ✓ an end to sexual harassment
- ✓ maternity rights and child care facilities
- ✓ equal pay for equal work
- ✓ May Day and June 16 as paid public holidays
- ✓ an end to apartheid
- ✓ troops out of the townships
- ✓ one person, one vote

Many supported the idea of one national non-racial federation of unions. Between 1981 and 1985, a series of conferences were held to discuss the unity of trade unions against apartheid. These discussions culminated in the creation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985 with a membership of 500 000.

The Inaugural Congress of COSATU in November 1985 resolved that COSATU should not belong to any political organisation, but should take up *“political struggles through the membership and structures at local, regional and national levels, as well as through disciplined alliances with progressive community and political organisations, whose interests are compatible with the interests of the workers and whose organisational practices further the interests of the working class.”*

COSATU supported the policy of “one union one industry” and urged unions within the same industry to merge into one. In 1985, unions were initiating consumer boycotts all over the country. While these were often unsuccessful they did help to create unity between unions and township-based organisations.

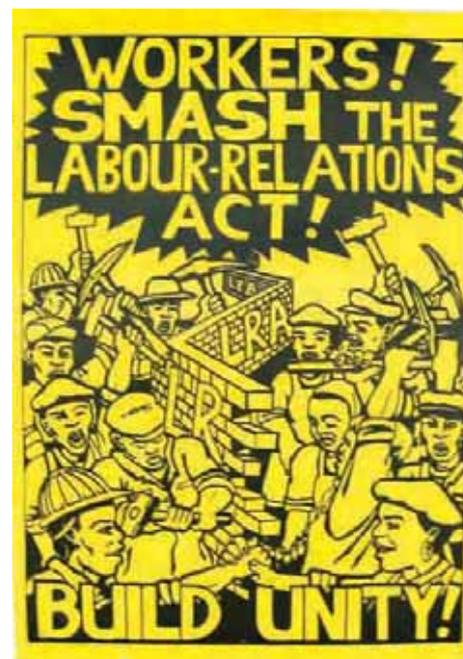
In October 1986, trade unions affiliated with Black Consciousness also merged into one large federation known as National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU). NACTU and COSATU did, however, work together in a number of campaigns.

### The power of the trade unions

As the power of the trade unions grew the apartheid government acted with greater violence towards them. Trade union offices were constantly raided and leaders detained. In 1986, COSATU House was bombed and destroyed.

In September 1987, the government - in collaboration with industry owners - introduced the new Labour Bill limiting trade union powers and making unfair dismissals and retrenchments legal. Workers agreed to three days of peaceful protest and to form a “broad alliance of forces” committed to the end of apartheid. Almost 3 million workers stayed away from work, costing industry owners R500-million. This was a crippling blow to the power of both industry owners and the government. The trade unions had become a formidable force in the fight against apartheid. From this point on the government tried to restrict the activities of COSATU to economic issues on the factory floor.

*“This is the most significant achievement of the labour movement – through the strategic use of collective power it has created a set of procedures and democratic practices that provide South Africa with a model for a negotiated transition to a new democratic order.”*  
- Webster, E. 1991. “Taking labour seriously: Sociology and labour in South Africa”.



All posters on this page courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)

### The demands of female workers

In April 1988, COSATU organised a Women's Congress to focus on the female experience of the struggle. The women made the following demands:

- ✓ that COSATU educate its membership so that men and women can have equal relationships at home, at work and in politics;
- ✓ that COSATU educate its members about rape and train women in self-defence so that they can defend themselves against attacks by men;
- ✓ that COSATU fight with other organisations for the right to a safe, free and legal abortion whenever women want it;
- ✓ that women discuss how they face sexual harassment from men in the union, at work and in the community;
- ✓ at least nine months paid maternity leave;
- ✓ paid time off to attend the clinic;
- ✓ free, safe contraception and proper sex education for all;
- ✓ safe working conditions;
- ✓ that domestic workers and farm workers should also get UIF [Unemployment Insurance Fund];
- ✓ that the government and bosses provide free child care.

## Workers' Day

May 1 is International Workers' Day; it commemorates the struggle of working people throughout the world. Known also as May Day; it was celebrated unofficially in South Africa since the 1980s, but after the democratic elections of 1994 it became an official public holiday.

The celebration of May 1 grew out of the struggle for an eight-hour working day in the United States. In 1884, the Federation of Organised Trades Labour Unions passed a resolution stating that eight hours would constitute a legal day's work from and after 1 May 1886. Up until then workers had been forced to work up to 14 hours a day. Support for the May Day movement grew and by April 1886, 250 000 workers were involved in the campaign. On 3 May 1886, police fired at striking workers with machine guns, killing four and wounding many others.

In 1889, over 400 delegates met in Paris on the 100th anniversary of the French revolution at the Marxist International Socialist Congress. The congress called for an international demonstration

Courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)



to campaign for the eight-hour day. On 1 May 1890, May Day demonstrations took place in the United States and most countries in Europe. Demonstrations were also held in Chile and Peru. In Havana, Cuba, workers marched, demanding an eight-hour working day as well as equal rights for all and working-class unity. Throughout the world workers in more and more countries marked the celebration of labour on May Day. Today May Day is celebrated as a public holiday in most countries, with the exception of the United States.

## THE BATTLE OF CUITO CUANAVALÉ



© Linda Marindale

*“Cuito Cuanavale stimulated in South Africa a later ‘battle for history’ as conflicting assessments of this war emerged among writers and historians. Some, like the English journalist Fred Bridgland, believe that the events in Angola in 1987-88 were important enough to be described as ‘the war for Africa’ (...) Others such as the historians of political and diplomatic history of the 1980s ignored it. Depending on where you stood, Cuito Cuanavale was described as a defeat or a victory for the South African Defence Force, or a stalemate.”*

Greg Mills and David Williams in **7 Battles that shaped South Africa** (2006)

**A**ngola suffered from years of colonialism and slavery. When the Portuguese colonialists left in 1975 they left Angola without a recognised political leader. Three rival political movements tried to fill the gap – the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola - MPLA) in the capital, Luanda; the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (National Front for the Liberation of Angola - FNLA) in the north-east; and *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola - UNITA) in the central highlands. The MPLA government army fought ongoing battles against UNITA and the FNLA.

Mosaic mural depicting the Angolan civil war, Luanda, Angola.

1575 – Angola becomes a “Portuguese possession” when Portuguese traders establish a trading post at Luanda. Slaves became a major export. More than two million slaves are taken from Angola - mainly to Brazil.

1956 – The MPLA is founded in Luanda.

1960 – After a series of violent crackdowns by the Portuguese secret police, the MPLA becomes a movement in exile.

1961 – A violent uprising in northern Angola leads to the deaths of several hundred white farmers and migrant labourers. The uprising is organised by Holden Roberto, leader of the FNLA.

1965 – Cuba sends first military advisers to assist Augustino Neto of the MPLA.

1966 – Jonas Savimbi establishes UNITA with limited support from China, Zaire and the American CIA.

1974 – During the “Carnation Revolution” in Portugal, the fascist dictatorship of Dr António Salazar is overthrown.



## CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

Many different countries and political movements saw the situation in Angola as an opportunity to further their own ends. Cuba supported the MPLA with its troops. The South African apartheid government supported UNITA and FNLA with its troops. The United States (USA), Zaire (now DRC), China, Israel, South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the African National Congress (ANC) also got involved. A newly liberated country, while still trying to stand on its feet, was caught in the crossfire. A civil war raged in the country from 1975 to 2002.

The conflict reached its climax around Cuito Cuanavale, in south-eastern Angola, where the Cuito and the Cuanavale rivers meet. For five long months, between October 1987 and March 1988, a series of battles raged. These battles were fought with tanks, jet fighters, long-range artillery (large cannons), missiles, rockets and other advanced technology. These were the largest battles on African soil since World War II.

By March 1988 peace negotiations started to slow down the fighting. Then in December 1988, the governments of Angola, Cuba and South Africa signed two peace agreements. This led to the withdrawal of Cuban and South African troops from Angola. The peace agreements also set the stage for democratic elections to take place in Angola's neighbour, South West Africa (Namibia).

The 27 years of civil war in Angola greatly delayed the development of its economic potential. Angola has rich oil deposits on its west coast. Since the 1960s, American oil companies have explored and extracted this oil. Both the USA and China are major buyers of Angolan oil today. Angola also has rich deposits of diamonds and other minerals and could become one of the richest countries in Africa.



Both photographs © Lori Wasechuk/South Photographs

### Resource curse?

Since decolonisation, many conflicts in Asia, Latin America and Africa have been caused by competition for the rich natural resources in conflict zones. In the case of Angola, the rich oil deposits in Cabinda province, mostly extracted by American companies, has funded the MPLA government's armed forces. Rich diamond deposits in the south helped keep UNITA armed and equipped through the 27-year civil war.

The Angolan civil war displaced four million people, a third of Angola's population. By 2002, militant forces had laid approximately 15 million landmines. Human Rights Watch estimates that UNITA and the MPLA employed more than 6 000 and 3 000 child soldiers respectively. More than 500 000 Angolans died in the 27-year long civil war.

1975 – Former Portuguese colonies, Mozambique and Angola, become independent.

1975 – While the FNLA advances on Luanda from Zaire, UNITA troops, supported by the SADF, advance towards Luanda from the south. The MPLA forces, assisted by Cuban troops and arms, force them to retreat.

1979 – Augustino Neto dies. José Eduardo Dos Santos becomes the leader of the MPLA.

1983 – The SADF launches an air raid on the Angolan city of Lubango.

1987, October – FAPLA's advancing 47th Brigade is almost destroyed by SADF forces coming to UNITA's rescue, 40 km from Cuito Cuanavale.

1987, December – Elite troops begin arriving from Cuba.

1988, 23 March – The SADF's last major attack on Cuito Cuanavale is decisively brought to a halt.

1988, 27 June – A squadron of MiGs bomb the Ruacana and Calueque dam installations, killing 11 SA conscripts.

1988, December – The governments of Angola, Cuba and South Africa sign two peace agreements in New York.

1990 – Namibia becomes independent.

1990 – The MPLA ends one-party government and rejects communism.

1992 – Angola holds its first multi-party democratic election. UNITA contests the results and resumes civil war.

1995 – The United Nations sends a peacekeeping force to help keep the peace between UNITA and the MPLA but the arrangement breaks down.

2002, 22 February – MPLA troops kill Jonas Savimbi.

2002 – UNITA demobilises its armed forces and declares itself a political party, ending 27 years of civil war.



Reasons why the different parties:

- ☛ got involved;
- ☛ contributed funding, troops and equipment to the battle; and
- ☛ started the peace process that ended it.

The Luanda-based MPLA government, led by Augustino Neto, and the Angolan army (FAPLA), with the support of the USSR and Cuba, wanted to assert its claim as the legitimate government of Angola.



UNITA, established in the 1960s by Jonas Savimbi, maintained a civil war with the MPLA government until Savimbi's death in 2002.



The FNLA, led by Holden Roberto, a liberation movement based in the northeast of Angola, was supported by Zaire (now DRC), the USA and China.



South Africa, led by President PW Botha, used their presence in South West Africa to resist the Marxist influences from Angola, which were supported by Cuba and the USSR.



Cuba supported the MPLA against Portuguese colonialism, and later helped to defend the MPLA against attacks from UNITA, the FNLA and the SADF.



The USSR supported Angola and Mozambique because the liberation movements in these countries supported Marxism.



The USA, led by Ronald Reagan, supported UNITA because Jonas Savimbi had declared himself anti-communist, and the USA needed someone in Angola that would help to protect its oil drilling interests.



## THE BIG PICTURE - WORLD POLITICS

In order to understand the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale (1987-88), it is necessary to have a clear understanding of what was happening in world politics at the time.

Three important world events had a direct impact on what happened in Angola:

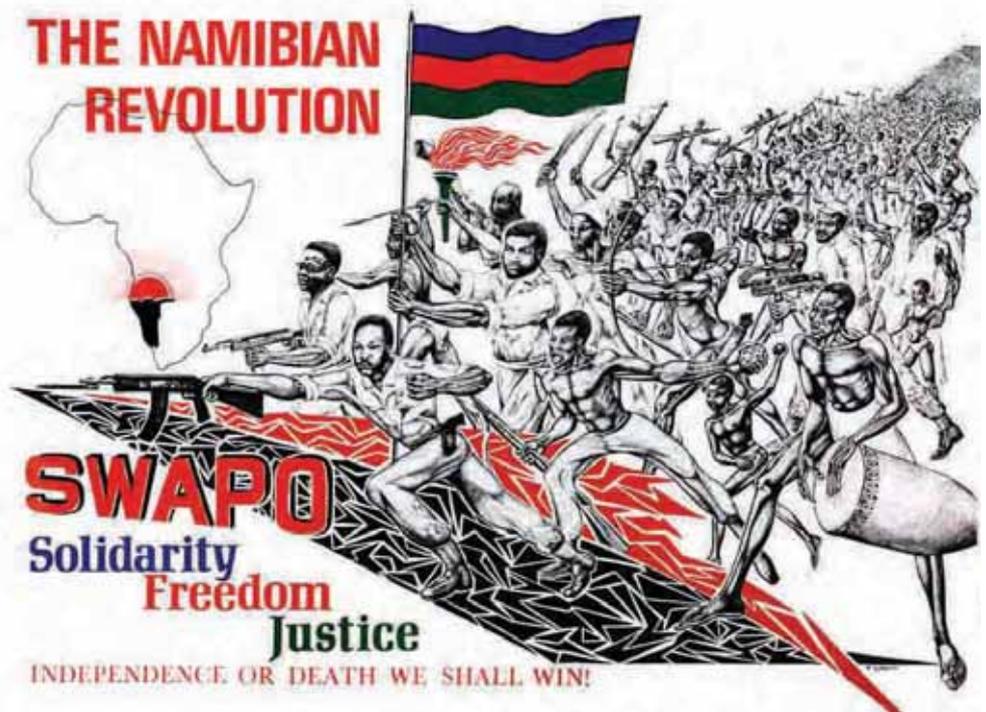
- the end of 500 years of Portuguese colonialism in Africa;
- attempts by apartheid South Africa to maintain political and military control over its own territory and South West Africa; and
- the end of the 'Cold War' between the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR), the United States of America (USA).

### (i) The end of Portuguese colonialism

Portugal granted independence to Angola in 1975. In the confusion that followed independence, three different political movements (MPLA, UNITA, FNLA), backed by different nations, competed for control. By 1988, the Cubans had shipped 55 000 troops and sophisticated war equipment to Angola in support of the MPLA government army, known as FAPLA. At the same time, South Africa sent between 3 000 and 5 000 troops and weapons to support UNITA and the FNLA.

### (ii) South Africa's claims over South West Africa

After World War I, the League of Nations granted South Africa a mandate to rule South West Africa as a protectorate from 1919. Since the 1960s, the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) had struggled for independence from South Africa. Early in this struggle, SWAPO set up military bases in southern Angola, from where it launched missions into South West Africa.



This SWAPO poster is a good example of left-wing, liberation movement propaganda. Note the visual symbology: the rising sun over the map of Namibia, the surging crowd of people and the black-and-red arrow-head. The slogan on this poster is a variation of the battle cry of the French Revolution: "Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood!"



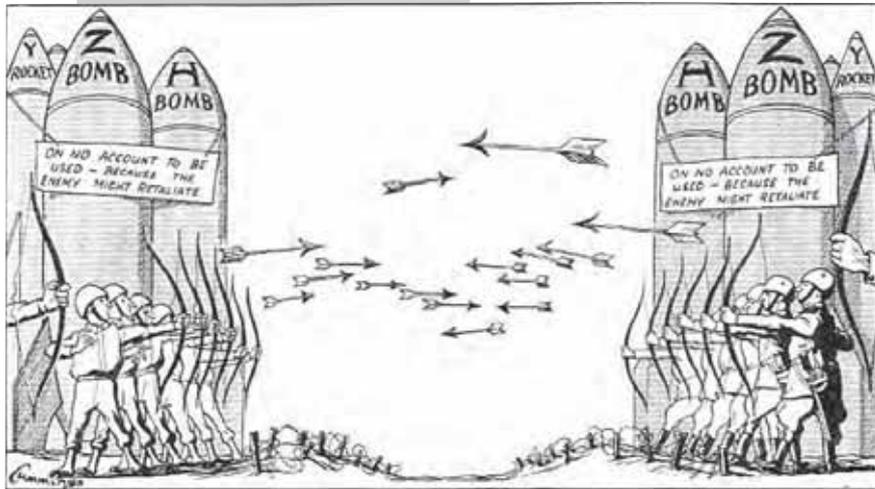
#### The Mexican stand-off

During the Cold War there was constant tension between East and West, yet the threat of nuclear war prevented the conflict from ever becoming a full-scale war. This stalemate compares to a so-called "Mexican stand-off", often portrayed in western films: a whole room full of people are trapped in a situation where everybody has their guns out, but nobody dares shoot because then everybody will die.

## THE COLD WAR

The origins of the Cold War can be traced back to 1945, near the end of World War II. At this time, the communist USSR became a major ideological challenge to the USA and other capitalist countries. The communists and capitalists began fighting over political processes and the resources of the world.

Courtesy Daily Express, UK



Political cartoon by Michael Cummings that appeared in the British Daily Express, 24 August 1953.

During World War II, the USA, England and the USSR formed an alliance to defeat Nazi Germany. But in the last months of the war, while Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin were working to thrash out a lasting peace between the communist East Bloc (countries aligned to the USSR) and the capitalist West (mainly the USA and western Europe), the USA ushered in a new era in human history, under the leadership of Harry Truman, when it destroyed the

Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atom bombs.

Within three or four years of the first atomic weapons being developed, the Soviet Union also produced nuclear weapons. After Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the horrors of nuclear war had become known worldwide. By the early 1960s nuclear missiles from the East and the West pointed at each other in a Mexican stand-off.

### Tension between Cuba and USA

After the Cuban revolution in 1959, the USA was threatened by Fidel Castro's openly communist government so close to it so the USA supported opponents of Castro's government. In 1961, the American CIA supported a group of Cuban exiles in an attempted invasion of Cuba. The invasion force was stopped by the Cuban army in an embarrassing battle at the Bay of Pigs.

In 1962, the USSR installed nuclear missiles on Cuban soil that could be used against the USA. This led to a diplomatic crisis (a crisis in international relations) that is known today as the Cuban Missile Crisis. The USA and the USSR came very close to declaring nuclear war on each other, but eventually the USSR agreed to withdraw its missiles from Cuba. A nuclear war was narrowly avoided. However, hostile relations between Cuba and the USA have persisted to this day.

From the mid-1960s, Cuba supported many Third World revolutionary movements that were committed to achieving independence from western colonialism. Cuba's involvement in revolutionary struggles in Latin America was met with fierce resistance from the USA. During the decolonisation of Africa, Cuba assisted African countries like Algeria, Guinea Bissau, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola.

#### Wars of ideology

Like World War II, which was a war between the ideologies of the fascists and the Allies, the Cold War was a struggle between the ideologies of communism and capitalism.

#### Capitalism

Capitalism has been the dominant economic system in western Europe and North America since the 18th century. In a capitalist system, property is owned by individuals and companies. Property (resources and money, or capital) is priced, traded and invested on the market. Government has only limited power to interfere with the workings of the market economy.

#### Communism

After the revolutions in Russia and China, communism represented an economic and political alternative to capitalism. Because the Chinese and Soviet systems and theories are different, a distinction is made between Maoism and Marxism-Leninism. Marxist ideology was based on the ideas of the philosopher, Karl Marx, who predicted that a series of revolutions would transform the world, defeating the dominance of global capitalism. Marxism demand that the state should own all resources, and control the economy for the benefit of all the people.

## The Angolan Civil War

After the withdrawal of the Portuguese from Angola in 1975, a battle for power began. In Luanda, Augustino Neto's MPLA claimed to be the rightful government of Angola. This claim was contested by Roberto Holden's FNLA and Jonas Savimbi's UNITA. The MPLA (supported by Cuba) fought a long civil war with FNLA and UNITA (backed by the SADF).

In 1979, Augustino Neto died and José Eduardo Dos Santos became the leader of the MPLA. On 22 June 1979, Savimbi and Dos Santos agreed to a ceasefire, but by August the agreement had broken down and fighting had resumed.

In 1988, after the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, a peace agreement was signed between Angola, Cuba and South Africa. South Africa could no longer support Savimbi. The MPLA ended its one-party system of government in June 1990 and rejected communism at the MPLA's third congress in December.

In 1992, Angola held its first multi-party democratic election. UNITA contested the fairness of the election and resumed civil war. Although the USA and South Africa had stopped aiding UNITA, supplies from Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire continued to fuel the civil war. Throughout the 1990s, UNITA and the MPLA continued to clash in western Angola, inflicting heavy casualties on the civilian population.

In 1995, the United Nations sent a peacekeeping force to help enforce a peace agreement between UNITA and the MPLA. Savimbi agreed to serve as vice president under President Dos Santos. This arrangement broke down, and Savimbi resumed the civil war.

On 22 February 2002, MPLA troops killed Savimbi. Then in August 2002, UNITA demobilised its armed forces and declared itself a political party.

*"To fend off the Unita threat, the MPLA government relied on 50 000 Cuban troops and spent heavily on Soviet arms, drawing heavily on revenues from the offshore oil fields being developed by American companies (...) One of the paradoxes of the Angolan conflict was that Cuban forces were given the task of defending American-owned oil installations from attacks by American-backed rebels."*

Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa* (2006)

29 February 1988, near Cuito Cuanavale: an Angolan soldier holds a Soviet-made AK-47 Kalashnikov. He is guarding a battery of Soviet-made ground-to-air missiles.

In 2007, the Kalashnikov rifle celebrated its 60th anniversary. According to a report released in 2006 by the Control Arms campaign, the AK-47 will remain the most widely used weapon in conflict zones for at least the next 20 years. This is because the manufacture and sales of this weapon are so poorly regulated.

### Fidel Castro's views on Angola

"Washington launched a covert plan to rob the Angolan people of its legitimate rights and install a puppet government. Its main lever was its alliance with South Africa, involving joint training and equipping of the organisations set up by Portuguese colonialism to thwart Angolan independence and turn the country into a condominium of the corrupt Mobutu and fascist South Africa, whose troops it did not hesitate to use to invade Angola.

"In mid-1975, the Zaire army and mercenary forces reinforced with South African heavy weapons and military advisers launched fresh attacks in northern Angola, reaching the outskirts of Luanda. However, the major threat was in the south: South African armoured columns in the south were advancing rapidly deep into the territory, with the aim of occupying Luanda with a combined force of racist South African and Mobutu's mercenary troops, before the proclamation of independence on 11 November. (...) By the end of November, enemy aggression had been halted in the north and in the south. Complete heavy armoured units, substantial land and anti-aircraft artillery, armoured infantry units up to brigade strength, transported by our merchant fleet, accumulated rapidly in Angola, where 36 000 Cuban troops launched a furious offensive. Attacking the main enemy in the south, they drove South Africa's racist army 1 000 kilometres back to where it came from, Angola's border with Namibia, the racist colonial enclave. The last South African soldier left Angolan territory on 27 March. In the north, Mobutu's regular troops and the mercenaries were driven back across the border with Zaire."

