

**Comrade George Naicker - 1919 – 1998** by Phyllis Naidoo, 16/04/1998

Early on Eid-ul-Adha, the 8 April 1998, at the farm Chongella, George Naicker, after his early morning walk sat down and collapsed. On his way to the hospital in Lusaka, he died.

He was one of six sons born to his parents on the 1st June, 1919. Only Jakes his brother remains in the family. He lost his mother while in prison on Robben Island.

Billy Nair whose association with George dates from 1950 when he was a branch member of the Seaview, Bellair, Hilary and Umhlatuzana area of the Natal Indian Congress says, that George was a delegate to the Congress of the People and joined the SACP in the 1955/56 period i.e. in its illegal period. Few of us know the cost of such membership.

Communists, post World War 2 despite their immense contribution to the defeat of Nazism, were an endangered species. The UN-American activities of the McCarthy period found links in SA where the CPSA was banned in 1950 while the cold war was being put in place. He embraced membership of the Party despite the consequences.

Prior to his arrest in July, 1963 he was employed as a legal clerk at the late G.S. Naidoo's office in Queen Street. While the constitution of the ANC made membership exclusive to Africans, George from his daily work in a legal office knew the mind boggling quality of the oppression and deprivation visited on African life. Ndabazabantu court is where you would find George regularly. Long after he went to Robben Island his clients were searching for him not believing that he was in prison.

Sunny Singh (ex-Robben Islander) states that he met George of NIC Youth Congress and was a Youth Delegate to the World Youth Festival (in Hungary).

In 1964, charged with sabotage etc. he was sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. He served his 14 year sentence to the day and returned home to further restrictions and House arrest orders on the 28th February 1978. The imposition of punishment by the courts did not satisfy police officers. They imposed further restrictions on his release, while Archie Gumede generous as the day is long, employed him on his release.

Today many peace-time activists have surfaced, but George through the organisations he worked in challenged the might of the then Nationalist party, incurred their wrath and took whatever punishment was meted out. He never capitulated on the Freedom Charter. He was and is our proud Charterist!!

MK structures outside the country found that a police agent had infiltrated our ranks. It decided to remove Ebi [Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim] and George from the country in 1980. The only description of George MK had was his very small feet.

Many times did he drop his pen to have a look at George's shoe. However George's indomitable courage had no relationship to his shoe size.

Soon Uncle George was in Lusaka, HQ attached to the treasury department. He was in charge of Chongella Farm where Sahdhan Naidoo was manager. He promised me faithfully that he would take care of my son. When Sahdhan was assassinated on the 15th April 1989 he would not talk to me feeling in some way he had let me down. In life and death you were his Uncle George.

When we started to return home in 1990. George was charged with taking care of the assets of the ANC in Lusaka and elsewhere, in a traumatic period, where some tried to personalize the organisation's possessions. He stayed behind.

George Naicker was a miniscule fellow weighing at most 50kg and wearing size 4 shoes. He was unassuming, always in the background, never in leadership roles. Dare anyone mistake that for weakness. If you did, you did so at your peril.

On Robben Island, he and Sunny Singh attended to getting the news together. How he obtained the newspapers, the radio that kept them abreast of the Nationalist propaganda are all dramatic and traumatic stories. He took part in the celebrations to honour the USSR on the 7th November every year under the noses of the warders. He suffered the extreme pain and indignity of a straight jacket.

George whether in detention or in a straight jacket on Robben Island betrayed none of his comrades. His integrity was unblemished. He worked his butt off in the struggle for democracy in our country. He was no clock watcher. All his energies were given selflessly to the NIC, ANC, MK and SACP. If Thomas Nkobi (the late ANC Treasurer-General) were alive, he would tell of his trustworthiness where money was involved. George was our shining star. He lived the life of a revolutionary with great distinction.

There is a quote that is used for the greatest leaders of the revolutionary movement. It is equally due to those salt-of-the-earth people who work and lead in the lower echelons of the movement and without whose work the greatest leaders would have nothing to lead:

"Man's dearest possession is life, and since it is given to him to live but once, he must so live as to feel no torturing regrets for years without purpose; so live so as not to be scarred with the shame of a trivial and cowardly past; so live that, dying, he can say: "All my life and all my strength were given to the finest cause in the world - The liberation of Mankind".

Thank you for your life George. We are so proud to have walked this road with you. We will miss your visits when you came armed with biscuits, fruit and that wonderful smile.

HAMBA KAHLE GEORGE.

Reference: Naidoo, P. (1998). [Comrade George Naicker - 1919 – 1998](https://web.archive.org/web/20071009072345/http://www.anc.org.za/people/naicker_g.html). Available at [https://web.archive.org/web/20071009072345/http://www.anc.org.za/people/naicker\\_g.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20071009072345/http://www.anc.org.za/people/naicker_g.html) online. Accessed on 18 August 2020.