Speech by Fidel Castro at the ceremony commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Cuban Military Mission in Angola, 2 December, 2005.

[http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Announcements/Fidel\\_on\\_30th\\_Anniversary.html](http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Announcements/Fidel_on_30th_Anniversary.html)



## The role of the USA

After the humiliating and politically damaging withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam in April 1975, the USA, under the leadership of the Secretary of State Henry Kissinger developed a policy of 'war by proxy'. War by proxy meant that the USA would support Third World forces that were in conflict with the USSR. In this way, the USA avoided direct confrontation with the USSR.

Chester Crocker and Pik Botha fumble with the pieces of "Uncle Sam's" (the USA's) "constructive engagement" puzzle.



An example of war by proxy is the USA's involvement in the war in Angola. The USA supported Jonas Savimbi's UNITA. This was because UNITA was in opposition to Augustino Neto's communist MPLA government, which was supported by the USSR and Cuba. The USA's support of UNITA was via South Africa and Zaire. Direct support was not possible because of the Clark Amendment. Historian Martin Meredith explains:

*"On 16 July (1975, President of the USA) Ford authorised Kissinger to mount a major covert operation supplying arms to both the FNLA and UNITA. The first planeload of arms left on 29 July for Zaire, which was used as a rear base for the Angola operation."*

*"Angola featured as part of President Reagan's strategy of 'bleeding' Soviet resources by fuelling insurgencies in countries he regarded as Soviet 'client states'. During his first term in office, Reagan, thwarted by the 1976 'Clark Amendment' banning direct US assistance to UNITA, used third parties to arm Savimbi. During his second term he succeeded in overturning the Clark Amendment, enabling him to provide direct covert military aid to UNITA. Year by year the amount increased."*  
Martin Meredith in **The State of Africa** (2006)

## The role of South Africa

Long before the National Party came to power in 1948 Afrikaner leaders' fears of the "rooi gevaar" already had had grim consequences. In 1922, during the white miner's strike on the Rand, inspired by communist worker ideals, General Jan Smuts expressed his fear of communism:

*"Smuts feared a 'red revolution' and the establishment of a Soviet Republic. He declared martial law and rushed in government forces, supplemented by air support, bombs and artillery ... The strikers were forced to surrender after heavy artillery shells fell on their strongholds; 214 people were killed in five days of fighting."*

- Hermann Giliomee, **The Afrikaners: Biography of a People** (2003)

### Total onslaught

In 1977, the Department of Defence published a White Paper spelling out the belief of PW Botha and the military, that South Africa faced a "total onslaught" on virtually every area of society. Threats could only be countered by a "total strategy" against subversive elements ... The upsurge of guerrilla activity in the southern African region and the introduction of Cuban troops and Soviet advisers in 1975 certainly added up to a formidable threat to the South African state. But Botha and some of his security advisers tended to present the threat in an even more dramatic fashion. Botha was fond of projecting the struggle in the South African region as a vital part of the global conflict between the East and the West, and between free enterprise and communism.

- Hermann Giliomee, **The Afrikaners** (2003)

The fear of communism continued during apartheid, when the phrase, "Die Rooi Gevaar" ("The Red Danger") referred to the threat of communism. The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 allowed the government to use the communist threat to justify extreme use of violence to advance its racist regime. The persistent use of the phrase "Die Rooi Gevaar" made it seem as if the government saw a communist under every bed.

The presence of Cuban and USSR military staff and equipment in Angola was certainly a cause for concern for the South African government under the leadership of John Vorster and later PW Botha.

In South West Africa, the struggle for independence from South Africa was waged with increased intensity by SWAPO. SWAPO freedom fighters often operated from bases in southern Angola, slipping over the border to attack targets in South West Africa.

After the student uprisings of 1976 international and internal pressure mounted on the government to abandon apartheid and withdraw from South West Africa. However, the government's fears of a "total onslaught" by black freedom fighters supported by communist forces led to a steady increase of military involvement in South West Africa. So from 1975, South Africa supported Jonas Savimbi's UNITA movement which was also supported and supplied by the USA. South Africa often helped to get American supplies and information to UNITA.

In 1988, at Cuito Cuanavale, opposing forces reached a stalemate. The SADF/UNITA forces were unable to advance, but unwilling to retreat. They had destroyed the bridge over the Lomba River and the air strip at Cuito; but the FAPLA/Cuban troops were dug in beyond the river and among the ruins of the town. Neither side could advance the battle without heavier casualties than they could afford. They couldn't retreat and they couldn't advance.

*"The Cubans could have marched into Namibia but exercised restraint, with all parties, including the US and USSR, looking for compromise and a way forward in negotiations that had previously been going nowhere. Fidel was not looking for a bloody encounter which would have cost many lives on both sides.*

*"Neither were apartheid's generals and political leaders. They could afford casualties even less than the Cubans, considering the popular mass struggle, growing armed actions within South Africa itself and the problem with white conscription."*

Ronnie Kasrils, *"Turning point at Cuito Cuanavale"*, **Sunday Independent**, 23 March 2008

This stalemate was a microcosm of the story of the Cold War, and was only resolved because of political changes in the USSR.



Magnus Malan manipulates a rebellious puppet Jonas Savimbi.

All cartoons on this page courtesy Derek Bauer Trust

Magnus Malan challenges a Cuban soldier to cross the border.



## THE BATTLE OF CUITO CUANAVALLE

The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale was a turning point in South Africa's cross-border war. It gave rise to a peace negotiation which led to the withdrawal of South African troops from Angola. Understanding this battle remains controversial as there are different views concerning the winners and losers.

### The Battle

In July 1987, the Angolan government's FAPLA forces advanced on UNITA's stronghold at Jamba and drove UNITA forces into the southeastern corner of Angola. The SADF quickly came to UNITA's rescue.

Ronnie Kasrils summarises the progress of the battle:

*"Then in October (1987), FAPLA's advancing 47th Brigade, at the Lomba River, 40km southeast of Cuito, was all but destroyed in an attack by SADF forces hastening to UNITA's rescue. Catastrophe followed as several other FAPLA brigades wilted under heavy bombardment but managed to retreat to Cuito."*

*"(The SADF) relentlessly pounded Cuito with the massive 155mm G-5 guns and staged attack after attack led by the crack 61st mechanised battalion, 32 Buffalo battalion and later 4th SA Infantry group. The defenders doggedly held out, reinforced by 1 500 elite troops that arrived from Cuba in December."*

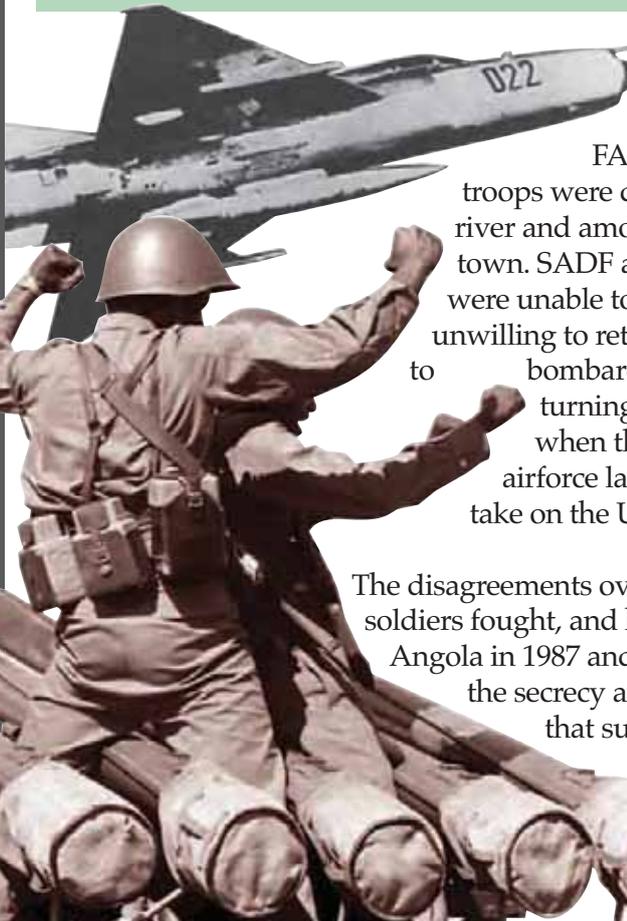
*"By 23 March 1988, the last major attack on Cuito was 'brought to a grinding and definite halt,' in the words of 32 Battalion commander Colonel Jan Breytenbach."*

- Ronnie Kasrils, **Sunday Independent**, 23 March 2008

The bridge and airport had been destroyed. FAPLA and Cuban troops were dug in beyond the river and among the ruins of the town. SADF and UNITA forces were unable to advance and unwilling to retreat. Both continued to bombard each other. The turning point occurred when the South African airforce lacked the capacity to take on the USSR's MiG-23.

The disagreements over how many soldiers fought, and how many died in Angola in 1987 and 1988, are typical of the secrecy and misinformation that surrounded the conflict.

All photographs courtesy SANDF archives.



*"The SADF deployed upwards of 5 000 men at Cuito, according to its commander-in chief General Jan Geldenhuys, plus several thousand UNITA troops. They were repulsed by the Cubans and 6 000 FAPLA defenders."*

Kasrils in **Sunday Independent**, 23 March 2008

*"The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale ... was fought by approximately 3 000 South African troops against an estimated combined Angolan-Cuban force of 25 000. South African combat losses ... totaled 44, while the Angolan-Cuban fatalities were a staggering 4 768 (these are official figures released by the SADF)."*

- Clive Holt in **At Thy Call We Did Not Falter** (2005)

With "Love from Abba"

"The story goes that on the night he was captured they were in TB (temporary base). They'd been up there too long and they were getting slack – instead of standing guard they all fell asleep, and these terrorists stumbled on them. I think five or six of them were killed, and of course they took Van der Mescht. We went in to try and get him back, but when we got to their base it was deserted. The fires were still burning and there was a breakfast meal there. They had fled with him, but we couldn't go too far in – we weren't prepared to go that distance. We found supplies, food and that sort of thing. Most of their food supplies came from Sweden. I remember that there was a pack of condensed milk and it had 'To Swapo with love from Abba' on it." Anonymous soldier in Susan Batley's **A Secret Burden – Memories Of The Border War By South African Soldiers Who Fought In It** (2007)



According to post-graduate history student at Wits University, Derrick O'Leary,

*"... whether the SADF fielded 3 000 or 5 000 soldiers in the Cuito area is only part of the story. SADF troops formed only part of the order of battle. Thousands more UNITA and SWATF (South West African Territorial Force) troops took part, providing the majority of infantry troops and suffered the majority of casualties on the South African side of the line. This allowed General Geldenhuys to make his claim about losing only 31 men."*

*"The SADF knew that so long as sanctions persisted a major war would destroy them as a major military force. Even a victory would leave it defenseless come the next war, or significantly less able to deal with an uprising inside South Africa."*

*"Once Angola and Cuba showed their willingness to risk a major war, the game was up. Cuito was a turning-point, not because the SADF was crushed, but because the SADF's bluff had finally been called."*

### Who won – a battle for history

The controversy over the outcome of the battle has raged for many years in letters, columns of newspapers, academic journals and the internet. Now parliament in South Africa has been involved in the debate:

The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale was re-enacted in parliament yesterday as the ruling party and the opposition could not agree on which side was the actual victor in the battle 20 years ago. While the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale pitted Southern African liberation army forces assisted by the Cubans against apartheid's South African Defence Force, yesterday's battle featured opposition party MPs and ANC MPs.

ANC speakers claimed that the military encounter held in Cuito Cuanavale, Angola, in 1988 was won by Cuban and Angolan FAPLA forces. Introducing the debate, Sport and Recreation Minister Makhenkesi Stofile was adamant the SA Defence Force and Angolan opposition UNITA fighters were convincingly trounced.

Opposition parties heckled his claims and laughed them off before launching counter-attacks at him. But Stofile was supported by fellow ANC member Joseph Maake who maintained that "apartheid forces were thoroughly thrashed". Not to be outdone, miffed opposition party MPs also claimed that the South African apartheid forces won the battle.

(...) The IFP's maverick general and chief whip Koos van der Merwe (...) prominently led the charge from the opposition benches, in support of the apartheid forces. "I am a bit surprised. I thought we were going to talk about the lessons we have learned from Cuito in respect of international progress, peace and prosperity," he thundered.

But instead of that, we had to listen to the fables of Stofile. No longer do we listen to Esop [Pahad] fables, but to Stofile fables, because everything he said about the South African Defence Force being defeated by FAPLA is a fable and a fable is untrue.

"Van der Merwe said there was no victory for the Cuban and Fapla forces. He claimed that 4785 Cuban and Fapla soldiers were killed against 31 South Africans, 94 FAPLA tanks were destroyed against only three from South Africa. "There can be no doubt that the South African forces won the battle," Van der Merwe said.

- Ndivhuho Mafela (<http://blogs.thetimes.co.za/politicallycorrect/author/mafela/>)

## NEGOTIATING A PEACE ACCORD

While the fighting raged on for months, peace negotiations between Angola, South Africa, Cuba and the USSR were underway. Negotiations had become the only way out for the over extended SADF. Dr Chester Crocker, the American assistant secretary of state for Africa, facilitated the peace process.

The negotiating teams each had a diplomatic and a military component. The South African military was represented by General Jannie Geldenhuys and General Kat Liebenberg, while the foreign service team was led by Neil van Heerden. The Cuban negotiating team was led by Jorge Risquet and the Cuban army by General Rosales del Toro. The Angolan Army was represented by General Antonio Dos Santos Franca. Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoly Adamishin led the delegation from the USSR.



© Barry Iverson/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

Angola's Foreign Minister Alfonso Van-Dunem (rear, right) talking with South Africa's Roelof "Pik" Botha (2nd left) and Magnus Malan (1st left) during peace talks.

In December 1988, a peace agreement was signed between the governments of Angola, South Africa and Cuba at the United Nations building in New York. The governments of Cuba and South Africa both agreed to withdraw their troops from Angola. South Africa also agreed to prepare for independence in South West Africa, now known as Namibia. There are, however, very different views as to who won and who lost the battle.

### SADF's point of view

Many writers and former members of the SADF still maintain that the SADF was not defeated at Cuito Cuanavale.

*"The importance of the small town of Cuito Cuanavale lay in its airstrip, its location as a supply base, and its control of the major bridge over the Lomba River. Without air support based at Cuito, FAPLA would find it very difficult to advance further against UNITA and get closer to Savimbi's stronghold at Jamba."*

- Greg Mills and David Williams, **7 Battles that Shaped South Africa** (2007)

Since FAPLA's advance on Jamba had been halted, the SADF could therefore claim to have achieved its military objectives.

## Cuban army's point of view

Cuban historians today argue that in 1988 the Cuban and FAPLA forces definitively defeated the UNITA and SADF forces at Cuito Cuanavale and in southwestern Angola.

The relationship between the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale and the attack in southwestern Angola is outlined by Ronnie Kasrils (2008):

*"The end for the SADF was signaled on 27 June 1988. A squadron of MiGs bombed the Ruacana and Calueque installations, cutting the water supply to Ovamboland and its military bases and killing 11 young South African conscripts."*

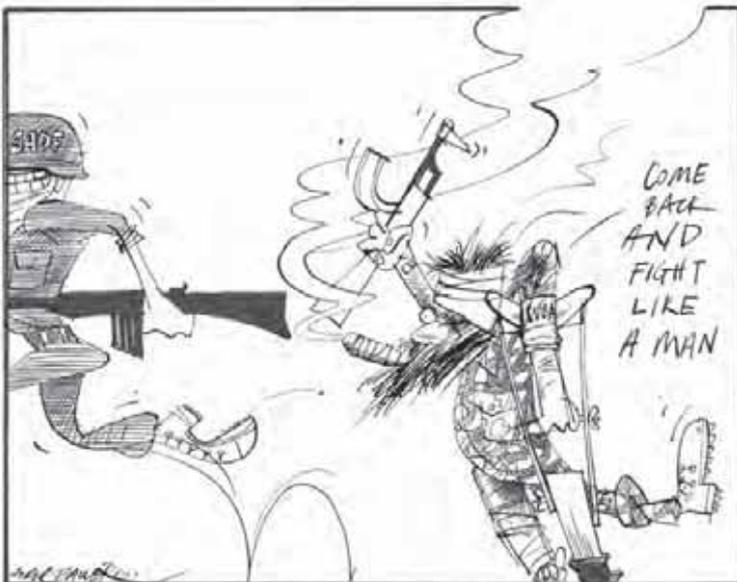
Fidel Castro used an analogy from boxing to explain the Cuban strategy:

*"Cuito Cuanavale in the east represented the boxer's defensive left fist that blocks the blow, while in the west, the powerful right fist had struck, placing the SADF in a perilous position."*

Kasrils points out that the outcome of the peace negotiations point to a victory for the MPLA:

*"It is history that the last SADF soldier left Angola at the end of August 1988 and that Namibia became independent in March 1990, even before the Cuban troop exodus from Angola."*

© AP Photo/Marty Lederhandler



Courtesy Derek Bauer Trust

## Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

In her book *A Secret Burden*, Karen Batley describes the effects of prolonged exposure to extreme violence, resulting in Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. This is a psychological disorder that includes powerful nightmares, insomnia, irritability, violent behaviour, feelings of isolation, rage, anxiety attacks and flashbacks.

"The Russian MiGs, apparently one of the greatest contributing factors to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among South Africans who fought in Angola, bombarded them relentlessly ... Aloneness is endemic to every account of trauma experience. It emphasises for us the soldier's rejection and alienation. A haunting poetic account of such aloneness in society is given by a veteran who, long after the war was over, would throw himself into the gutter if he was outside during a thunderstorm:

When the rolling thunder creeps closer  
salvo for salvo  
and the exploding shells of lightning  
burn up the darkening sky,  
the shadow of some nameless fear  
grabs hold of me  
and takes me back  
a thousand miles  
and many months ...

They're ranging in, those long range  
guns,  
bracketing me with invisible shrapnel  
hitting home every time –  
the crash of thunder and lightning  
shakes me up  
and I lie on my bed crying,  
wondering why no one else  
can hear the guns."

- Karen Batley, *A Secret Burden –  
Memories Of The Border War By  
South African Soldiers Who Fought In  
It* (2007)

### Freedom Park

It is fitting that at Freedom Park, outside Pretoria, the 2 070 names of Cuban soldiers who fell in Angola between 1975 and 1988 are inscribed along with the names of South Africans who died during our liberation struggle.

Ronnie Kasrils, "Turning point at Cuito Cuanavale", Sunday Independent, 23 March 2008



A section of the 687m long Wall of Names at Freedom Park that is inscribed with the names of those who died in the eight conflicts that shaped South Africa.

© Freedom Park



Angolan government/MPLA commemoration, Cuito Cuanavale, March 2008.

© Ceiric Nunn

Beauty contest for landmine victims  
Three major Cold War conflicts - in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Angola - left behind lots of buried landmines that continue today to injure and kill civilians. Landmines have maimed more than 80 000 people in Angola since the civil war. The humanitarian issue of landmines has been supported by celebrities like Princess Diana. More recently, a controversial spotlight on this tragedy is the Miss Landmine competition, launched in Angola in 2008. Organised by Morten Traavik, this is a beauty pageant in which all the entrants are landmine victims. "The winner, Maria Restino Manuel (26) ... hobbled up the platform on crutches to collect her prize - a golden, state-of-the-art prosthetic limb to replace the leg blown off 10 years ago." The 2009 Miss Landmine will be held in Cambodia.

## MEMORIALISATION

The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale is remembered today in Angola, Cuba and South Africa.

The ANC in exile had strong political ties with Cuba. Today, the Cuban soldiers who fell in Angola are remembered along with South African freedom fighters. In Cuba, the war in Angola, and especially the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, is memorialised as a glorious chapter in Cuba's revolutionary struggle against Western imperialism.

Nelson Mandela, after his release from prison, visited Cuba and expressed the gratitude of the ANC towards the Cuban people. He acknowledged the sacrifices Cuban people had made in fighting the apartheid government in Angola. In 2007, a government delegation representing the new South Africa paid respect to those who fell in the battle against the SADF.

In 1995, an international art exhibition, curated by Angolan artist Fernando Alvim, was mounted to commemorate the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. Artists from Angola, Cuba and South Africa participated in this project, which was entitled *Memorias Marcas Intimas*, Portuguese for "Memory, Marks and Intimacy". The exhibition was presented in South Africa and Portugal, helping to make the public aware of this little known chapter of Southern African history.

In South Africa, former soldiers of the SADF and writers have continued to publish books, newspaper articles and websites to tell their part of the story. This form of commemorating the war in Angola serves to give space to the concerns of people who were drawn into a war by circumstances beyond their control, and who fought and died in a foreign country. This kind of commemoration includes documentary films, poetry anthologies, personal narratives and the writing of history.



Casualties of war, Cuito, September 2002.

© Lori Wasselchuk/South Photographs

## FORWARD TO PEOPLE'S POWER



© Paul Weinberg/South

*"The formation of the UDF decisively turned the tide against the advances being made by the [National Party] regime ... The formation of the UDF captured the imagination of the masses, and structures of the UDF literally mushroomed all over the country... The UDF struck great success in rendering the structures of apartheid unworkable."*  
- Walter Sisulu. Tribute to the UDF National General Council, 1991

In the 1980s there was a groundswell of protests all over South Africa – consumer boycotts, strikes and school boycotts. The United Democratic Front (UDF) gave these diverse protests one face, or front. This united front offered a way for any social, political or cultural organisation to join the liberation struggle. Their shared vision was "To create a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society". This huge united front was a greater challenge to the state than fragmented protests could ever be. The UDF launch was attended by delegates from over 320 community organisations. Within months of the launch over 600 organisations had joined.

The UDF began as an initiative of coloured and Indian anti-apartheid activists who rejected the government's proposal of a tricameral parliament. This so-called 'reform' would allow parliamentary representation for coloureds, Indians and whites in separate, racially defined "houses". The coloured and Indian houses would be small, under-resourced and conservative. Black people would not be considered citizens of South Africa. They would only have rights in the 'independent homelands'. Black people already living in townships would be able to elect local councillors, but these councillors would fall under the control of the white Bantu Administration Board. The government planned referendums for white, coloured and Indian people to vote "yes" or "no" to 'Botha's new deal'. The UDF rejected the referendums with such enthusiasm that the coloured and Indian referendums had to be cancelled.

Frances Baard at the national launch of the UDF on 20 August 1983, Mitchells Plain, Cape Town. A crowd of about 10 000 supporters came from all over the country to witness the event.

1983 – UDF is launched in Cape Town.

1984 – UDF rolls out its anti-tricameral parliament campaign.

1984 – SADF troops occupy townships and the UDF and End Conscription Campaign roll out the "troops out of the townships" campaign.

1985 – In February, UDF offices are raided and over a hundred people are arrested and leaders are charged with treason.

1985 – On 23 April, 19 UDF activists appear in court in Delmas on charges of terrorism, subversion and murder.

1988 – UDF headquarters in Khotso House are bombed.

1988 – UDF restricted under state of emergency.

1989 – The Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) temporarily takes over the work of the UDF.

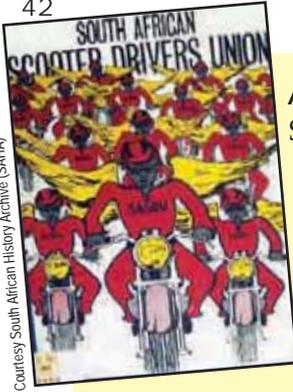
1989 – The MDM launches its defiance campaign.

1990 – ANC, SACP, PAC unbanned and restrictions on the UDF lifted

1991 – The UDF is dissolved.



© The Star



Courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)

All walks of life  
Some organisations that joined the UDF were tiny local groups, such as parent-student committees, sports clubs, and stokvels.

*“Among social movements, the UDF must surely be unique in the heterogeneity of affiliates under its umbrella: from the Johannesburg Scooter Driver’s Association to the Northern Natal Darts Club, from the Grail to the Pietermaritzburg Child Welfare Society and the National Medical and Dental Association.”*

- Ineke van Kessel. **Beyond Our Wildest Dreams** (2000)

Civics were also UDF affiliates. Civics were the structures created by communities to help them deal with issues directly affecting them, such as rent and transport costs.

Other UDF supporters were members of professional organisations, such as those representing doctors, journalists and teachers.

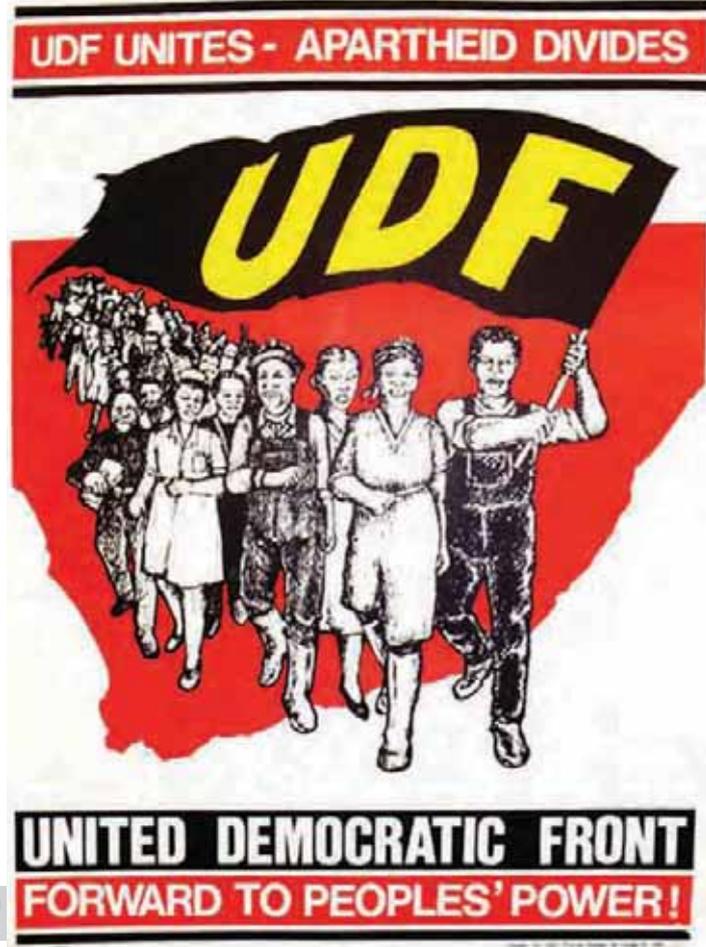
White organisations also joined the UDF. One small, but powerful, group was the End Conscription Campaign (ECC). This organisation was opposed to the apartheid law that forced all white males to serve in the army.

The UDF logo was designed at a workshop held at Crown Mines. The drawing was done by the artist Carl Becker together with activist Fazel Mamdoe.



Reverend Alan Boesak at the launch of the UDF, 20 August 1983.

Courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)



Courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)

**Youth** The 1976 Soweto uprisings sparked protests by black students nationwide. After this, thousands

of youth groups were formed, with guidance and support from seasoned anti-apartheid activists. Most youth groups were linked to schools. Many of these small groups were part of powerful national structures, such as the Congress of South African Students (COSAS).

Others were linked to universities, such as the South African National Students Congress (SANSCO). The white National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) also joined the UDF. Out-of-school youth joined organisations such as the South African Youth Organisation (SAYO), or other local youth clubs.



© Paul Weinberg

## Women

Ordinary women played an extraordinary role in the UDF's resistance to apartheid.

*"... It was the associations of hairdressers and beauticians, or stokvels and women's farmers' groups – not the branch structures of the political*

*organisations – that gave credibility to the notion of a mass base."*

- Shireen Hassim. **Women's Organisations and Democracy in South Africa – Contesting Authority** (2006)  
Women also played a leading part through more formal political structures, such as the

Women's National Coalition (WNC). Despite their important role, women held less than 10% of the leadership positions within the UDF.



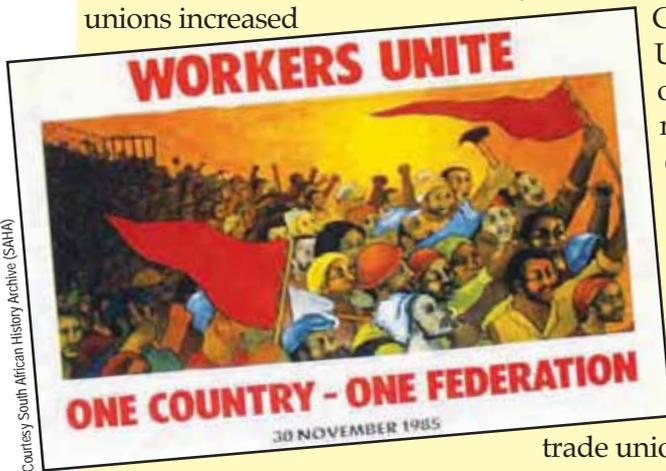
Courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)

## Trade unions

The UDF's link to trade unions increased

its support. Not all unions joined the UDF. Some, like the General Workers Union (GWU), objected to the multi-class nature of the UDF. Some unions were also unhappy that all organisations regardless of their size only had two votes. This meant that a trade union with thousands

of members would have the same voting power as much smaller organisations. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), an umbrella structure of black trade unions, was formed in 1985. It was a major player in the UDF because of its mass support base, representing about 1,5-million members who worked in all kinds of industries.



Courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)



## Political organisations

Many members of banned organisations such as the SACP and the ANC continued the struggle against apartheid under the UDF banner. The UDF was shut down by apartheid forces in 1988. Later many of these activists continued their work under the banner of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM).

Trevor Manuel speaking at a meeting in Wynberg, Cape Town, 1986.

Religious groups  
South Africans of many different faiths shared the view that apartheid was immoral and unacceptable. They added their support to the liberation movement. For example, the UDF head office was located in Khotso House, owned by the South African Council of Churches. The UDF offices were raided frequently, and Khotso House was bombed in 1988.

*"The nationalist and socialist discourse used by both the ANC and the UDF at the macro level was often flavoured by moral or spiritual arguments.*

*"At a conference in 1983 it was proposed that the UDF*



Courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)

*declaration must be adapted into a prayer in order for it to have appeal to the church. The UDF has clearly benefited from its close relationship with churches and religious leaders. Churches and clerics rendered moral legitimacy to anti-apartheid resistance and provided the UDF with publicity, resources, protection and advice."*  
- Ineke van Kessel **Beyond Our Wildest Dreams** (2000)

### The role of funerals

The death of an activist was always an occasion to organise anti-apartheid protests. Banners, posters and T-shirts bearing the image of the fallen hero would be produced for the event. The UDF would often provide transport to swell the numbers. At the funeral of the murdered Cradock Four (UDF activists Matthew Goniwe, Sparrow Mkhonto, Sicelo Mhlawuli and Fort Calata), for example, 60 000 people gathered from all over the country. Security forces would often make their presence felt at these funerals. At the funeral of assassinated activist Ashley Kriel, for example, police and comrades wrestled to win control over the ANC flag that had been draped over his coffin. On that particular occasion, the comrades prevailed.

### Civil disobedience

If you feel that certain laws are unjust you may decide to act in non-violent ways that break those laws. This is known as civil disobedience. An example of civil disobedience was the UDF defiance campaign. The basic principle was to defy apartheid's laws. The first target was the racially segregated health care system. Thousands marched to their local hospitals and staged mass protests, demanding that all South Africans be given access to the same quality of care. With the help of sympathetic medical staff, several black patients managed to get themselves admitted to whites-only hospitals. Another example of civil disobedience was the End Conscription Campaign through which young white men refused to go to the army and so risked imprisonment.

## Siyaya, siyaya noba, kunzima - "We are going, we are going, even if it is difficult"

After the successful boycott of the tricameral elections the UDF needed to reorganise around new campaigns. It was difficult to agree on a common purpose and strategy. Some felt there was a lack of direction and UDF activities were very slow in getting off the ground.

There were many divisions. Some supported the Freedom Charter and others did not. Some were committed to negotiation and others preferred militant action. There was also the issue of the authority of certain UDF leaders versus the representation of all affiliates in decision making processes.

The main decision making body of the UDF was the National General Council. Each affiliated organisation, no matter how big or small, had 2 representatives on the General Council. While this was inclusive, decision making was slow. There were many disagreements over what executive decisions were binding on all affiliates and when affiliates could act independently.

According to Jeremy Seekings, *"In a sense, there was no single UDF, but rather many UDFs, varying according to time, place and the vantage point of the observer."*

The UDF focused on mobilising people, not on building organisational structures.

*"By linking local issues to national politics and the central question of state power, the UDF infused bread-and-butter struggles with a new meaning.*

*By boycotting rent increases or school classes, people not only demonstrated their anger about inadequate incomes, housing conditions, or lack of textbooks; they were also taking part in the liberation struggle."*

- van Kessel (page 54)

Courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)



Courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)



Organising wasn't always easy. On 22 January 1984, for example, the UDF launched the Million Signatures Campaign (the largest national campaign since the 1950s). By October they had collected less than 400 000 signatures. Police harassment was blamed for the shortfall.

There were extraordinary successes, however. Fundraising was one of them. The international community, especially western Europe, saw the UDF as a non-violent anti-apartheid movement without links to communism. By 1987, the UDF had raised R2-million for the organisation and over R200-million had been donated to other organisations aligned to the UDF.

The UDF's greatest success is possibly the role it played in convincing the apartheid government that violent military solutions were no longer sustainable and that negotiated political solutions were the only way to move forward into the future.

A real challenge that faced the UDF was the extreme forms of violence that some people used to punish collaborators and informers. For example, the gruesome practice of placing a burning tyre around someone's neck became known as necklacing.

*"Perhaps we should have come out with a clear position on necklacing. But many of the people involved in necklacing were not part of formal UDF structures. They were so called amaqabane, comrades, people who felt themselves to be part of the UDF or ANC without formally belonging to any structures. We did not speak out against necklacing because we did not want to alienate those people."*

- Azhar Cachalia, UDF leader, quoted in Seekings, **The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983-1991** (2000)

Elinor Sisulu explains how ideological differences between the UDF and AZAPO flared into physical violence between 1985 and 1986:



*"By the end of 1986, 100s of UDF and AZAPO supporters had been killed and houses of leaders bombed. The state played an active role by adding fuel to the fire. Fake UDF pamphlets were distributed in Soweto condemning AZAPO, and the police were said to be responsible for some of the bombing of leaders on both sides. In January 1987, the leadership of both AZAPO and UDF committed themselves to a peace process and agreed to halt further attacks on vigilantes."*

- Elinor Sisulu, **Walter and Albertina Sisulu – In Our Lifetime** (2003)

In her book **Laying Ghosts to Rest**, the anti-apartheid activist and first black female vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town, Mamphela Ramphele describes the problem of authoritarianism:

*"Under pressure from the apartheid regime, the ideals of democratic participation were compromised in favour of stringent enforcement of solidarity ... Campaigns such as consumer boycotts, strikes, school boycotts and other protests assumed strong elements of intimidation and intolerance for individual choices. Even without these excesses, it is unlikely that a decade or so of post-apartheid experimentation with democracy would have been long enough exorcise the ghost of authoritarianism. All South Africans are newcomers to democracy. We must acknowledge our authoritarian political heritage. It will not simply go away in the face of a democratic national constitution. It should be called by name and put to rest. ... How do we honour freedom of expression without promoting the imposition of dominant views that undermine the rights of others to hold theirs?"*

- Mamphela Ramphele, **Laying Ghosts to Rest – Dilemmas of the transition in South Africa** (2008)

#### NECC – Right to Learn

In 1985, the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) was formed by members of the UDF in response to the banning of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), and the collapse of Bantu Education. The NECC tried to replace the boycotts of schools with a call for a People's Education:

"Education is a basic human right. Schooling should be free and compulsory for all children. Privatisation does not serve the interests of education for all. All schools should be open to children of all races. All people should have the right to attend schools of their choice and all teachers should have the right to teach all children."

- 1989 NECC conference

Many of the activities of the NECC were suppressed during the State of Emergency in the 1980s.



#### Organising a protest march

To organise a protest march one needs:

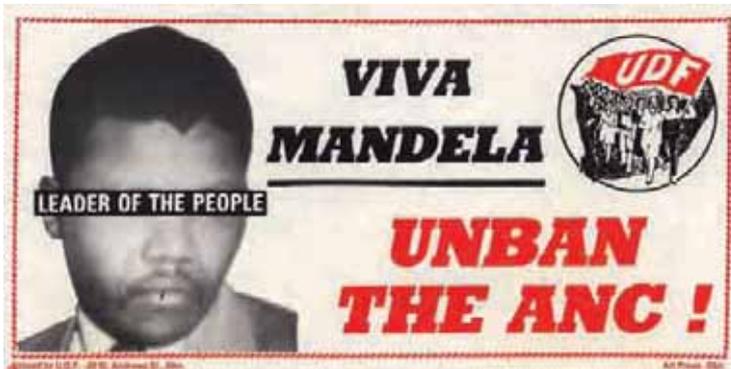
- ✓ permission to march along a route
- ✓ posters to advertise the march
- ✓ a venue for the rallying point
- ✓ a public address system so speakers can be heard at the event
- ✓ rules of conduct that you will communicate to all marchers
- ✓ trained marshalls to help organise the crowd
- ✓ first aid kits and trained first aid staff
- ✓ slogans on placards
- ✓ petitions that you will hand to an authority
- ✓ legal resources to help with any problems you may encounter

Protesters during the apartheid years also had to deal with violent responses from the state – teargas, rubber bullets, live ammunition and detention without trial.



Arm yourselves with knowledge for freedom  
The UDF used many creative ways to communicate messages to the masses. By wearing T-shirts, caps and printed buttons people could publicly identify themselves with the struggle. Songs, plays and poems also provided ways of expressing solidarity, sharing experiences and spreading information. The contributions of artists to designing posters gave birth to a whole new poster movement. Pamphlets and banners were used in marches. An alternative press (newspapers and magazines) arose in the 1980s, giving voice to those who were not being heard.

*"In those tense and violent years, it took moral courage to openly show your support of the liberation struggle. Dilip Waghmarae, head of the UDF media committee, describes being upfront and public about his commitments: 'My car was covered with stickers, so every time I stopped for petrol, some Afrikaner would come and kick my car.'"*  
- Judy Seidman **Red on Black** (2007)



Young people were very involved in promoting resistance culture and were provided with training and resources by organisations set up for this purpose. For example, silk screen printing workshops presented to activists at the Community Arts Project (CAP) in Cape Town and the Silkscreen Training Project (STP) in Johannesburg, are examples of projects that provided training in media production while also building solidarity in mass organisations of the time:

*"Most activists who attended the workshops on behalf of mass-based organisations came with little visual vocabulary for struggle. A large part of the workshopping therefore revolved around developing this vocabulary. People who came in as political activists felt comfortable with a visual vocabulary that included images of barbed wire, police vehicles, clenched fists; some of those from a fine arts background were not."*  
- Judy Seidman (2007)

*"Lionel Davis points out that: 'Symbols used in posters came from international socialist symbols – from banners – from other revolutions: the flag, the banner, the wake-up call, people marching. I got gatvol [thoroughly fed up] of clenched fists.'"*  
- Judy Seidman (2007)

As time went on the UDF established a uniquely South African visual vocabulary of struggle, such as the ANC's spear and shield, and iconic pictures such as that of Hector Pieterse who was one of the first students killed in Soweto in 1976.

*"We need to clearly popularise and give dignity to the just thoughts and deeds of the people ... the role of an artist is to ceaselessly search for the ways and means of achieving freedom. Art cannot overthrow a government, but it can inspire change."*  
- Thami Mnye, artist, quoted in **Images of Defiance** (2004)



## T-shirts

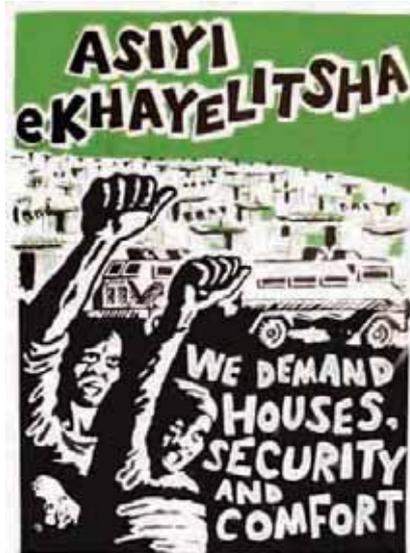
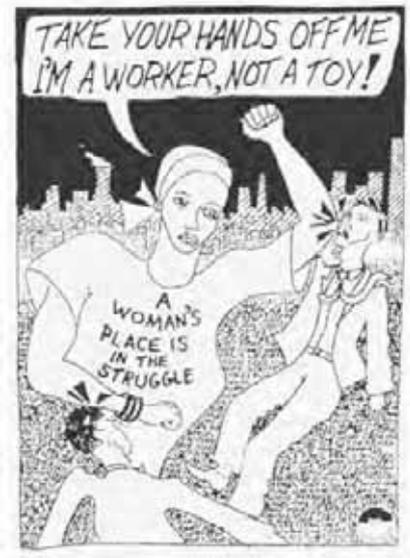
Slogans like, “Forward to People’s Power” and “Arm yourselves with knowledge for freedom” were printed on millions of T-shirts, banners, pamphlets, posters – even stickers. Their message wasn’t only heard locally – it echoed around the world. As Nelson Mandela put it:

*“We [the prisoners on Robben Island] realised that the propaganda being issued in the form of posters and other material contributed a great deal to the sharpening of people’s perceptions and developing their ability to articulate their ideas and aspirations.”*

- **Images of Defiance** (2004)

*“Struggle T-shirts were walking posters. Each day I’d put on a T-shirt with another message on it. As I walked to the station, who knows how many hundreds of people would have seen it. At the Lansdowne Youth Movement (LYM), we made most of our T-shirts at CAP’s silk screening workshop in Woodstock. We’d come with our logos and wording, T-shirts and five litre tubs of this lovely thick ink called Croda. All of us were studying or working, so we almost always did this at night. Until the sun came up, we’d all take turns working the silkscreen or hanging finished T-shirts up to dry. These were always group activities, so being involved meant spending time with people you really liked – it didn’t feel like a chore at all.”*

- Rehana Rossouw, a Cape Town activist, interview by Julia Grey, April 2008

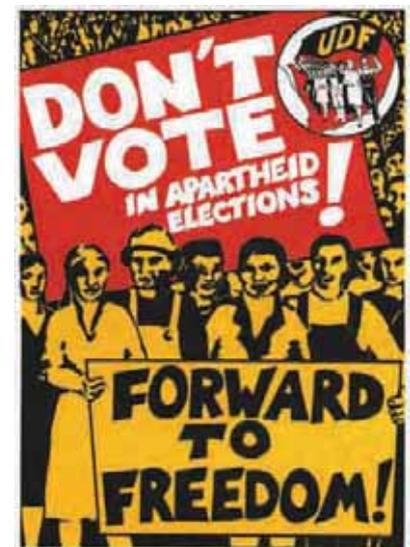


## Posters and the Medu Art Ensemble

Thami Mnyeale was one of a small group of South African artists living in exile in Botswana, who started the Medu Art Ensemble in 1978. Medu introduced anti-apartheid activists to the power of the poster and to the technology of silkscreening. They organised a Culture and Resistance Festival in Botswana in 1982, which was attended by 5 000 South African cultural workers. The apartheid government was quick to respond, banning Medu posters and imposing stiff sentences on anyone caught smuggling posters across the border. On 14 June 1985, Medu came to a sudden and

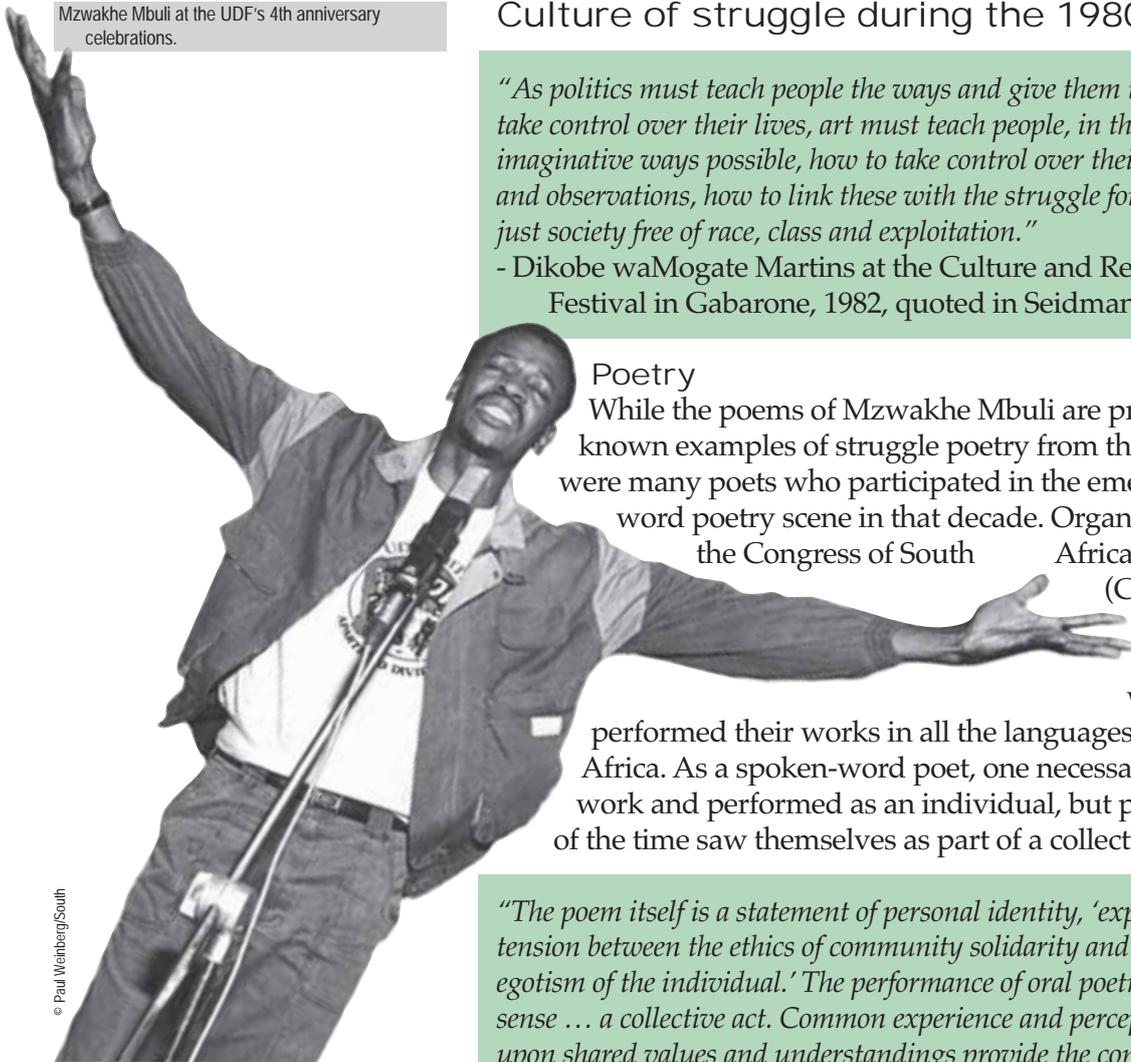
brutal end when apartheid security forces crossed the Botswana border and attacked Gaborone. Among the 12 people they killed were Thami Mnyeale and Mike Hamlyn, another Medu member. Surviving members either left Botswana or went underground. But the seed they’d planted among the South African activists took root, and grew to become a nationwide silkscreening frenzy.

HOW LONG MUST  
WE KEEP ON  
DYING IN THIS  
WAY?



All posters on this page courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)

Mzwakhe Mbuli at the UDF's 4th anniversary celebrations.



© Paul Weinberg/South

## Culture of struggle during the 1980s

*“As politics must teach people the ways and give them the means to take control over their lives, art must teach people, in the most vivid and imaginative ways possible, how to take control over their own experience and observations, how to link these with the struggle for liberation and a just society free of race, class and exploitation.”*

- Dikobe waMogate Martins at the Culture and Resistance Festival in Gaborone, 1982, quoted in Seidman (2007)

### Poetry

While the poems of Mzwakhe Mbuli are probably the best known examples of struggle poetry from the 1980s, there were many poets who participated in the emerging spoken-word poetry scene in that decade. Organisations like the Congress of South African Writers (COSAW) held regular poetry readings, where poets performed their works in all the languages of South Africa. As a spoken-word poet, one necessarily created work and performed as an individual, but politicised poets of the time saw themselves as part of a collective.

*“The poem itself is a statement of personal identity, ‘expressing tension between the ethics of community solidarity and the striving egotism of the individual.’ The performance of oral poetry is in this sense ... a collective act. Common experience and perceptions based upon shared values and understandings provide the context within which any performance becomes aesthetically, emotionally and socially meaningful.”*

- D Coplan, quoted in Seidman (2007)

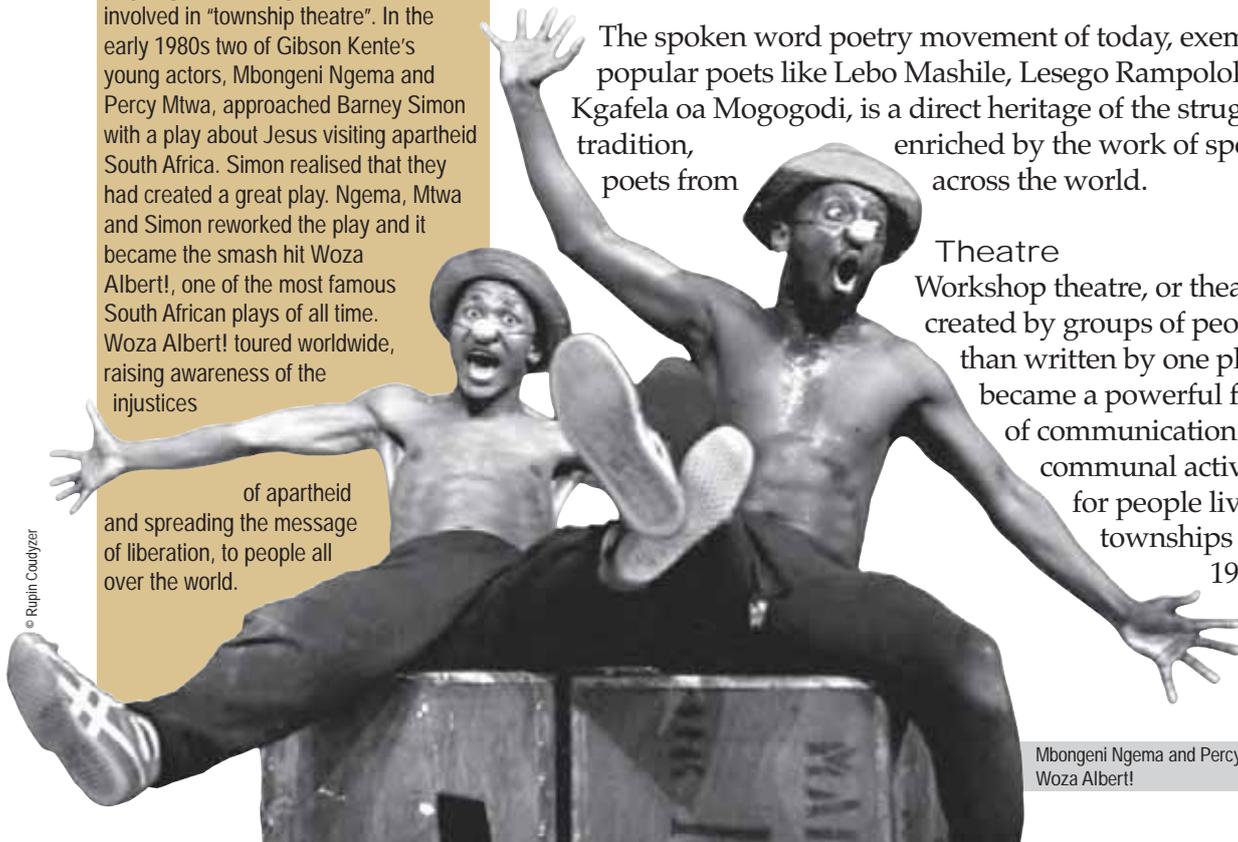
### Woza Albert!

More mainstream theatre makers like the director, Barney Simon, and the playwright, Athol Fugard, became involved in “township theatre”. In the early 1980s two of Gibson Kente’s young actors, Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa, approached Barney Simon with a play about Jesus visiting apartheid South Africa. Simon realised that they had created a great play. Ngema, Mtwa and Simon reworked the play and it became the smash hit *Woza Albert!*, one of the most famous South African plays of all time. *Woza Albert!* toured worldwide, raising awareness of the injustices

The spoken word poetry movement of today, exemplified by popular poets like Lebo Mashile, Lesego Rampolokeng and Kgafela oa Mogogodi, is a direct heritage of the struggle poetry tradition, enriched by the work of spoken word poets from across the world.

Theatre Workshop theatre, or theatre created by groups of people rather than written by one playwright, became a powerful form of communication and communal activity for people living in townships in the 1980s.

of apartheid and spreading the message of liberation, to people all over the world.



© Rupin Courtyzer

Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa in the play *Woza Albert!*

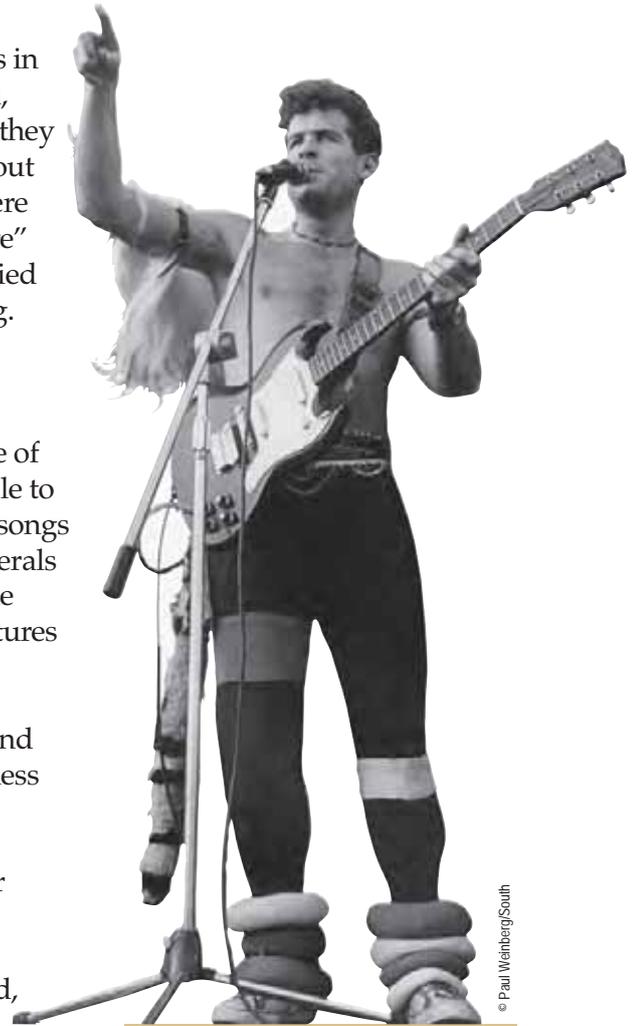
The “father of township theatre”, Gibson Kente, and many others produced plays that could be performed to audiences in township venues like community and church halls. In Natal, workers from the SARMCOL factory, who were fired when they went on strike, created a play in 1985 that told the world about their struggle. Plays by Kente or the SARMCOL workers were bold and full of humour and passion. This “township theatre” was devised to play to raucous township audiences, and relied on mime, song and dance, as well as bold, caricatured acting.

### Music and song

The anti-apartheid movement inside South Africa relied on rich and varied musical traditions to create a musical culture of resistance. Most importantly, resistance movements were able to draw from the rich traditions of choral singing to create the songs sung by protesting crowds of supporters on marches, at funerals and at political meetings. As with the poems and plays of the time, struggle songs relied on bold images and simple structures to communicate messages to the masses.

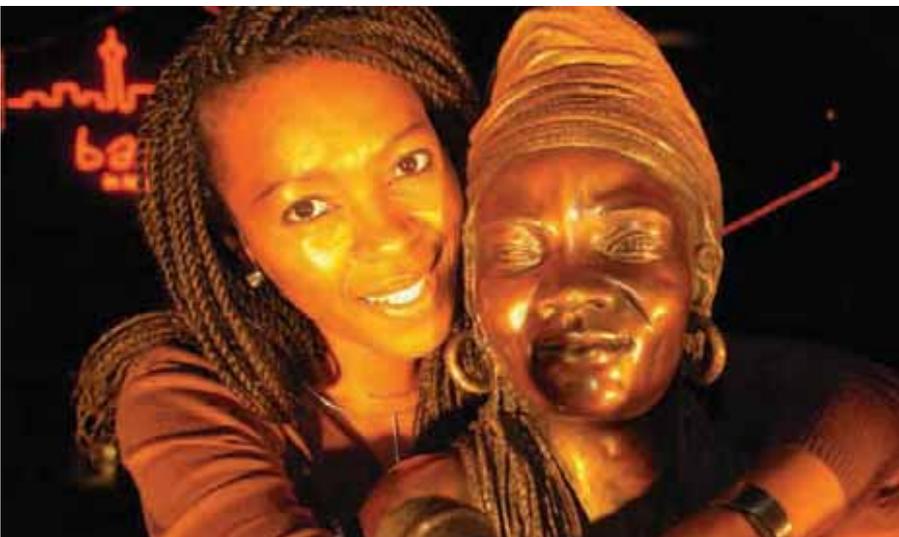
Struggle songs served to entrench messages like solidarity and perseverance. Some songs expressed their outrage and sadness about apartheid, while others praised banned leaders of the movement, keeping their names alive in the imagination of communities when it was illegal to mention them in print or on the radio. The very act of singing struggle songs brought people together and allowed them to express their outrage, determination and support of their leaders. Across the world, people were moved by the spectacle of singing crowds confronting armed police and soldiers. The documentary film **Amandla – A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony** is a moving and well-researched record of this rich tradition.

Musicians like Brenda Fassie, Hugh Masekela and Johnny Clegg wrote songs that expressed criticism of the apartheid government and inspired audiences to be part of the struggle. Today, artists like Bongo Maffin, Freshly Ground and Thandiswa Mazwai are creating socially conscious music for a new generation.



© Paul Weinberg/South

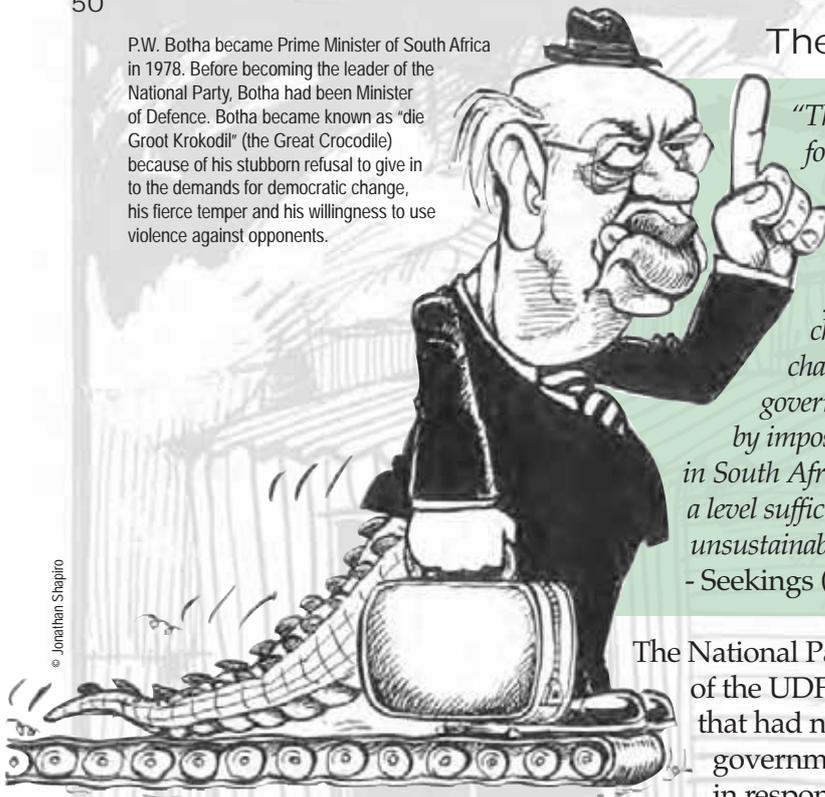
Asimbonanga by Johnny Clegg  
 Asimbonanga (We have not seen him)  
 Asimbonang' uMandela thina (We have not seen Mandela)  
 Laph'ekhona (In the place where he is)  
 Laph'ehleli khona (In the place where he is kept)  
 Oh the sea is cold and the sky is grey  
 Look across the Island into the bay  
 We are all islands till comes the day  
 We cross the burning water  
 Chorus....  
 A seagull wings across the sea  
 Broken silence is what I dream  
 Who has the words to close the distance  
 Between you and me  
 Chorus....  
 Steve Biko, Victoria Mxenge  
 Neil Aggett  
 Asimbonanga  
 Asimbonang 'umfowethu thina (we have not seen our brother)  
 Laph'ekhona (In the place where he is)  
 Laph'wafela khona (In the place where he died)  
 Hey wena (Hey you!)  
 Hey wena nawe (Hey you and you as well)  
 Siyofika nini la' siyakhona (When will we arrive at our destination)



Brenda Fassie shot to fame in the 1980s, and became South Africa's top-selling music star. Unlike many musicians of her time, Brenda's songs were often openly political. Ma Brrr, as she was known to many fans, was mourned by the nation when she passed away on 9 May 2004.

© Sunday Times

P.W. Botha became Prime Minister of South Africa in 1978. Before becoming the leader of the National Party, Botha had been Minister of Defence. Botha became known as "die Groot Krokodil" (the Great Crocodile) because of his stubborn refusal to give in to the demands for democratic change, his fierce temper and his willingness to use violence against opponents.



## The Crocodile Years

*"The township revolt from the second half of 1984 forced the state into the defensive, pushing it to use brutal repression, which served to highlight the moral poverty of even 'reformed apartheid'. The strategic frame of people's power enabled the forces of revolt to be harnessed more effectively, and channelled into a direct and potentially sustainable challenge to the apartheid state. In response the government was able to stem the tide of resistance only by imposing a level of repression that was unprecedented in South Africa ... But resistance adapted and continued at a level sufficient to render the state's strategy of repression unsustainable."*  
 - Seekings (2000)

The National Party government responded to the formation of the UDF with levels of violence and repression that had not been seen before. In 1977, the apartheid government had already announced a 'total strategy' in response to what it called the 'total onslaught'. The government was convinced that there was a communist-inspired plan to destroy Christian and capitalist ideals. It used the threat of communism to justify its racist violence. This meant labelling all opposition communist whether or not they were. As General Magnus Malan declared in 1981:

*"We have to accept that the onslaught here in South Africa is communist-inspired, communist-planned and communist-supported. The security of the Republic of South Africa must be maintained by every possible means at our disposal."*  
 - [www.bradford.ac.uk/acad/sbtwc/other/ethics/print/u1sec6.html](http://www.bradford.ac.uk/acad/sbtwc/other/ethics/print/u1sec6.html)

When P.W. Botha came to power in 1978, he reduced the power of parliament and gave more power to the National Security Council. The National Security Council was made up of carefully selected government officials and its activities were kept secret. Minister of Defence General Magnus Malan, and Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok, were key members. The National Security Council took over the co-ordination of the state's security forces, foreign policy and management of black townships. It was not answerable to parliament, and therefore not subject to the law.

### State of Emergency

A State of Emergency was in force from 12 June 1985 to 2 February 1990. Under emergency legislation, the government could detain people for as long as it wanted without charging them. Tens of thousands of people were detained. Emergency legislation also gave the government greater powers to ban organisations and individuals and to censor newspapers, radio and television news.



General Magnus Malan was promoted from being head of the army to being the Minister of Defence when P.W. Botha came to power. Malan was a chief supporter of the total onslaught ideology. As Minister of Defence General Malan was responsible for the activities of the SADF inside and outside South Africa, including raids, military invasion and covert operations.

As Minister of Law and Order in the 1980s, Adriaan Vlok was in charge of the South African Police. In this capacity, Vlok was responsible for the activities of the police force in harassing, detaining and banning opponents of the apartheid government. Vlok was also responsible for secret police efforts to destroy opponents of apartheid through assassination and torture.



Magnus Malan, Adriaan Vlok and background cartoon courtesy Derek Bauer Trust

© Jonathan Shapiro

The levels of protest in the townships were so high that the South African Police (SAP) was not strong enough to carry out apartheid repression. The South African Defence Force (SADF) was then used to repress revolts in townships, bringing unarmed children and civilians face-to-face with well-armed soldiers.

### Legal oppression

Botha's government continued to use legal means to harass, ban and imprison activists. Existing laws, like the 90-day Detention Act and the Repression of Communism Act, allowed the government to legally detain and ban political leaders. In 1988, the UDF, 16 other organisations and 18 activists were banned. Legal forms of oppression included house arrest, detention without trial and solitary confinement in prison. Leaders were often taken out of the struggle through lengthy treason trials.

### Illegal activities

The special legal powers available to the security forces under the State of Emergency were not enough to crush resistance. The government therefore resorted to illegal means on a scale much greater than it had done in the past.

The infamous C10 police unit, based at Vlakplaas, a farm near Pretoria, was established in 1979. From here, the Security Branch of the SAP launched covert operations, including torture, kidnapping and assassinations. The list of assassinated activists is long. It includes, Rick Turner, Griffiths Mxenge, Ruth First, Matthew Goniwe, Sparrow Mkhonto, Dulcie September, David Webster and Chris Hani.

In addition to the assassination of enemies and sabotage, Botha's secret units provoked "black on black violence" between black communities and organisations. In this way they destroyed opponents of apartheid without the state being accountable in any way for their actions. Through "black on black violence" the government also portrayed organizations like the UDF and AZAPO as violent and determined to kill each other. The role of the government in this violence was often suspected and referred to as the "third force".

At Vlakplaas, the security police also used torture, bribery and blackmail to force some of the freedom fighters it had captured to work for the state - killing state enemies and instigating "black on black" violence.

The Civil Co-Operation Bureau was a secret unit of the SADF. It used chemical and biological weapons to assassinate political enemies. The CCB was also responsible for sabotage and bombing of anti-government targets.



Courtesy Derek Bauer Trust

### A monster

The secret units established to carry out assassination and sabotage, continued to cause death and destruction long after Botha had resigned as president of South Africa. De Klerk succeeded Botha in 1989. His government had no way of immediately stopping these unofficial, underground activities before negotiating with the ANC.

On the night of 17 July 1992, for example, Inkatha-supporting hostel dwellers attacked the ANC-supporting township of Boipatong, killing 38 people. This attack nearly derailed the negotiations between the ANC and the government. While no evidence came to light during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that the police had helped to co-ordinate this attack, it is widely accepted today that some police officers had continued to promote violent attacks against ANC supporters without being ordered to do so by National Party leaders. It was as if the culture of violence had become a monster that could no longer be controlled by the master who had created it.



Courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)

Victoria Mxenge

Griffiths and Victoria Mxenge  
Victoria Mxenge was a lawyer in practice with her husband, Griffiths. After Griffiths was assassinated by the security police on 19 November 1981, Victoria continued with the legal practice. The death of her husband, Griffiths led to her involvement in UDF structures, and she became one of the more prominent members of the Natal Organisation of Women. She spent many years representing youth and students who were detained by the security police and who were treated badly in detention. She was part of the team that defended the United Democratic Front and the Natal Indian Congress during the Pietermaritzburg Treason Trial. In 1985, while preparing for the trial, she was brutally murdered. Her killers were heard by the amnesty committee of the TRC, however the Mxenge family still feels that justice was not done.

## Treason Trials

Two treason trials involving members of the UDF took these activists away from their homes, jobs and political activities.

### The Pietermaritzburg Treason Trial

In 1984, in an attempt to break the back of mass action, the government arrested 12 UDF leaders and four leaders of the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU). They were accused of treason and contravention of the Internal Security Act. The case started with the brutal assassination of Victoria Mxenge, a member of the defence team.

The prosecution, making the government's case, tried to use transcripts, tapes, videos and statements collected by the police to prove that the UDF and SAAWU were being used by the ANC to bring about the violent overthrow of the government. The government was overconfident and its case was flimsy. The treason charge was based on the liberation songs the accused had sung and the anti-government speeches they had made, suggesting that these had violent intent. They also tried to show that the accused were guilty of terrorism as a result of their associations and sympathies with the ANC. Mass rallies and meetings were organised across the country in support of the accused. Allan Boesak called on the government to arrest him as well as he had made similar statements.

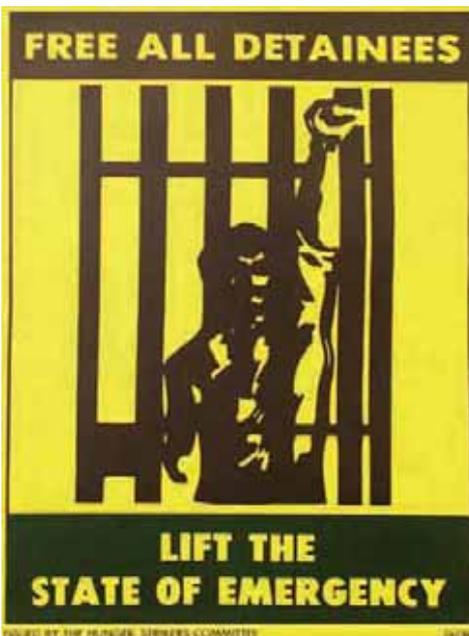
The state's expert witness, a political scientist, De Vries, said that a revolution did not just happen, but was preceded by certain activities such as the creation of an ideology, the establishment of certain organisations, criticism of the existing system and the creation of a violent climate. Not all actions in this lead up would be violent, but the final aim would be the violent overthrow of the state.

De Vries said that it was impossible to prove the claim that the UDF was a front for the ANC, but that it was clear that the ANC saw it in this way as it called on people to support the UDF.

Videotapes were used to try to prove the revolutionary atmosphere at meetings, but the judge said that they had failed to establish violence, revolution and treason. Some of the witnesses the government used eventually admitted that they had agreed to be witnesses while they were in detention. Some had been paid to be witnesses. One witness claimed to have been tortured.

On 9 December 1985, the state withdrew the charges against the UDF leaders. The state's case to prove conspiracy and links to the ANC had failed.

The case against the SAAWU leaders relied heavily on recordings made by bugging SAAWU offices. The government could not prove that the recordings were original and had not been tampered with. All charges were withdrawn on 23 June 1986.



DESIGNED BY THE HUNGER STRIKERS COMMITTEE

Courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)

While the trial had managed to keep important leaders out of action for a long time, it had not succeeded in finding the 16 accused guilty of treason or in proving that the UDF or SAAWU were part of an ANC conspiracy.

The outcome of this trial is partly a testament to the diverse nature of the UDF. It was not aligned to one political party. It genuinely represented a very diverse group of South Africans and organisations.

### The Delmas Treason Trial

The Delmas Treason Trial was another attempt by the apartheid government to try to suppress the United Democratic Front. It was the longest running political trial in South Africa's history (from 1985 to 1989).

Among the 22 defendants were leaders of the UDF, Popo Molefe, Patrick "Terror" Lekota and Moses Chikane. They were charged with murder and treason and faced the death penalty. The defence team was headed by George Bizos and Arthur Chaskalson.

Again state prosecutors tried to prove that the UDF was actually the internal wing of the revolutionary African National Congress. If they succeeded they would be able to criminalise any protest activity, no matter how nonviolent, if it was carried out under the United Democratic Front banner.

The judge was unconvinced and pronounced Molefe and Lekota part of a "conspiratorial core inside the UDF apple". Mr. Molefe was sentenced to 10 years in prison, Mr. Lekota to 12 years. On appeal, this judgment was struck down on a technicality, and all those convicted in the Delmas trial became free men on 15 December 1989, after being jailed for a total of four and a half years.

Seven weeks later, President FW de Klerk lifted the ban on the ANC, and both Molefe and Lekota became national leaders.



Courtesy South African History Archive (SAHA)

Delmas trialists Aubrey Mokwena, Ismail Mohammed, Albertina Sisulu and Curtis Nkondo.



© Gordon Rainsford

Simon Nkoli

#### Out of the closet

One of the Delmas accused was gay activist Simon Nkoli. He had to convince the senior UDF and ANC leaders that lesbian and gay people faced discrimination that was like apartheid. He confronted and destroyed the myth that holds that it is unAfrican to be gay and defended lesbian and gay equality as part of the struggle against apartheid and for human dignity. He said, "If you're black in South Africa, the inhuman laws of apartheid closet you, if you're gay in South Africa, the homophobic customs of this society closet you. If you are black and gay in South Africa, well, then it really is the same closet, the same wardrobe. Inside is darkness and oppression. Outside is freedom." After the Delmas Treason Trial, a new struggle began - Simon Nkoli and comrades founded the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of Witwatersrand (GLOW) as the first mass black township-based organisation of lesbian and gay people. GLOW was non-racial and supported the ANC as a part of the democratic movement. Nkoli and his GLOW comrades organised and led the first three lesbian and gay pride marches in South Africa. The streets of Johannesburg resounded in 1990 with Nkoli's voice as he led the chants - "Out of closets - into the streets" and "Not the church, not the state, we ourselves decide our fate".

## “Alternative” Voices of Resistance

After the Soweto uprising of 1976, activists began to look for new ways to spread the anti-apartheid message. Radio and television were firmly in the hands of the state, and most newspapers were owned

by big business. In this context, activists began to create their own media. The “alternative press” was born. Its origins lay in the student newspapers, trade union newspapers, church publications and Black Consciousness (BC) journals of the 1970s.

The weekly newspapers and monthly magazines of the alternative press were mainly funded by overseas anti-apartheid organisations. Sached (SA Council for Higher Education), published a weekly supplement

to the black newspaper, **Weekend World**, entitled **People’s College**, and Ravan Press published the influential BC poetry and arts magazine, **Staffrider**. **The Voice** was a short-lived but

important Johannesburg church newspaper of the late 1970s, and the **South African Labour Bulletin** represented the emerging trade union movement. The banned ANC and SACP publications, **Sechaba** and **The African Communist** were secretly distributed in South Africa. The first important alternative community newspaper of the 1980s was **Grassroots**, launched in the Western Cape in 1980. Others followed, including **South**, **UmAfrika** and **New Nation**.

These alternative press publications were the birthplace of radical cartooning in South Africa. Before 1980, all South Africa’s cartoonists were white and worked for apartheid-supporting Afrikaans newspapers or liberal English newspapers. Their criticism of the apartheid government was very mild. But the new generation of radical cartoonists changed all that.

**Sloppy**  
The first black cartoonist to emerge in the alternative press was Mogorosi Motshumi. Born in Batho township in Bloemfontein in 1954, he began his career as a cartoonist in 1978, drawing cartoons for a



Courtesy Derek Bauer Trust



supplement to the Bloemfontein newspaper **The Friend**, aimed at black readers. But he was arrested by the security police and detained. After that he moved to Soweto and started drawing a cartoon strip entitled *In The Ghetto* for **The Voice**. He also contributed drawings to **Staffrider** magazine. After **The Voice** closed down he began drawing for **Learn and Teach** magazine.

Motshumi's comic strip about township life, *Sloppy*, was launched in the first issue of **Learn and Teach** in 1981 and continued to appear in the magazine until it closed in the 1990s. *Sloppy* was enormously popular with the magazine's readers. Lasting for more than ten years, it was South Africa's longest running township cartoon strip. During this time the main character, Sloppy, got married to his girlfriend Lizzie, had a child called Lucky, and had an amazing variety of adventures, including a period when he had super-powers and became The Warrior. Other characters in the strip were his friends Dumpy and Gladys. While the strip was never overly political or preachy, it nevertheless engaged with the realities of apartheid and played a small but significant role in popular education and the struggle for liberation.

After the closure of **Learn and Teach**, Motshumi worked for a while as a sports cartoonist at **City Press** and **Daily Sun**, but despite his best efforts, he was unable to find a home for *Sloppy* in the newspapers and magazines of the new South Africa. Meanwhile, anti-apartheid funding, the lifeblood of the alternative press movement, dried up after 1994. Very few of the alternative press publishers had the business skills to survive in the competitive money-driven world of post-apartheid publishing. And so an important chapter in South African publishing, and South African cartooning, came to an end.

It is only now, as we look back on the UDF period of the 1980s, that we come to appreciate the contribution of these publishing pioneers. Their committed and idealistic activism provided the foundation for the vigorous free press that we enjoy in South Africa today. And Mogorosi Motshumi's *Sloppy* remains an unforgettable icon of those courageous times.



Hard Rock

Today, Motshumi lives in Batho township where he grew up and is working on a long comic about his life and times, entitled *Hard Rock: A Cartoonist's Journey*, which will hopefully be published soon as a graphic novel.

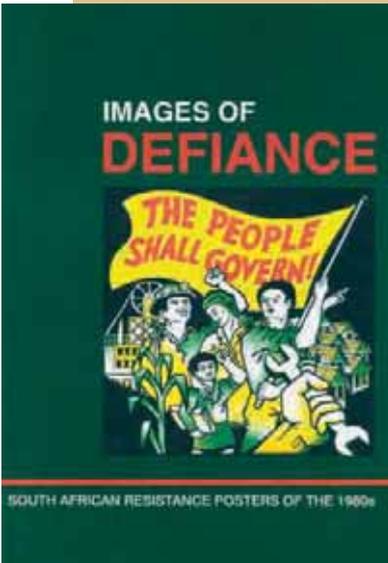
© Andy Mason



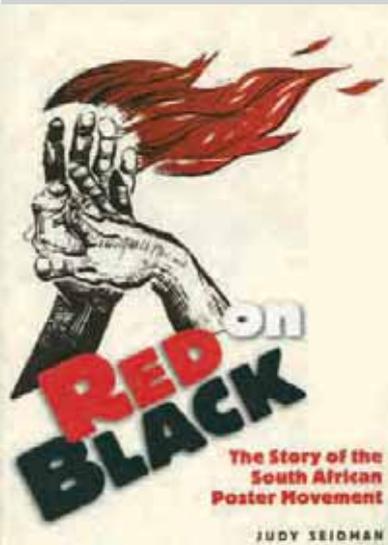
© Mogorosi Motshumi

### UDF film: New Deal?

"Apartheid state crackdowns necessitated that films be made anonymously, though they were still widely distributed throughout the townships. (Filmmaker) Bensusan's crew included Brian Tilley, Lawrence Dworkin and Siphon Ralo, Popo Molefe (voice), an unknown guitarist and many others. It is the only footage of the event and the crowd scene energetically relays the spirit of the moment." - 10th International Documentary Film Festival Encounters programme.



"... a visual record of grassroots mobilisation and resistance, of the struggle to shatter the silence imposed by massive state repression. This book of posters celebrates the Congress movement and the principles it has fought so long to uphold: non-racialism, democracy and an end to economic oppression. Produced by ordinary members of community-based organisations during the 1980s, these symbols of defiance are the work of a people confronting the present with courage and determination, and facing the future with strength and hope."



"This book tells the story of the ideas, hopes and the harsh repression under which (South African) artists and activists worked. The posters and images in this book speak powerfully about those times, capturing the atmosphere and emotion, pain and passion of events that both shattered and built our nation."

Courtesy STE Publishers

## Victory

In 1988, the apartheid government used the State of Emergency to put extreme restrictions on the activities of the UDF. It was almost as if it had been banned. The role of the UDF was temporarily taken over by the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM). When the restrictions on the UDF were lifted in 1990, most activists reunited under the UDF once again.

The actions of the UDF had stretched the government's resources to breaking point. In this way it helped to bring the government to the point where it had to negotiate a political solution with the ANC.

The broad ideals and diversity of the UDF were an advantage on the battlefield, but negotiations needed a political party with specific goals and a clearly defined constituency. In 1991, once the ANC was unbanned, the UDF dissolved. The ANC absorbed most of the UDF leaders along with their valuable experience of building non-racial organisation during the 1980s.

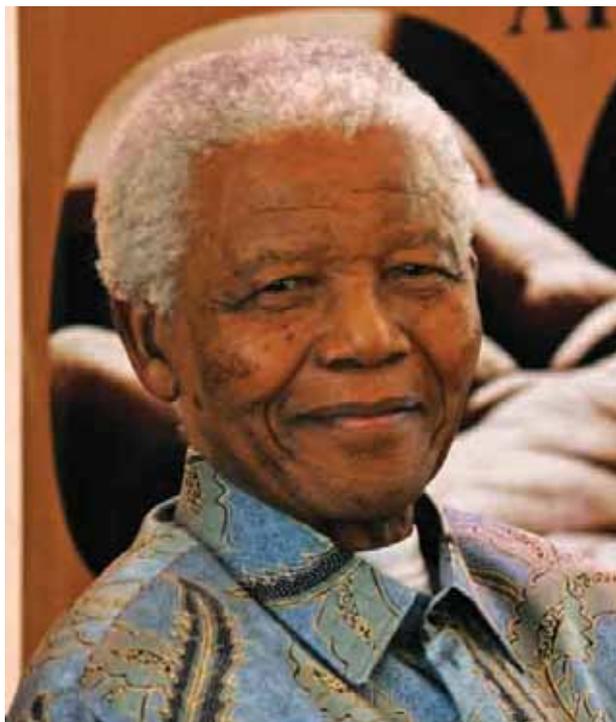
Looking back, united front activists had to have staying power and remain committed to the long, complex and often frustrating CODESA negotiation process. In South Africa today, there continues to be a strong need for civil society organisations to work together to ensure government is held accountable to the constitution of the people. We must ask, "Is civil society doing enough to uphold our democracy?"

## The values of the Struggle today

*"It is important to consider the values which underlined those selfless deeds during the eighties ... A new culture arrived with the nineties. It brought and legitimated the "market" ... Though the market had been with us for a long time it remained condemned, the domain of decadent white society. And whereas some of us were quite sceptical about it at the beginning, we eventually succumbed. Today it regulates and controls all of our lives. It determines how we conduct our politics. It writes the scripts of our locally produced soapies. Increasingly our young minds at school are imprinted with the dictates of the market. Drilling them in the art of selling themselves ... It influences the way we play sports, the way we speak, the way we dress. Our public appearances are carefully choreographed. These are the requirements of the market. It demands that we present ourselves as saleable commodities ... some of us discover that we are not appropriately packaged. And we begin to doubt our own worth, our own self-worth ... In our market society everyone looks out for himself - and only himself. Nobody is his brother's keeper. Very different from the tenets held and forged during the camaraderie of the eighties ... The new values ... are at the opposite pole of those prevalent during the times of the UDF. We can hardly expect the values, which came with the nineties, to give rise to those selfless deeds seen during the time of the UDF."*

- From an interview with Johnny Issel, a key UDF Western Cape leader, in 2003 (related in [sahistory.org](http://www.sahistory.org) <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/governance-projects/organisations/udf/accounts.htm>)

## LIVES WELL LIVED



© Oryx Media Productions

Nelson Mandela was from a Thembu family. As far as archaeologists and oral historians can tell, the Thembu people have lived in the area between KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape since at least the 16th century. The first Thembu king was Dhlomo. In pre-colonial times, Thembu groups were independent from each other, and were not directly ruled by a single king. Under Dhlomo's great-grandson Ngubengcuka (1810 to 1830), the Thembu people began to form a more united nation. In the 1840s, Thembu chiefs signed two treaties with the British colonists, subjugating them to British rule.



© AP Photo/Themba Hadebe

Albertina Sisulu came from a Mfengu family. The Mfengu (Fingo) people are the descendants of the Bhele, the Hlubi and Zizi people who migrated west from KwaZulu-Natal into the Eastern Cape during the early eighteenth century. While some of these immigrants were absorbed into Xhosa society, others settled in the Cape Colony, where they became early converts to Christianity. Today, the very existence of the Mfengu as a distinct and unified ethnic group is questioned by some historians. In the Transkei of Albertina's childhood, however, Mfengu people shared a sense of history and identity, while at the same time regarding themselves as members of the Xhosa people.

*"On the day of the inauguration (1994) I was overwhelmed with a sense of history. In the first decade of the twentieth century, a few years after the bitter Anglo-Boer War and before my own birth, the white-skinned peoples of South Africa patched up their differences and erected a system of racial domination against the dark-skinned peoples of their own land. The structure they created formed the basis of one of the harshest, most inhumane societies the world has ever known. Now, in the last decade of the twentieth century, and my own eighth decade as a man, that system had been overturned forever and replaced by one that recognises the rights and freedoms of all peoples regardless of the colour of their skin."*

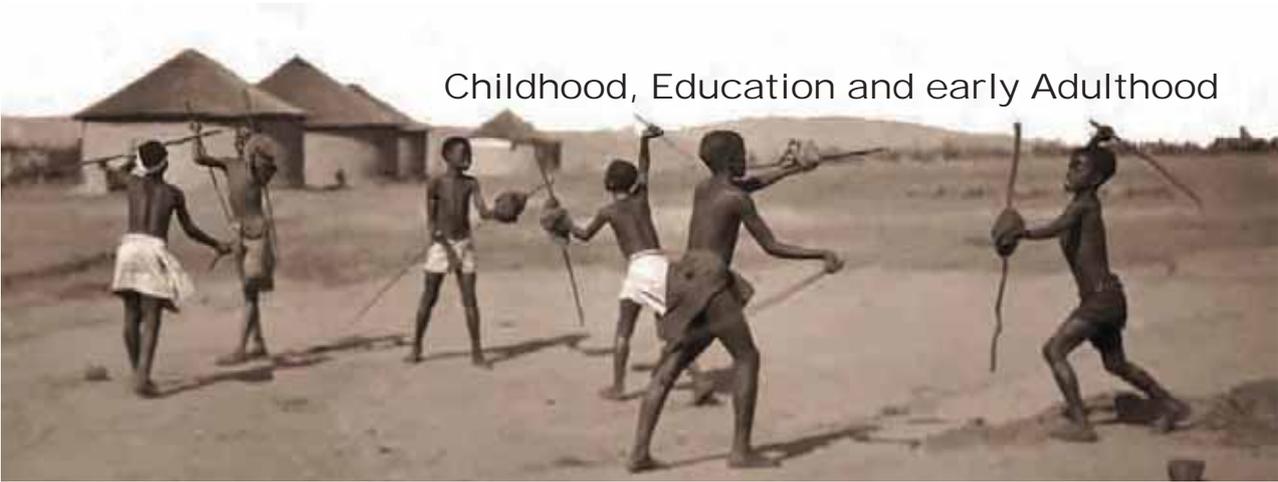
- Nelson Mandela, **Long Walk To Freedom** (1994)

**N**elson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu were both born in 1918 and in the same region of South Africa, but they were born into different circumstances. Their careers span the second half of the twentieth century. As leaders, they showed the ability to respond, both to the needs of their people and to events in global politics. In doing so, they ended up helping to shape the history of their nation. They will be called Madiba and Albertina in this chapter.

Though both born in the same year and in the same region of South Africa, Madiba and Albertina were born into very different circumstances.

## Childhood, Education and early Adulthood

© Duggan Cronin, Mc Gregor Museum, Kimberley



Madiba recalls a life lesson learned as a child in Qunu

"I learned my lesson one day from an unruly donkey. We had been taking turns climbing up and down its back and when my chance came I jumped on and the donkey bolted into a nearby thorn bush. It bent its head, trying to unseat me, which it did, but not before the thorns had pricked and scratched my face, embarrassing me in front of my friends. Like the people of the east, Africans have a highly developed sense of dignity, or what the Chinese call 'face'. I had lost my face among my friends. Even though it was a donkey that unseated me, I learned that to humiliate another person is to make him suffer an unnecessarily cruel fate. Even as a boy, I defeated my opponents without dishonouring them." Mandela (1994)

Madiba

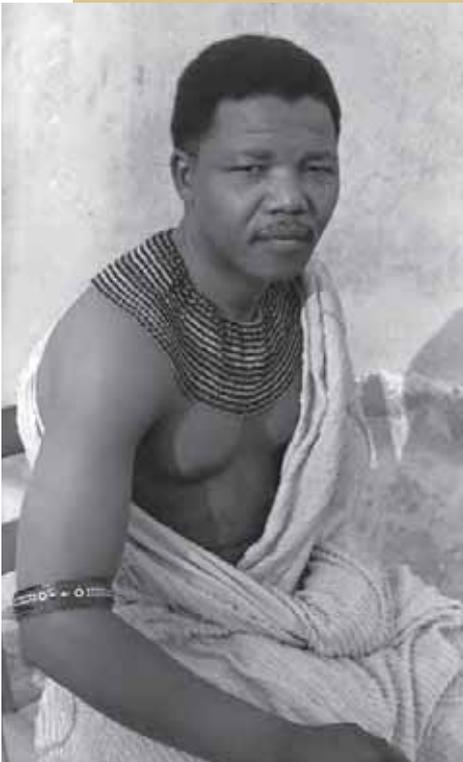
*"I was not born with a hunger to be free. I was born free – free in every way that I could know. Free to run in the fields near my mother's hut, free to swim in the clear stream that ran through my village, free to roast mealies under the stars and ride the broad backs of slow-moving bulls. As long as I obeyed my father and abided by the customs of my tribe, I was not troubled by the laws of man or god. It was only when I began to learn that my boyhood freedom was an illusion, when I discovered as a young man that my freedom had already been taken from me, that I began to hunger for it."*

Mandela, **Long Walk to Freedom** (1994)

On 18 July 1918, in the last year of World War I, Rolihlahla Mandela was born in Mvezo village, Umtata district, Transkei (now the Eastern Cape). His father, Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa, a Thembu chief, called his son Rolihlahla, meaning "pulling the branch of a tree". It also means "troublemaker". After a confrontation with the local magistrate his father was deposed as a chief; and his mother, Nosekeni, moved with her newborn son to the village of Qunu. On his first day of school his teacher, Miss Mdingane, gave him the Christian name Nelson, as was customary in missionary education.

When Nelson was nine years old, his father passed away. His uncle, Chief Jongintaba Dalindyebo, became Nelson's guardian, welcoming him into the royal homestead. After his initiation, at age 16, Nelson was sent to Clarkebury Boarding School. Three years later he joined his cousin Justice at Healdtown, the Wesleyan College Fort Beaufort, where he came into contact with teachers and students who were not Xhosa-speaking. Completing high school, Madiba enrolled at Fort Hare University to study English, politics and law. It was here that he met his life-long friend and comrade, Oliver Tambo.

Nelson's studies were interrupted when he was expelled by the principal over a dispute about the credibility of the Student Representative Council elections. Mandela returned to chief Jongintaba for a short while, but when he learned that the chief had arranged for him to be married, he ran away from home. He arrived in Johannesburg in 1941 where an estate agent, Walter Sisulu, befriended him and helped him find a job at a law firm.



Madiba poses in traditional Thembu costume. The intention was to portray him as an African leader with a strong affinity for his people and their traditions.

© Mayibye Archives

## Albertina

Three months after Nelson's birth, Nontsikelelo Albertina Thethiwe was born on 21 October 1918 in Camama village near Cofimvaba in the Transkei. Albertina's father, Bonilizwe Thethiwe, was a peasant farmer and migrant worker on the gold mines of the Rand. His family were of the Ndlangisa clan, part of the Mfengu people. Albertina's mother, Monica Mnyila, was the daughter of an influential Mfengu family. Monica was chronically ill, and so Albertina and her two brothers lived with their grandparents in Xolobe. When she was not at school, Albertina had to look after her younger siblings.

At the age of 11, Albertina's father, on his deathbed, asked her to promise to take care of his children. This meant that straight after her father's death, Albertina left school for approximately two years to look after her new baby sister, Flora, and little cousin Gcotyelwa. Fortunately, the missionaries had established a nursery school and Albertina was able to leave the children in care and return to Middle Xolobe Primary School. She was a diligent student who was always top of her class and in her final year was head girl.

After completing primary school, Albertina won a four-year bursary from the Transkei government to go to high school. But when the officials heard that she was two years older than the other children in her class, the bursary was withdrawn. Fortunately, Father Bernard Huss heard about Albertina's case, and arranged a bursary for her to complete high school at Mariazell College.

In 1939, by the start of World War II, Albertina's high school years were drawing to a close. During this year, Albertina had to decide what career she would pursue. In December 1938, Albertina had been told that her uncle Campbell had arranged for her to marry a promising young man from the village. Albertina decided not to marry and to become a professional person so that she could continue to provide for her mother and siblings. Father Huss suggested that she become a nurse because then she'd be paid while in training. Albertina applied to various training hospitals and by the time she left Mariazell, she had been accepted as a trainee nurse at the Johannesburg Non-European Hospital.

Thus by the early 1940s, both Nelson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu found themselves in Johannesburg, on the cusp of starting their careers. In Johannesburg, Madiba and Albertina would not only get involved in the politics of the ANC. They would also fall in love, get married and establish their own families.

1918, 18 July – Madiba is born.  
 1918, 21 October – Albertina is born.  
 1939 – Madiba enrolls at the University of Fort Hare.  
 1939 – Albertina becomes a trainee nurse.  
 1941 – Madiba moves to Johannesburg.  
 1944, 15 July – Albertina marries Walter Sisulu.  
 1944 – Madiba marries Evelyn Mase.  
 1944 – Albertina qualifies as a nurse.  
 1952 – Madiba and Oliver Tambo open South Africa's first black law firm.  
 1958 – Madiba marries Winnie Madikizela.  
 1954 – Albertina helps found the non-racial, non-party Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW).  
 1955 – The Freedom Charter is drawn up at the Congress of the People.  
 1960 – The government bans the ANC.  
 1962, 5 August – Madiba is arrested.  
 1963 – Albertina and her son Max are detained under the 90-Day Detention Act.  
 1963, October – The Treason Trial starts.  
 1964 – Madiba, Walter Sisulu and other accused are sentenced to life in prison.  
 1989, 13 October – Restrictions on Albertina are lifted.  
 1989, 15 October – Walter returns home.  
 1990, 11 February – Madiba is released.  
 1991 – The Codesa talks begin.  
 1994 – Madiba becomes the president of South Africa.  
 1994 – Albertina Sisulu becomes a member of parliament.  
 1998, 18 July – Madiba marries Graça Simbine Machel.  
 1999 – Mandela's five-year term as president ends.

Albertina recalls a life lesson from her childhood

"[At Mariazell College] Girls were not allowed to receive letters from anyone outside their immediate family unit. Although theirs was a co-ed school, they were strictly forbidden to mix with the boys. They were not even allowed to talk to the boys in class and when taking walks during break periods. But the boys and girls would always find means to communicate. The boys would open the taps of the huge tanks situated at the corners of the hostel buildings. The water would flood the irrigation furrows that passed the girls' dormitories. They would then 'post' their letters on the flowing water to be picked up by the interested parties in the girls' dormitory. Albertina was bemused by this reckless behaviour. Discipline was strict and the punishment was immediate expulsion. She could not understand how people could take such foolish risks with their education."  
 Elinor Sisulu (2002)



© Mayibuye Archives

The death of Madiba's son, Thembekile "One cold morning in July 1969, three months after I learned of Winnie's incarceration, I was called to the main office on Robben Island and handed a telegram. It was from my youngest son, Makgatho, and only a sentence long. He informed me that his eldest brother, my first and oldest son, Madiba Thembekile, whom he called Thembi had been killed in a motor accident in the Transkei. Thembi was then twenty-five, and the father of two small children... I returned to my cell and lay on my bed. I do not know how long I stayed there, but I did not emerge for dinner. Some of the men looked in, but I said nothing. Finally, Walter came to me and knelt beside my bed, and I handed him the telegram. He said nothing, but only held my hand. I do not know how long he remained with me. There is nothing that one man can say to another at such a time."

- Mandela p 201

## Family life of Nelson Mandela

While Albertina was the anchor of the Sisulu family throughout the anti-apartheid struggle, Madiba's political career kept him away from his family for most of his adult life. Madiba married three times.

### Madiba and Evelyn Mase

Madiba's first marriage was to Evelyn Mase. They were married in 1946 but their relationship did not survive the pressures of Madiba's political career. In 1956, during the Treason Trial, their marriage ended. Madiba had often been away from his family because of his work and political activities, and Evelyn was no longer willing to live under those circumstances.

*"Years later, despite the vindication of Mandela's success, Evelyn was still critical of his failure to meet his family obligations. 'While he talked about the struggle against apartheid, I had a struggle bringing up our children alone ... I can never forget those years and how different things might have been had he been a husband and father rather than a revolutionary.'"*

- Luli Callinicos in **The World that made Mandela – A Heritage Trail** (2000)

Two sons and two daughters were born to Madiba and Evelyn Mase - Thembekile Mandela was born in 1946 and Makgatho in 1950. In 1947, their first daughter, Makaziwe, died when she was nine months old. Their second daughter, born in 1953, was also called Makaziwe, to honour the memory of her first-born sister.

### Madiba and Winnie Madikizela

Nelson Mandela's second marriage was to Nomzamo Winnifred Madikizela, popularly known as Winnie. The wedding took place on 14 July 1958 in Bizana, Pondoland. Winnie and Madiba never knew a stable family life. From the time they married, they were apart far more often than they were together. When Madiba was released from prison in 1990, it soon transpired that their relationship had not survived the long years of separation. In 1992, at a dramatic press conference, Madiba announced his separation from Winnie to the world.

Madiba and Winnie had two daughters, Zenani and Zindzi, born in 1958 and 1960, respectively.

Winnie Madikizela  
After Madiba was sent to Robben Island, Winnie continued to work for the ANC. As a result, she was banned by the police. She was not allowed to leave Orlando where she lived. But Winnie ignored the banning order. The police arrested her and jailed her for 17 months. When she was released, she was placed under

house arrest. During the 1976 student uprising, Winnie helped to arrange funerals for children who had been killed and helped form support groups for their parents. Soon after, Winnie was jailed for six months. When she was released from prison, the police banished her to the small Free State town of Brandfort. Winnie lived there for almost nine years, organising a crèche and a mobile clinic. In 1985, Winnie eventually defied her banning order, returning to Soweto. The police continued to harass her but Winnie participated openly in political meetings and rallies. Before Madiba was released from prison, Winnie became involved in strong controversy as a result of the activities of the so-called Mandela United Football Club, which amongst other things resulted in the tragic murder of Stompie Sepei in 1988.

### Regrets

Madiba writes about his regrets about being absent from his children's lives after the death of his son Thembekile in 1969:

"I find it difficult to believe that I will never see Thembi again. On February 23 this year he turned 24. I had seen him towards the end of July 1962 a few days after I had returned from the trip abroad. Then he was a lusty lad of 17 that I could never associate with death. He wore one of my trousers which was a shade too big and long for him. The incident was significant and set me thinking. As you know he had a lot of clothing, was particular about his

dress and had no reason whatsoever for using my clothes. I was deeply touched for the emotional factors underlying his actions were too obvious. For days thereafter my mind and feelings were agitated to realise the psychological strains and stresses my absence from home had imposed on the children. I recalled an incident in December 1956 when I was an awaiting trial prisoner at the Johannesburg Fort. At that time Kgatho was six and lived in Orlando East. Although he well knew I was in jail he went over to Orlando West and told Ma that he longed for me. That night he slept in my bed."

- Letter from Nelson Mandela to Winnie Mandela, 19 July 1969

### Madiba and Graça Machel

On 18 July 1998, Madiba married Graça Simbine Machel, the widow of the Mozambican President Samora Machel, who had died in an aeroplane crash on the border between South Africa, Swaziland and Mozambique in October 1986. Samora Machel had led Mozambique to independence in 1975 and was a staunch supporter of the ANC. To this day, the circumstances of the accident that led to Samora Machel's death are shrouded in mystery. Many believe the accident was caused by the South African military.



© PictureNet Africa / Henner Frankenfeld

### Madiba, Graça and philanthropy

Both Madiba and Graça have continued to champion human rights, and particularly children's rights. Graça has championed children's rights internationally. After retiring from her position in the Mozambican government, Graça was appointed as the expert in charge of producing the ground-breaking United Nations Report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children.

On 18 July 2007, in Johannesburg, South Africa, Nelson Mandela, Graça Machel, and Desmond Tutu convened The Global Elders, a group of world leaders to contribute their wisdom, leadership and integrity to tackle some of the world's toughest problems. Mandela announced its formation in a speech on his 89th birthday.

*"This group can speak freely and boldly, working both publicly and behind the scenes on whatever actions need to be taken," Mandela commented. "Together we will work to support courage where there is fear, foster agreement where there is conflict, and inspire hope where there is despair."*

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gra%C3%A7a\\_Machel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gra%C3%A7a_Machel)



Through the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, Madiba has helped to raise large amounts of money for the improvement of conditions of children in South Africa.

© Shaun Harris/PictureNet Africa



Courtesy Sisulu family

Wedding photograph of Walter and Albertina Sisulu, 15 July, 1944.

### Family Life of Albertina Sisulu

Albertina and Walter Sisulu's marriage is one of the greatest love stories in South African history. Over 50 years, their love triumphed over poverty, persecution by the apartheid government and more than 25 years of separation while Walter was in prison.

The story of how Walter Sisulu met Albertina is told by his daughter-in-law, Elinor Sisulu:

*"Just after he met Mandela in 1941, Walter had the most significant encounter of his life. He was visiting his sister Barbie and Evelyn Mase at Johannesburg General Hospital when he bumped into an acquaintance, Jumba, who was visiting his cousin, Albertina Thethiwe. Jumba introduced Walter to his cousin, and Walter was instantly captivated. 'She appealed to me right from the beginning. I at once made efforts to take her out.'"*

Elinor Sisulu (2002)

After some hesitation, Albertina, who thought Walter was "very handsome", agreed to go out with him.

*"Walter was fond of going to the 'bioscope' [cinema], so he invited Albertina to watch a film and the relationship developed from there. He soon took Albertina home to meet his mother and she became a regular at No. 7372. Here she became accustomed to the buzz of political discussion among the young men who visited the house. So close were Walter and Mandela that she assumed that they were related to one another."*

- Elinor Sisulu (2002)

Albertina and Walter were married on 15 July 1944. After a traditional ceremony in Cofimvaba in the Transkei, they had a second reception on 17 July at the Bantu Men's Social Centre in Johannesburg.

Albertina and Walter's relationship survived the hardship of Walter's political career. By the time he was released from prison in 1989, Albertina was a world famous political figure in her own right. After Walter and Albertina visited the United States in 1990, Walter told their children:

*"Your mother is very well known in the States ... At most places I was introduced as Mrs Sisulu's husband!"*  
- Elinor Sisulu (2002)



© Mayibuye Archives

Walter and Albertina Sisulu remained devoted to each other through the long years of political struggle and the years after liberation. In 1990, months after Walter's release from prison, they visited Lusaka to meet the ANC leadership in exile. Elinor Sisulu was there:

*"Everyone remarked that they (Walter and Albertina) were like a couple on honeymoon and how wonderful it was to see two people of that age so engrossed with one another. I remember Cyril Ramaphosa watching them in amazement. 'Their body language is of two people in love,' he remarked. 'In the struggle you don't expect people to be so expressive. They stand out easily as the most loving couple in the struggle.'"*  
- Elinor Sisulu (2002)

#### Life at 7372

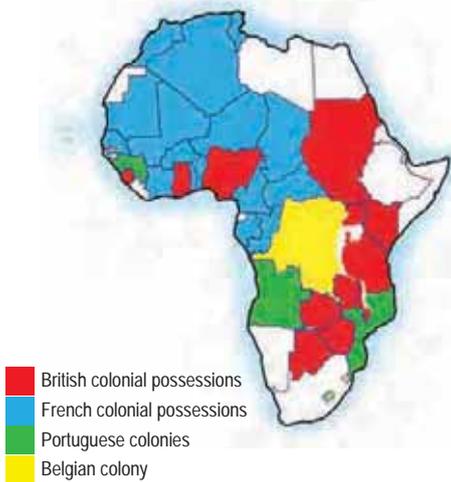
Sheila, the wife of Mlungisi Sisulu, recalls living at number 7372 with Albertina: "She just never stopped to rest. She would spend her weekends doing laundry and constantly cleaning the house. She was fussy about cooking and cleaning and the feeding of people. The house had to be spotless and everyone who visited had to be served tea. At that time things were not easy financially, so the amount of food we cooked, especially meat, was just enough for the family."  
- Elinor Sisulu (2002)

Albertina and Walter had five children of their own. Sons Max, Mlungisi and Zwelakhe were born in 1945, 1948 and 1950, while daughters Lindiwe and Nonkululeko were born in 1954 and 1957. Albertina also took in her sister's daughter, Beryl, and Walter's cousin's son, Jongumzi, and brought them up as her own children.



Members of the Sisulu family pose for a photo in Orlando West, March 1990. Front, from left: Jacqueline with Tshepang, Zwelethu, Walter, Vuyelwa, Albertina, Zodwa with baby Ziyeka; middle: unknown, Tumi, Moyikwa, Thulane, Zoya; back: Jongi, Sheila, Lungi Snr, Lungi Jnr, ANC bodyguard.

© Gisele Wulfsohn



From the age of empires ...  
In 1918, when Madiba and Albertina were born, most of the African continent was ruled by European colonial powers. During their lifetimes, these vast colonial territories would become the independent African states of today.



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## From World War II to Robben Island

During the 1940s, Madiba and Albertina's generation of South African leaders was building the political ideas and relationships that brought the ANC to power 50 years later. After the end of World War II, the process of dismantling the colonial empires started. The ANC took note of signs that the days of colonial dominance of Africa were over.

In 1946, General Jan Smuts Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa and Dr Xuma, then the ANC president, both attended the first General Assembly of the United Nations. At this meeting, the government of India launched a vigorous attack on the racist policies of the South African government. The end of European rule in Africa was drawing closer, but the cautious and polite politics of Dr Xuma's generation of ANC leaders could not bring about political change in South Africa. A younger, more militant generation of ANC leaders needed to change the ANC before it could take on the government effectively. The ANC, an organisation of the black elite, had to be changed into a mass liberation movement with popular membership.

## Founding of the ANC Youth League

During the 1943 ANC conference in Bloemfontein, decisions were taken that led to the creation of the Youth League and Women's Leagues of the ANC. In 1944, Madiba, Albertina and Walter Sisulu participated in the creation of the Youth League Manifesto, which was later presented to Dr Xuma. The first conference of the Youth League was held in 1944 in Johannesburg. In 1949, Walter Sisulu became the first full-time general secretary of the new, mass-based ANC movement. Albertina became the chief breadwinner of the Sisulu family.

Albertina had been involved in the politics of the ANC since the 1940s, but in the 1950s she emerged as an activist in her own right. On 17 April 1954, Albertina Sisulu helped to found the non-racial, non-partisan Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW). She was deeply involved in the campaigning leading up to the Congress of the People, where the Freedom Charter was adopted in Kliptown in 1955. On 9 August 1956, she took part in the Women's March on the Union Buildings. In 1958 Albertina, Winnie Mandela and other women were jailed for their opposition to pass books for women

### NEW IDEALS FOR A NEW GENERATION

The Atlantic Charter of 1941, signed by the USA's president, Roosevelt and Britain's prime minister, Churchill, reaffirmed faith in the dignity of each human being and propagated a host of democratic principles.

"Inspired by the Atlantic Charter ... the ANC created its own charter, called African Claims, which called for full citizenship for all Africans, the right to buy land and the repeal of all discriminatory legislation."

- Mandela (1994)

The African Claims document was presented to the government, who rejected the document as "propagandistic".

The ANC Youth League Manifesto is the founding document of the ANC Youth League. The Manifesto proposes an action plan to transform the ANC from within, and calls for a united national effort to end racial oppression and bring about a society in which all people are free and equal. It calls on the Youth League to transform the ANC from a poorly organised movement with a modest following, into a mass organisation representing all levels of the African population, united by a common national goal.

The Youth League commits itself to actively organising communities, providing political education to the masses and preserving unity and discipline in the organisation.  
[www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/ancylman.html](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/ancylman.html)

### The time of militancy

Madiba and Oliver Tambo established the first black-owned law firm in 1952. They both also rose to high positions in the ANC in the 1950s. Within 10 years' of establishing their law firm, the ANC would be a banned organisation, and Tambo and Mandela would be in hiding or in exile.

In 1956, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela and 156 other activists were charged with treason in a trial that would drag on for years. In 1960, the government declared a State of Emergency. It became clear that the ANC would soon be prevented from organising freely in South Africa. On 29 March 1960, Oliver Tambo left South Africa to lead the ANC in exile. On 8 April the PAC, the SACP and the ANC were banned. Madiba and Albertina both chose to stay in South Africa. These choices caused great hardship and sacrifice in both their lives.

In 1961, immediately after having charges against him in the Treason Trial withdrawn, Madiba went into hiding. He spent this time travelling around South Africa, helping to build ANC structures. This was the year South Africa became a republic. In December, the ANC announced the beginning of the armed struggle against the apartheid government. In 1962, Madiba visited several African countries and travelled to London to promote the cause of the ANC. Returning to South Africa, Madiba was arrested on 5 August 1962, in Howick.

The state brought charges of high treason against Madiba, Walter Sisulu and other ANC leaders in the Rivonia Trial. On 12 June 1964, Madiba was sentenced to life imprisonment and sent to Robben Island.

By placing some of its leaders outside the country, and by building its membership inside South Africa, the ANC had developed the capability to maintain the struggle against apartheid through the hardest years of its history. In the meantime, Madiba and Albertina had to make great adjustments to survive those three decades of imprisonment, banishment, and persecution. Albertina had to apply for a pass book before she was allowed to visit Walter on Robben Island. After all the years of resisting the issuing of pass books to women, and refusing to carry a pass book herself, Albertina now had to submit to the humiliation of applying for the hated document.



To the age of nation states Today, the African continent is divided into self-governing nation states.

Over the period of decolonisation and independence that

coincided with Madiba and Albertina's adult lives, there have been many wars, rebellions and uprisings in the former African colonies. While often also encouraged or aggravated by foreign governments, many of these conflicts were caused by the fact that the borders of new African states were defined by the colonists during colonial times. Across the African continent, borders repeatedly lump people from many different ethnic groups together in single states, while at other times dividing people from single ethnic groups between two or more different countries. Conflicts in the Great Lakes region, for example, have been fuelled by such contradictions between national borders and the ethnic make-up of these new African nations like Burundi, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo.





Albertina's life while Walter was on Robben Island

*"The winds of change had indeed blown in South Africa; but they had blown backwards."*  
- Sisulu (2002)

While Madiba and Walter were in prison, Albertina had to face the harsh realities of apartheid repression in Johannesburg. From 1964 to 1989, Albertina was banned again and again, for approximately 17 years in total – the longest period of time any South African has lived under banning orders. The government regularly renewed her banning order, strictly controlling her movements.

This cartoon illustrates the fear of change experienced by white racists in South Africa.

Courtesy Daily News

#### What is a banning order?

The apartheid government made wide use of banning orders to prevent activists from operating freely, but without having to sentence them and imprison them. A banning order restricted a person's freedom of movement and freedom of association. Typically, a banning order forced the affected person to stay within a particular area, for example to the area where they lived and worked. Banned persons were not allowed to attend meetings, address the public, or meet other banned persons. Banning orders effectively removed activists from society and made it almost impossible for them to continue with political activities.

Albertina suffered considerable financial stress in those years. She managed to stay employed despite banning orders, detention and other harassment by the security police. Often, Albertina and her children Zwelakhe and Lindi, who stayed in South Africa with her, came face-to-face with the violence and intimidation of the apartheid state. Albertina and Walter's other son, Max, went into exile and didn't see his mother or father in these difficult years.

As levels of violence in Soweto and other townships increased in 1976, Albertina was often more worried about others than about what might happen to her. Albertina's daughter, Lindi, had been detained by the police before the uprising began, and the Sisulu family did not know where she was being held. During this time, Albertina remarked to her daughter-in-law, Sheila:

*"The boers can do what they like to your father and I, but when they take my children they break me at the knees."*  
- Elinor Sisulu (2002)

© Sowetan



Lindi was released in May 1977 after 11 months of detention and torture. In June 1977, she went into exile, one of the thousands of young South Africans who left the country in the wake of the 1976 uprising.

In 1981, the banning order on Albertina was lifted, allowing her to form an ANC cell called *Thusang Basadi* (Wake Up Women). This was interrupted on 15 June 1982 when Albertina was issued with her fifth banning order.

In 1983, Albertina was deeply involved in the launch of the UDF and she was elected as one of the three co-presidents, even though she was in jail at the time of the election.

Albertina Sisulu at a UDF press conference on the banning of 17 organisations, 24 February 1988

In June 1989, Albertina Sisulu left South Africa for her first overseas visit. Although she was under another banning order, PW Botha's government could not refuse her permission to travel abroad. She had been invited to visit the USA by President George Bush (senior). She also visited France, England and Sweden. Before returning to South Africa, she met the ANC in Zambia.

On 13 October 1989, banning order restrictions on Albertina were lifted, just two days before the release of her husband from prison. She insisted that she had to be at home when Walter was released. And on 15 October, Walter arrived home at number 7372.

### Nelson Mandela in prison

While on Robben Island (from 1964 to 1982), Madiba could communicate regularly with other political prisoners; he was also able to stay up-to-date with political developments in the country and ANC politics more generally. In 1982, Madiba, Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada and Raymond Mhlaba were transferred to Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town. The government increasingly pressurised Madiba to renounce the armed struggle and to abandon his links with the ANC in exile.

On 10 February 1985, Zinzi, Madiba's daughter, read out a speech that Madiba had smuggled to her from prison, at a UDF mass rally at Soweto's Jabulani Stadium. In the speech, Madiba congratulated Desmond Tutu on winning the Nobel Peace Prize.

*"It went on to explain that the ANC had turned to violence only after all other avenues of resistance had been closed and argued that it was Botha who should renounce violence... He closed on a poignant but proud note: 'I am not less life-loving than you are. But I cannot sell my birthright, nor am I prepared to sell the birthright of the people to be free.' ... It was Mandela's first public message in 20 years, and it had a huge impact both at home and abroad, giving further impetus to the campaign for his release."*

- Elinor Sisulu (2002)

From August 1985, Madiba was jailed separately from Sisulu, Kathrada and Mhlaba. During this time, Madiba initiated talks with Botha's government. He had to be very careful to avoid the impression that he was selling out the ANC. Madiba used letters and conversations with people who could convey messages to Oliver Tambo and the ANC in exile to reassure them that he would not compromise of the objectives of his organisation and that he remained loyal to the ANC. Before Madiba's release in 1990, the authorities moved him to a comfortable home on the grounds of Victor Verster Prison where he could meet fellow political prisoners, UDF activists and other political allies in preparation for his release from prison and the unbanning of political organisations.

The ANC in exile and the UDF in South Africa – Albertina explains her role  
 "As you know, the ANC has been banned for the last thirty years, and in 1989 it was unbanned. And I went to a conference in Lusaka where the ANC was operating, and I was appointed the convenor inside the country. That means a person who is going to see to it that the structures of the ANC, especially the Women's Section, is being addressed. From there inside the country I started working with other women, and we were joined by other women after the unbanning of the ANC, from exile, to help us do the work. We first of all launched our ANC Women's League in Durban in 1990, August the ninth, which is a historic day for women. I am the Deputy President."  
 Albertina Sisulu in interview from Blue Portraits by Reiner Leist



Zinzi Mandela at Soweto's Jabulani Stadium on 10 February 1985.

PW Botha unsuccessfully tries to convince Nelson Mandela to give up the armed struggle as a condition of his release.



Courtesy Derek Bauer Trust

### Three of the best

After being re-united, Walter, Madiba and Oliver Tambo continued their close collaboration as leaders of the ANC. Rusty Bernstein provides an apt summary of how their skills complemented each other in the roles they played: "Mandela's endurance and charisma made him the symbol of our liberation struggle ... Tambo's single-mindedness and diplomatic skills sponsored the world wide campaign against apartheid ... And Sisulu, the 'father of them all', set the strategic directions and the standards of humanity and comradeship which characterised the South African liberation movement ... The interconnection of these three great men shaped our nation's history through the decades of struggle that led to a new South Africa".  
- Sisulu (2002)

Lionel "Rusty" Bernstein was arrested with Sisulu at Liliesleaf, Rivonia, in 1963, which led to the Rivonia Treason Trial.

## Release, negotiations, elections and after

The year 1989 is remembered in South Africa and across the world as a year when political change suddenly happened after decades of very slow progress.

*"Almost overnight, with little warning, the Berlin Wall – that symbol of total breach between two northern empires – was dismantled ... This was final proof of the near-silent collapse of the Soviet empire, and the melting away of the Cold War."*

- Elinor Sisulu (2002)

The demolition of the Berlin Wall ended the division of Germany into communist and capitalist parts – a division that had lasted since the end of World War II in 1945.

In South Africa, a couple of key events in the same year ushered in the end of apartheid. In August 1989, PW Botha resigned as president of South Africa. The new National Party leader, FW de Klerk, was now in the position to make use of the opportunities presented by the change in global politics.

On 13 October 1989, De Klerk lifted all restrictions on Albertina. The next day, Walter Sisulu and seven other political prisoners were released. Walter arrived home in Soweto on 15 October. Even at this emotional time for the family, Walter and Albertina were steadfast in their political commitment. In a statement after Walter's release, Albertina said that her husband's freedom would "not minimise the spirit and actions of defiance among our people until we bring the government to a genuine negotiated settlement for a full democratic, participatory non-racial South Africa for all".

On 13 December 1989, Madiba and De Klerk met face to face for the first time. On 2 February 1990, De Klerk announced at the opening of parliament that political parties would be unbanned, and that Madiba would be released from jail. Madiba was released from prison on 11 February 1990.

Although there was great excitement at Madiba's release and the unbanning of political movements, South Africa faced enormous challenges over this time. Since before his release, Madiba had

been meeting regularly with a team of National Party negotiators to prepare the ground for negotiations between the government and banned political movements. But there was not yet a clear plan for political transformation to which all parties agreed. After his release, Madiba travelled to Lusaka to meet the ANC in exile. He had to convince the ANC that he had not betrayed its political agenda and that it was possible to engage in meaningful negotiations with De Klerk's government.

Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk.

Courtesy Derek Bauer Trust



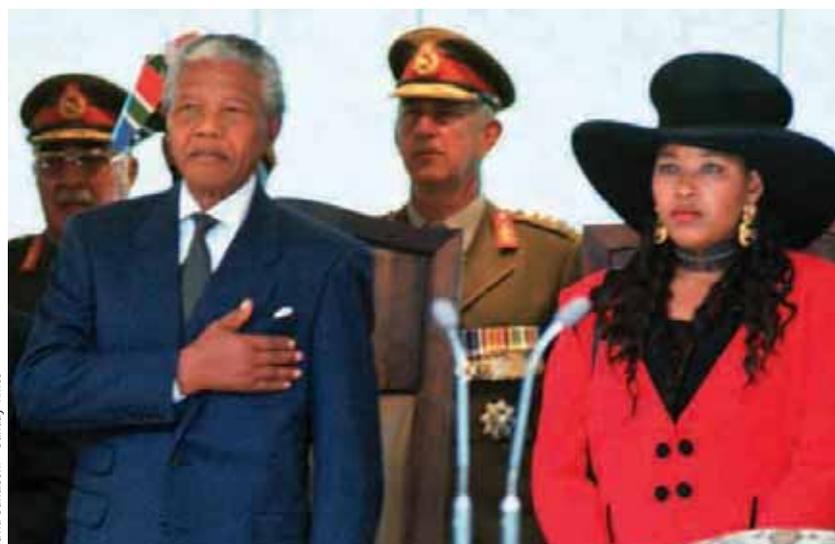
While the ANC and the government were trying to establish common ground for negotiations, political violence continued to claim lives and jeopardise the political process. On 26 March 1990, for example, police opened fire on a crowd of protesters in Sebokeng, killing 12 people and wounding hundreds more. In this month alone, 230 people died in clashes between ANC and Inkatha supporters in KwaZulu-Natal.

In July 1991, the ANC held its first annual conference in South Africa in 30 years. Madiba was elected president of the ANC, placing him in the position to lead his movement to power less than three years later.

In December 1991, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) started. This was the start of the process that brought about a completely new political system in South Africa. In the meantime, political violence continued to claim many lives. In May 1992, the second round of CODESA talks started. But then, on the night of 17 June 1992, 42 people were murdered by Inkatha supporters in the ANC-supporting township of Boipatong. The police had failed to prevent this atrocity, and were suspected by many of having provoked it. The ANC suspended negotiations with De Klerk's government. The relationship between Madiba and De Klerk deteriorated over this time but negotiators on both sides managed to revive the negotiations.

In November 1992, the ANC and the government agreed to the creation of a transitional government, called the Government of National Unity. In terms of this agreement, the ANC and the National Party agreed to share power for a five-year period, allowing time for a peaceful transition from a whites-only system of government to a full democracy in South Africa. A date was set for the first election in South Africa in which people of all races could vote for the government of their choice.

In 1994, Madiba was inaugurated as the first president of a democratic South Africa. Albertina became a member of the South African parliament. Madiba served for one term as the president of South Africa before retiring from politics in 1998. Walter and Albertina Sisulu also retired from politics in this time.



David Sandison © Sunday Times

#### Women's rights

Albertina maintained her focus on women's rights throughout her career. She played a pivotal role in the formation of the ANC Women's League and FEDSAW. She maintained her focus on women's issues after the unbanning of the ANC.

In an interview with journalist Alice Thomson [England 1992] she was able to expound her views on gender and transformation, noting that women were particularly affected by poverty, illiteracy and unemployment: "Our women are exploited three times over. They are oppressed by the traditions and customs of our society ... by the government and by the menfolk." She said she dreamed of a nonracist, nonsexist democratic South Africa with a government to be elected by all the people: "Whether the government elects a white president or a black president, it must be a government run for the people and voted for by the people – and that includes women." - Sisulu (2002)

#### AIDS activist

Nelson Mandela has taken the lead once more. By disclosing that his son Makgatho died due to Aids-related factors, he has shown the way to South Africans struggling to break the stigma that still surrounds the disease in the country. Makgatho Lewanika Mandela died on 6 January 2005, aged 54. He was Nelson Mandela's last surviving son. Mandela's announcement has been described as "courageous", as few prominent South Africans have publicly discussed the effect of HIV/Aids on their families... The battle against HIV/Aids has been central to Mandela's mission in recent years. The Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, started in 1995 to address the needs of young people facing homelessness, joblessness and poverty, now directs a large part of its resources where the country needs them most - to Aids orphans.

- "My son died of Aids: Mandela" (<http://www.southafrica.info/mandela/mandela-son.htm>) 12 January 2005

President Nelson Mandela and his daughter Zindzi Hlongwane-Mandela at his Inauguration, Union Buildings, 1994.



Nelson Mandela Bridge, Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

Courtesy City of Johannesburg

## Madiba

The success of the Release Mandela Campaign and the extraordinary circumstances of the transition to a new political system in South Africa have catapulted Madiba to the kind of world fame which only few people know each century. As a result of this fame, the name and life story of Nelson Mandela is memorialised in the form of monuments, museums, place names, and awards.

Four memorials in South Africa that link the life of Madiba to the places where his life story unfolded are the Mandela House at Victor Verster Prison, the Mandela Museum in Umtata, the Howick memorial to Madiba's arrest on 5 August 1962 and the Mandela Family Museum in Soweto. In London, a bronze statue of Mandela opposite the Palace of Westminster is a powerful reminder of the decades-long history of the anti-apartheid movement in that city.

Roads have been named after Madiba in England, Wales, India and Lesotho. In South Africa, several roads are named after him and today Nelson Mandela Bay incorporates the municipalities of Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage and Despatch in the Eastern Cape.

Nelson Mandela Bay is the home of Nelson Mandela University. In Johannesburg, the city in which Madiba and Albertina became citizens of the world, the Nelson Mandela Bridge between Newtown and Braamfontein is one of the most famous post-apartheid landmarks.

Nelson Mandela has been awarded many honorary doctorates and other awards by governments and institutions across the world. Most famously, in 1994, the Nobel Peace Prize was jointly awarded to Mandela and FW de Klerk.

It's in our hands



Albertina Sisulu highway, Ekurhuleni.

Courtesy Gauteng Corporate Communications

## Albertina

The life of Albertina has not been memorialised nearly as often. One road - the R21 between OR Tambo International Airport and Tshwane - has been named after her. In Soweto, the Albertina Sisulu Centre for Children with Disabilities is an appropriate memorial to a woman who dedicated her life to the care of others.

The Women's Prison at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg, where Albertina, Winnie Mandela and many other female activists were detained during the apartheid years, has been turned into a memorial to these women. In the former solitary confinement section, one of the cells has been converted to a memorial to Albertina. A colour photograph of Albertina, Walter, their children and *bazakulwana* in the cell draws attention to the fact that for Albertina, her beloved Walter, children and grandchildren were always on her mind.

# LEARNING ACTIVITIES

## Greetings educators

This publication is designed as an extra classroom resource. You can use it from time to time to provide your learners with interesting supplementary activities. The learning activities are designed to be a challenge to all secondary school learners. Use them to get your learners thinking.

Each chapter in the publication has its own set of learning activities which follow a specific format:

- Each set of learning activities starts with a suggestion of how you can READ the chapter to the class. The read icon informs you that the activity involves reading.
- The activity based on the CHRONOLOGY in each chapter provides the learners with a schema for understanding the whole chapter. The chalkboard icon reminds you to write the questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.
- The COMPREHENSION activity tests how well the learners read or listened to the chapter. There are basic recall questions for ALL grades in secondary school. Then there are interpretive-type questions for Grades 10, 11 and 12. These graded questions are colour-coded for easy recognition. The read icon informs you that the activity requires reading and writing.
- The SOURCES activity unpacks how sources have been used in the chapter to help construct historical information. The source icon informs you that the activity involves unpacking sources in the chapter.
- The UNPACKING POWER activity helps learners to explore a particular aspect of power dynamics in the chapter. Introductory activities on power dynamics can be found in Unpacking Power: Introduction. These activities are designed to help learners get a broad understanding of the power dynamics that they experience in society. It is possible to do the activities in the chapter without doing the activities in the introduction, but the learners will have a better understanding of power dynamics if they do both. This activity also asks learners to WRITE a range of text types (essay, paragraph, poem and poster, etc.)
- The ANALYSING POLITICAL CARTOONS activity is based on a cartoon found in the chapter. The questions provided help the learners to unpack the message in the cartoon.
- Each set of learning activities ends with a topic for DEBATE that is based on an issue in the chapter.

At the end of the learning activities section is a set of GUIDELINES FOR DEBATING IN THE CLASSROOM which sets out the format for a formal debate.

### The National Schools' Oral History Competition

Each year the National Department holds this competition, which is open to all learners from Grade 8 to Grade 11 and all history educators in secondary schools. A total of 10 learners and three educators (from each province) will be selected to represent their province at a national event to be held later on in the year, and stand in line to win the national prize. Find out more about this competition by visiting the South African History Online website for information on oral history research at [www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za), or get more information from your provincial or area office.

All the history learning outcomes for GET (grades 8 to 9) and FET (grades 10 to 12) are covered by the activities provided for each chapter.

GET	FET
Grades 8 - 9	Grades 10 - 12
Learning Outcome 1 – The learner will be able to use enquiry skills to investigate the past and present.	Learning Outcome 1 – The learner is able to acquire and apply historical enquiry skills.
Learning Outcome 2 – The learner will be able to demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding.	Learning Outcome 2 – The learner is able to use historical concepts to analyse the past.
Learning Outcome 3 – The learner will be able to interpret aspects of history.	Learning Outcome 3 – The learner is able to construct and communicate historical knowledge and understanding.
	Learning Outcome 4 – The learner is able to engage critically with issues around heritage.

## UNPACKING POWER: INTRODUCTION

This section introduces the concept of power, providing a foundation for unpacking power dynamics in each of the chapters. This foundation starts by looking at how power functions in our own lives, everyday, in quite complex and subtle ways.

### PLEASE NOTE:

Most of the exercises in this section require interpretation on the part of the learner. Encourage your learners to approach these exercises as honestly as possible. Your role is to help your learners to:

- See there are different/ alternative meanings from which to choose;
- Make their own choices;
- Reflect on and express how they got to their particular choice; and
- Be able to decide whether or not they can live with that choice by thinking through the consequences of that choice.

Understanding how power works is important because power influences the:

- actions we take;
- ideas we hold; and
- choices we make.

In our lives there are people who seem powerful – others fear them or look up to them as role models. There are also other people who seem to have very little power – others abuse them or take care of them. We refer to those with power as the **top dogs**; and those who are disempowered as **under dogs**.



### What gives some people more power than others?

**PLEASE NOTE:** The focus in this activity is on the qualities that give a person a high or low power status, so it is not necessary for the learners to reveal the names of the people they have used in thinking about these qualities.

Thinking about the **top dogs** we know...

Learners think about a top dog (a powerful person) they know and write down in their notebooks five things about this person that makes them seem powerful.

Thinking about the **under dogs** we know...

Learners think about an under dog (a disempowered person) they know and write down in their note books five things about this person that makes them seem disempowered in their note books.

Write a list of all the qualities the learners offer for top dogs and under dogs in two separate columns on the chalk board. As a class discuss whether these qualities are really deserving of a high or low power status.

### Choices are key to how we live our power

In any given situation we can choose to:

- Empower or overpower others; or
- Be disempowered or empowered by others.

*We always have a choice!*

Learners draw up the table below in their notebooks.

- Read the case study on bullying on the next page.
- Discuss in pairs the questions that follow.
- Complete the information gaps in the table below.

<b>TAKE A STAND – MAKE A CHOICE...</b>	
<b>CHOICE: Join in with the bullying.</b>	
<i>Consequences now:</i> - A free bit of lunch. - A 'sense of power'. - Perhaps none, except for your own conscience. - Perhaps Mpho has an older relative who decides to get the bullies back. -	<i>Consequences a year from now:</i> - - - - - - -
<b>CHOICE: Talk to the learner and together try to work out a solution.</b>	
<i>Consequences now:</i> - - - - -	<i>Consequences a year from now:</i> - Mpho feels empowered for having contributed to ending the bullying. - You and Mpho could help other victims of bullying with a strategy. -
<b>CHOICE: Stand up to the bullies.</b>	
<i>Consequences now:</i> - You will have to find another group to hang out with and risk being bullied yourself. - They could stop bullying Mpho. - They could continue bullying Mpho. -	<i>Consequences a year from now:</i> - - - - -
<b>CHOICE: Do nothing.</b>	
<i>Consequences now:</i> - - - - - -	<i>Consequence a year from now:</i> - Mpho is still being bullied, has a seriously low self esteem, is suffering from depression and has perhaps attempted suicide. - The group has got bored with Mpho and moved on to others, damaging more people's self esteem. -
<b>CHOICE: Consult an adult that you trust.</b>	
<i>Consequences now:</i> - The adult could intervene and stop the bullying. - The bullies could find out you told on them and you get labelled a "snitch".	<i>Consequences a year from now:</i> - - - -
<b>CHOICE:</b>	
<i>Consequences now:</i> - - - -	<i>Consequences a year from now:</i> - - - -

**Read the case study below:**

At your school, some of the guys you hang out with at break have started bullying a learner in a lower grade, called Mpho. It started in the first term with verbal abuse, including calling Mpho derogatory terms like “retard”, “loser” and other rude names. At first you joined in for the fun of it. By the second term, it had become physical abuse with the two of the guys pushing Mpho around, sometimes with Mpho being pushed to the ground. Recently, the guys have started stealing Mpho’s lunch and distributing it among themselves.

**In pairs, discuss the questions:**

- Who appears to be the top dog in this situation? Has this power status been earned?
- Who appears to be the underdog in this situation? What makes this person less powerful?
- How do you feel about what is going on in this situation?
- In the past, what have you done in a similar situation?
- In the future, what do you intend to do in a similar situation?

**Complete the information gap table in your notebooks (refer to previous page):****UNPACKING POWER IN HISTORY**

Let’s now think about the power dynamics we see in the history of our country.

**Unpacking power in history: RACE**

In our apartheid past, power was organised according to racist ideas and set out in the laws of the country. The colour of a person’s skin determined whether a person had power or not.

- Top dog = people with light skin
- Under dog = people with dark skin

Nowhere else in the world has racism ever been institutionalised in the way that it was in apartheid South Africa. But there are a number of places in the world where people have made, and continue to make, the choice to hold onto racist ideas and even act out their prejudices, for example, the Aborigines of Australia and the Native Americans of North America. These are two clear examples of racism.

**Unpacking power in history: GENDER**

The history of the women’s struggle, in the chapter **OUR WOMEN LED THE WAY**, shows how power can be organised according to sexist ideas. A person’s gender determines whether a person has power or not.

- Top dog = men
- Under dog = women

To better understand the power dynamics between the genders in our society, we have to understand the concept of patriarchy. Encourage the learners to read the box on the right (from Chapter 1) and discuss the questions below.

- What is patriarchy?
- How and when should patriarchy be challenged?

Racism, classism and sexism  
While female activists supported the struggle against white racist rule, they also had to struggle against male domination in their own families and communities. Women experienced discrimination because of the colour of their skin (racism), because of their poverty (classism) and because of their gender (sexism). Women had to deal with traditional attitudes on male authority (patriarchy). In this patriarchal value system, women were often treated as inferior to men. The word “patriarch” refers to the male leader of a family or community. The role of the patriarch has often been linked to a value system that limits the roles of women to being mothers, caregivers, homemakers and sex objects. Patriarchal value systems also regard women as unable to take decisions about their own lives, bodies, education, making a living, relationships and their future. In its worst form patriarchy condones the abuse of women by men and women accept this abuse as normal. Our Constitution does not support patriarchy. In 1998, the Commission on Gender Equality said that in South Africa patriarchy “is so firmly rooted that it is given a cultural halo and identified with customs and personalities of different communities. Thus to challenge patriarchy, to dispute the idea that it is men who should be dominant figures in the family and society, is to be seen not [only] as fighting against the male privilege, but as attempting to destroy African tradition, or to subvert Afrikaner ideals ...”

## UNPACKING POWER: WOMEN LED THE WAY

Let's now think about the power dynamics we see in the history of the women's struggle (Chapter 1).

### Read about women standing up for their rights today

The Saturday Star, 14 June 2008, featured an article about 37-year-old Refilwe Mabalane, who lives in the North West village of Mabaalstad. Her late father was the chief of the Baphiring clan, and as his first-born she believes she should become the next chief, because the Constitution guarantees the right to gender equality.

This issue has confounded the tribal council and split the village. Some villagers believe it is very important to acknowledge customs and traditions and preserve them. "But this is a new democratic South Africa that we all created and it is our responsibility too, to respect the principles of this democracy." On the other side, there are villagers who feel that: "It would be like cursing our future generation if we were to allow the principles of our tradition to be bent because we want to be like other nations."

In early June 2008, a landmark decision, which Mabalane believes will strengthen her fight, was handed down by the Constitutional Court. It upheld that a women could be chief. "The court found that traditional authorities had the right to develop customary law, as long as they did so in accordance with the constitutional right to equality."

The court upheld Limpopo Chief Tinyiko Lwandhlamuni Philla Nwamitwa Shilubana's right to succeed her father who died without a male heir. Shilubana sees her case as leverage for women and the end of a long battle.

"There is no custom that is static," she said. "It is dynamic and changes all the time. Women are liberated and above all we have been liberated by the Constitution. This victory is not only for me – it's for all women who have been discriminated against. To be a chief is a birthright ... We don't only belong in the kitchen."

### Encourage the learners to discuss and decide:

- Who do you agree with – those who uphold the Constitution or traditional custom? Why?
- Do you think you are living out this choice in your life? Explain your answer.
- When should culture and traditions change?

### Read about Charlotte Maxeke in 1913 and answer these questions:

- How would you describe Charlotte Maxeke as a person?
- When Charlotte Maxeke says "*this work is not for yourselves*" – what "*work*" is she talking about and who is the work for?
- Why should you "*do away with that fearful animal of jealousy*"?
- Why does Charlotte Maxeke believe that tribalism "*should cease to be*"?

### In groups, discuss the essay topic "*Racism is not unlike sexism in terms of the abuse of power,*" in relation to:

- Charlotte Maxeke and what she stood for.
- Refilwe Mabalane's struggle to become chief.

Learners then **write** this essay in their notebooks.

**Look out for the UNPACKING POWER activities for each of the chapters.**

#### Charlotte Maxeke

Charlotte Maxeke, one of the earliest female activists, was born in Ramokgopa, Pietersburg (Polokwane) in April 1874.

She was the first African woman to graduate from a university - the Wilberforce University in Ohio, USA - with a Bachelor of Science degree. On her return to South Africa, she married the Rev MM Maxeke and was instrumental in introducing the African Methodist Episcopal Church to the country.

Members of this church were to play a leading role in the founding of the ANC. Maxeke was involved in the early anti-pass marches and later co-founded the Bantu Women's League and the National Council for African Women. In both instances she called for political unity across gender and racial barriers. Her fight for social justice even took her to the courts of Boksburg and Benoni, where she appeared before magistrates on behalf of youths who had been arrested. She died in 1939 and is buried in Kliptown.

Maxeke taught that you could not experience solidarity if your own ego was more important to you:

"This work is not for yourselves – kill that spirit of 'self' and do not live above your people, but live with them. If you can rise, bring someone with you. Do away with that fearful animal of jealousy – kill that spirit, and love one another as brothers and sisters. The other animal that will tear us to pieces is tribalism; I saw the shadow of it and it should cease to be."

- Charlotte Maxeke at the 2nd conference of the National Council of African Women, Bloemfontein, 8 December 1938



## 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FORMATION OF THE BANTU WOMEN'S LEAGUE



### READ the chapter

Read the chapter loudly and clearly to the learners, using learners who read aloud well to help you.

### CHRONOLOGY: Get a sense of the women's struggle

Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Allow the learners to work out the answers in pairs.



- How long after the formation of the ANC in 1912 were women allowed to become full members of the ANC?
- How long after the formation of the ANC in 1912 did the organisation broaden its understanding of equality to include gender equality?
- When did white women get the vote? When did black women get the vote?



### COMPREHENSION: How well did you read the chapter?

Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Learners should write their answers in full sentences in their notebooks.



#### General recall questions for all grades

1. How did the women lead the way?
2. What did Josie Palmer do in the struggle for democracy to deserve the honour of the National Order of Luthuli in silver?
3. Why did women protest against the Liquor Act of 1928, which prohibited the brewing of traditional beer?
4. List all the rights that the Women's Charter of 1954 called for?
5. How did women resist Bantu Education?
6. Why is Miriam Makeba a good example of an activist in exile?

#### More interpretive type questions for:

##### Grade 10

7. Why do you think Dr Abdullah Abdurahman, of the African People's Organisation, at first scolded the women for their activism and then changed his mind and praised them?
8. You have been given the task of designing the programme for the next Women's Day function in your province. What kinds of things would you include in the programme and why?

##### Grade 11

9. Why do you think the relationship between FEDSAW and the ANC deteriorated (became strained) in the late 1950s?
10. What kind of person was Masediba Lillian Ngoyi and in what ways did she contribute to the struggle for democracy in this country that earned her the ANC's highest award?

##### Grade 12

11. "Fighting against racism, alongside men, does not always guarantee women that men will fight against sexism alongside them." Is the above quote true for the women of South Africa? Give reasons for your answer.
12. In a plaque unveiled by the SA Heritage Resources Agency, Charlotte Makgomo Maxeke was given the title "The Mother of African Freedom in this Country". Do you think Charlotte Maxeke would agree with the state buying large amounts of weapons and giving her name to a submarine when so many children are going hungry in this country? Give reasons for your answer.

### UNPACKING POWER

See the Unpacking power: Introduction for the activity for this chapter.



### SOURCES: The 1994 Women's Charter for Effective Equality

In this chapter we find out about the two Women's Charters. The first was adopted by FEDSAW at its first conference in April 1954, and the second was created by the Women's National Coalition in 1994 through a process known as Operation Big Ears. Encourage the learners to read the extract from the 1994 Charter, and answer these

questions:

1. Why was the process by which the charter was created known as Operation Big Ears?
2. How do the women represented by this charter feel they have been treated by the society in which they live?
3. What do they mean when they say: "We cannot march on one leg or clap with one hand"?
4. What are the women asking for in this charter?

### ANALYSING POLITICAL CARTOONS: Cartoon on page 15

Encourage the learners to listen to the story below right (box) and use information from the chapter to answer the questions below.



#### The Story of the Three Little Pigs

There were once three little pigs who agreed each would build a house.

The first little pig decided to build a house with straw, the second little pig a house with wood and the third little pig a house with bricks. But a big, bad wolf was watching them.

When the first little pig went inside the straw house, the wolf called out: "Little pig, can I come in and see your beautiful new house?" The first little pig was very frightened and told the wolf to go away. "Let me in, or I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down!" shouted the wolf angrily. Then he took a deep breath and blew the straw house down.

The first little pig ran to the second little pig in the wooden house and the wolf called out: "Little pig, can I come in and see your beautiful new house?" The second little pig was also scared and told the wolf to go away. "Let me in, or I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down!" shouted the wolf. Then he took a deep breath and blew the wooden house down.

When the two little pigs got to the third little pig in the brick house, the wolf called out: "Little pig, can I come in and see your beautiful new house?"

"No," said the third little pig.

"Let me in or I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down!" shouted the wolf angrily. Then he took a deep breath and blew so hard he fell over because the brick house was so strong. The wolf was very angry and hungry, so he got a ladder to climb up on the roof and down the chimney. The third little pig saw what he was doing and put a big pot of boiling water on the fire and the wolf fell right into it. He leapt out the pot, ran out the door and across the field as fast as his legs would carry him. And the three little pigs lived happily ever after in the little brick house.

### Questions

1. There are three little pigs in the house. How are they dressed? Who do they represent?
2. There is a wolf lurking outside the house. How is he dressed? What does he represent?
3. Does he look like a friendly wolf? Give reasons for your answer.
4. What kinds of papers protect the three little pigs?
5. Is this house like the house of straw, wood or bricks in the Story of the Three Little Pigs? Give reasons for your answer.
6. Where will these three little pigs run to if the wolf blows down the house in this cartoon?
7. From his comment in the speech bubble, how strong does the wolf think the house is that the three little pigs are sitting in? Explain the irony in his comment.

### DEBATE: Women's rights

"In the 21st century there is no reason for any culture to deny any woman any opportunity!" (Refer to debate guidelines.)

## 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DURBAN STRIKES



### READ the chapter

Read the chapter loudly and clearly to the learners, using learners who read aloud well to help you.

### CHRONOLOGY: Get a sense of the history of the workers' struggle

Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Allow the learners to work out the answers in pairs.



- Which law made non-racial trade unions illegal? When?
- Which law made striking illegal? When?
- When did the first black industrial union form? What was it called? For how long did it exist?
- When was the registration of black trade unions first allowed?
- Make a list of all the organisations using full names and acronyms that have the words union, trade, labour or workers in their names. What does this list tell us about the history of the workers' struggle in South Africa?



### COMPREHENSION: How well did you read the chapter?

Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Learners should write their answers in full sentences in their notebooks.



### General recall questions for all grades

1. Why does Zwelinzima Vavi think trade unions are so important in a society like ours?
2. What is a strike and when do workers use strike action?
3. How did workers succeed in their strike at the tea-packing company of TW Beckett and Co.?
4. What major breakthrough happened at the Smith and Nephew plant in Pinetown in 1974?
5. Why was the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) one of South Africa's most successful trade unions?
6. What happened after the death in detention of Neil Aggett?

### More interpretive type questions for:

#### Grade 10

7. What were the causes of the strike action that started in Durban in 1973, and continued throughout the 1970s?
8. For what did the female workers who attended the COSATU Women's Congress in 1988 ask?

#### Grade 11

9. What is the history of Workers' Day?
10. Draw up the programme of events for the next Workers' Day function in your province.

#### Grade 12

11. How did the government react to the growth in power of the unions in the latter half of the 1970s and the 1980s?
12. What factors made Durban the incubator of South Africa's democratic trade union movement?



### SOURCES: Posters

Write the questions on the chalk board before the lesson.

In groups learners use the questions to unpack the message in the poster.

1. Who is represented by the top fist? Why?
2. Who are represented by the row of fists at the bottom of the poster? Why?
3. Why is there only one black fist in the poster?
4. What does the black fist suggest about the committees' ability to represent the concerns of black workers? Explain your answer in full.

Each learner **writes** a response to the poster to show their understanding of the:

- caption;
- visual style;
- point of view of the black workers in relation to the committees; and
- point of view of the bosses in relation to the committees.



### UNPACKING POWER: Point of view – workers vs bosses

Before the lesson draw the tables below on the chalkboard. Encourage the learners to discuss in groups, the points of view of workers and bosses with regard to different aspects of the workplace. Once they have completed their group discussion, and shared their answers as a class, they can fill in the table.

- Learners should consider how both groups feel about this aspect of the workplace.

How do you feel about each aspect below?	Workers – Employees	Bosses – Employers
Work done by workers		
Workers' wages		
Working conditions		
Company profits		
Strikes		
Trade unions		

- Learners should consider what both groups want in relation to each aspect of the workplace.

What do you want to achieve?	Workers – Employees	Bosses – Employers
Work done by workers		
Workers' wages		
Working conditions		
Company profits		
Strikes		
Trade unions		

Each learner **writes** an essay in their notebooks comparing the different points of view of the workers and bosses in relation to at least three aspects in the workplace.

### DEBATE: Workers' rights

*"Leave politics to the politicians; trade unions should concern themselves only with labour issues."*  
(Refer to debate guidelines.)

**READ the chapter**

Read the chapter loudly and clearly to the learners, using learners who read aloud well to help you.

**CHRONOLOGY: Get a sense of Angolan history**

Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Allow the learners to work out the answers in pairs.

- For how long was Angola a Portuguese colony?
- When was the MPLA established?
- Which of the three rival political movements (UNITA, FNLA, or MPLA) was the last to form? When?
- When did the Cubans first become involved in Angola?
- When did the South Africans first become involved in Angola?
- When did the civil war in Angola end?

**COMPREHENSION: How well did you read the chapter?**

Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Learners should write their answers in full sentences in their notebooks.

**General recall questions for all grades**

1. Who were the leaders and foreign supporters of the three rival political movements in Angola?

	MPLA	FNLA	UNITA
Led by?			
Supported by?			

2. How did the MPLA and UNITA fund their armies?
3. Which countries supplied troops and weapons to fight the war in Angola?
4. What is "war by proxy"? Which country got involved in the war in Angola in this way? Why?
5. What was the Cuban Missile Crisis?
6. Who was involved in negotiating the peace accord and which countries did they represent?
7. What is Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome and how does it affect its sufferers?
8. How has the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale been memorialised, and by whom?

**More interpretive type questions for:****Grade 10**

9. Why did South Africa get involved in this war in Angola?
10. Why did Cuba get involved in the Angolan war?

**Grade 11**

11. Why was there such tension between the United States of America and Cuba?
12. How did these two countries' involvement in Angola differ?

**Grade 12**

13. What was the Cold War? Who were the major players? How did the Cold War affect what happened in Angola?
14. Why was the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale such a significant battle?



### SOURCES: Speech by Fidel Castro at the ceremony commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Cuban Military Mission in Angola, 2 December, 2005

Write the questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Encourage the learners to read the extract in the chapter and answer the questions below.

According to Fidel Castro:

1. Which country launched a covert plan in Angola?
2. a. Which countries supported this covert plan?  
b. In which parts of Angola did the fighting take place?  
c. What city were both these countries aiming to reach?
3. What role did the Cubans play?

Do you agree with Fidel Castro's interpretation? Give reasons for your answer?

### UNPACKING POWER: Who won and who lost in Angola?

There are different views as to who won and who lost the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. This battle was part of the civil war in Angola that lasted for 27 years.

Write these figures on the chalkboard before the lesson:

- Cuba sent 55 000 troops to Angola.
- South Africa sent between 3 000 and 5 000 troops.
- According to official figures released by the SADF, 4 768 Cuban troops were killed and 44 South African troops.
- The war displaced four million Angolans – a third of the population.
- Fifteen million landmines were laid by 2002.
- Human Rights Watch estimates that UNITA and the MPLA employed more than 6 000 and 3 000 child soldiers respectively.
- 500 000 Angolans died.



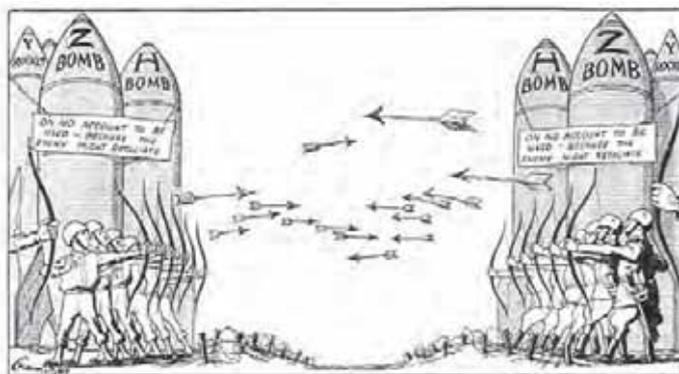
Encourage the learners to discuss, in groups, and decide for themselves who won and who lost after 27 years of civil war in Angola. They can use the facts and figures on the chalkboard, and in the chapter, to inform their responses. After the group discussions, learners share their opinions with the class and give reasons for their answers.

### ANALYSING POLITICAL CARTOONS: Cartoon on page 32

Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Encourage the learners to use information from the chapter to answer the questions that follow:

1. "On no account to be used – because the enemy might retaliate" What does retaliate mean?
2. What is a Mexican stand-off? How is it represented in this cartoon?
3. Which countries are represented in this cartoon? Are they equally matched? Give reasons for your answer?
4. Why are the soldiers fighting with bows and arrows when they have bombs?



### DEBATE: Beauty after war

"Beauty contests for landmine victims raise awareness for amputees in a questionable and tasteless way and should be banned!" In preparation, read the extract on **Beauty contests for landmine victims** (page 40). (Refer to debate guidelines.)

**READ the chapter**

Read the chapter loudly and clearly to the learners, using learners who read aloud well to help you.

**CHRONOLOGY: Get a sense of the contribution by the UDF to the struggle for freedom**

Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Allow the learners to work out the answers in pairs.



- When was the UDF launched?
- What campaigns did the UDF launch?
- What happened to some UDF leaders?
- For how long did the UDF exist?

**COMPREHENSION: How well did you read the chapter?**

Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Learners should write their answers in full sentences in their notebooks.

**General recall questions for all grades**

1. The UDF began as an initiative of coloured and Indian anti-apartheid activists who rejected the government's proposal of a tricameral parliament. Explain how this proposal caused the formation of the UDF.
2. No individuals, only organisations, could join the UDF. What kinds of organisations joined the UDF?
3. How was the UDF structured and what advantages did this structure offer the organisation?
4. What is civil disobedience and how was it used by the UDF to further its aims?
5. What kinds of things do you need to do in order to organise a protest march?
6. What was the Medu Art Ensemble and what happened to it?
7. How did the UDF spread its message throughout South Africa and the rest of the world?
8. What did the apartheid government hope to achieve in the Pietermaritzburg and Delmas treason trials?

**More interpretive type questions for:****Grade 10**

9. Describe the role music, theatre and poetry played in the struggle against apartheid in the 1980s.
10. What methods did the apartheid government use to try to undermine the UDF in the 1980s?

**Grade 11**

11. Was the fact that the UDF was comprised of so many different organisations a strength or a weakness? Give reasons for your answer.
12. Some people believe that the dynamics of oppression for certain segments of our society today are not very different from apartheid times. Would you agree or disagree with this opinion? Why? Why not?

**Grade 12**

13. What would stand in the way of the ANC government creating the likes of a National Security Council today?
14. Mamphela Ramphele says: "All South Africans are newcomers to democracy. We must acknowledge our authoritarian political heritage. It will not simply go away in the face of a democratic national constitution. It should be called by name and put to rest ... How do we honour freedom of expression without promoting the imposition of dominant views that undermine the rights of others to hold theirs?" Do you agree/disagree? Give reason for your answers.



### SOURCES: Struggle song: Asimbonanga by Johnny Clegg

Encourage the learners to perform this song with passion in the classroom, or for a school assembly.



### UNPACKING POWER: Are power dynamics static?

Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Encourage learners, in pairs, to discuss the answers to the questions below.

During the 1980s in South Africa:

1. Who were the top dogs?
2. What mechanisms did the top dogs use to maintain power?
3. Did the top dogs succeed in maintaining power? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Who were the under dogs?
5. What did the under dogs do to try to get more power?
6. Did the under dogs succeed in getting more power? Give reasons for your answer.



Encourage the learners to discuss how the power dynamics in the 1980s in South Africa shifted. Then in their notebooks the learners **write** a paragraph about the lessons to be learned from this time in our history.

### ANALYSING POLITICAL CARTOONS: Cartoon on page 45

Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.



Encourage the learners to use information from the chapter to answer the questions that follow:

1. Describe the person in the foreground of the cartoon. How is s/he dressed? What is s/he carrying? Why?
2. What does this person represent?
3. Why is there a white hand giving him/her money?
4. Why can't you see the whole of the white person?
5. Who do the two people lying on the ground represent? Who put them on the ground? Why?
6. What is going on in the background of the cartoon?



### DEBATE: Building our Democracy

*"Vote for the DA. The ANC needs an opposition party that is a strong challenger if our young democracy is to grow and flourish."*

In preparation read the following extract from an article in **The Star** newspaper, 6 May 2008, in which the new spokesperson for the Democratic Alliance, Lindiwe Mazibuko, says:

*"The more I read the more I realised ... I agreed with the DA on a lot of points ... It's difficult ... for a black person to be seen to agree or even associate with the DA. There is an unwritten understanding among black people that the liberation struggle was fought on their behalf and that voting for any party other than the ANC was a slight on those who laid down their lives for the cause."*

(Refer to debate guidelines.)

**READ the chapter**

Read the chapter loudly and clearly to the learners, using learners who read aloud well to help you.

**CHRONOLOGY: Get a sense of the lives of these great South Africans**

Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Allow the learners to work out the answers in pairs.



- How old were they when Madiba enrolled at the University of Fort Hare and Albertina became a trainee nurse in Johannesburg?
- How old were they when Albertina married Walter and Madiba married Evelyn Mase?
- How old were they when the Freedom Charter was drawn up at the Congress of the People in 1955?
- How old was Albertina when she helped found FEDSAW in 1954?
- How old was Madiba when he was sentenced to life in prison on Robben Island?
- For how long was Madiba in jail?
- For how long did Albertina have to raise her children alone while Walter was in jail?
- How old were they when Madiba became president and Albertina a member of parliament?

**COMPREHENSION: How well did you read the chapter?**

Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Learners should write their answers in full sentences in their notebooks.

**General recall questions for all grades**

1. How would you describe Madiba and Albertina's childhoods?
2. What clan did Madiba come from? What clan did Albertina come from? How did these clans differ from one another?
3. How would you describe Albertina's relationship with her husband, Walter?
4. What factors contributed to the breakdown of Madiba's first two marriages?
5. What was the ANC Youth League Manifesto and what was its message?
6. How were Madiba and Albertina treated by the apartheid government from the 1960s to the 1980s?
7. What organisations has Albertina been part of and what roles has she played?
8. What challenges did Madiba face after he was released from prison in February 1990?

**More interpretive type questions for:****Grade 10**

9. Describe experiences in both their childhoods that influenced the kinds of people that Madiba and Albertina were to become.
10. Write a praise song for either Albertina or Madiba to be performed in class or at a school assembly.

**Grade 11**

11. Do you think the memorialisation of Albertina has been adequate? Give reasons for your answer.
12. What kinds of things are Madiba, and his third wife Graça, involved in today that show they care about the society of which they are part?

**Grade 12**

13. How has Madiba responded to the HIV / AIDS pandemic? Why do you think he has taken this stance?
14. How has Albertina shown her commitment to women's rights throughout her political life?



**SOURCES: Letter from Madiba to Winnie, 19 July 1969**



Write the questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Encourage the learners to read the extract from the letter in the chapter and answer the questions below.

1. In what ways did Madiba's sons show their need for their dad in their lives?
2. What prompted Madiba to write this letter?

**UNPACKING POWER: Stand up for what you believe in**

Madiba and Albertina, in the course of their lives, made the choice to hold on to what they believed in, even when faced with punishment. They stood true to what they believed in – they “walked their talk” – and the nation is filled with gratitude.



Encourage the learners to choose a current, local issue about which they feel strongly. Learners can then express their thoughts and feelings, and show their commitment to this issue by choosing to do at least two of the following options:

- Design a poster;
- Write a poem;
- Compose a song; or
- Create a drama or a story.

**ANALYSING POLITICAL CARTOONS: Cartoon on page 67**



Write these questions on the chalkboard before the lesson.

Encourage the learners to use information from the chapter to answer the questions that follow:

1. How is Madiba portrayed in this cartoon?
2. How is PW Botha portrayed?
3. What is the irony in what PW Botha is saying?



**DEBATE: The value of solidarity**

An African proverb states, “If you want to travel fast, travel alone. If you want to travel far, travel together.” Debate this proverb in relation to the lives of both Nelson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu.

(Refer to debate guidelines.)

## GUIDELINES FOR DEBATING IN THE CLASSROOM

Encourage learners to get involved in debating, because it will help them to develop a wide range of useful skills, including how to:

- research a topic;
- structure an argument;
- listen to others' points of view;
- counter an argument in a constructive way; and
- stand up and speak in front of the class.

### Set up the teams

To set up a debate you will need six learners to volunteer – three learners for Team A and three learners for Team B. Each team is made up of a chairperson and two speakers.

### Choose and prepare a topic

Once a topic has been chosen, by you or the learners, the teams should decide which team will agree with the topic, Team A, and which team will disagree with it, Team B. The teams will then need some time to research the topic and prepare their arguments for the debate. By doing the learning activities for the chapters, the learners may be aided in their research.

For a **prepared debate** the learners can be given a few days or even a week to prepare, whereas for an **impromptu debate** the learners can be given one hour to prepare.

### The structure of the debate is as follows:

TEAM A	TEAM B
The chairperson introduces her/his team and the topic showing their agreement.	The chairperson introduces her/his team and the topic showing their disagreement.
Speaker 1 speaks for two minutes giving her/his points of agreement.	Speaker 2 speaks for two minutes giving her/his points of disagreement.
Speaker 3 speaks for two minutes giving her/his points of agreement.	Speaker 4 speaks for two minutes giving her/his points of disagreement.
The debate is opened up to the floor (class).	
The chairperson sums up her/his team's points of agreement and concludes the debate for the team.	The chairperson sums up her/his team's points of disagreement and concludes the debate for the team.

After the debate, the class decides which team presented the more persuasive argument and this team is declared the winning team.

Continued from the outside back cover...



We then re-dyed it and I walked around for a while with blonde hair, a blonde goatee and granny glasses. It was a pretty effective disguise.

After a few months, I dropped my disguise and continued my political work as usual. But in mid-1988 I was eventually detained without trial by the Security Police. When they interrogated me, their first question was "Why do you draw us as pigs?". I answered "I draw what I see". Then they put me in solitary confinement

(though the real reason for putting me in solitary was I refused to answer questions about my comrades).

I still hold onto my experience of the UDF days as my political lodestone. It is a time I often think back on when grappling with issues in the present. The principles of those early days – the commitment, the passion, the sense of a budding democracy, and especially the non-racialism of the UDF – continue to inform my work today and I often call upon my UDF experiences when I'm trying to figure out what I want to say and draw.



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