



## **ANTON XABA**

aka Anthony Ndoda 'Mfenendala' Xaba

Born 1 April 1933 – Died 21 July 2009.

**Speech given by Phyllis Naidoo at his funeral Saturday, 1 August, 2009, at the Sobantu Sports Ground, Pietermaritzburg.**

On the 5 December 1975, when William Khanyile, Judson Khuzwayo, Harold Nxasana and two others left my office in CNR House, Cross Street, Durban, they were immediately detained. I only realised this when my neighbour told that he saw 5 arrests outside my office. Reading the Daily News that evening told of 75 detentions under The Terrorism Act had taken place in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, I only knew of the detentions of the five comrades who had left my office.

## *Footprints*

We had no news of Comrade Zuma and worried about his safety. On the 5 January 1976 he called his 'attorney' to say he was safe in Swaziland.

I was soon visited by the families of the detained both from Pietermaritzburg and Durban. We checked with the Special Branch of the Police Force and they confirmed the detentions but denied the detention of Stephen Dlamini. It was Lulu Gwala who saw him lying in his pee (See Footprints in Grey Street by Naidoo)

It was Mavis Magubane, Elda Gwala when released from detention, Peter Brown, Drs Chetty and Motala and others who took care of the families and detainees in Pietermaritzburg. Daily in Durban my office sent parcels for each detainee that we had identified. Police refused visits by the families, but allowed fruit, nuts and sealed food.

If you speak to Jeff Radebe articulated to me then, now Minister of Justice he will tell you how he parcelled food daily for detainees. Bongzi Dlomo will tell you of her detained brother who had parcels daily from my office. So too Beauty Khuzwayo will confirm that Judson had parcels daily. In a later detention we were able to send Judson warm clothes as well, as that tiny frame of his, was freezing.

I was banned and House arrested from 1966 to 1976, in exile from 1977 till 1990, I've lost my two sons Sahdhan and Sha both MK cadres. It is 34 years since this trial commenced!  
At 81 my memory is not to be relied on, so do some research and check the facts of my memorial to Comrade Anton.

The trial started in March 1976 and the accused were shocked to learn of Joseph Mdluli's death in detention on the 19 March 1976. They were devastated! What a way to start their trial?

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### **So who were the accused?**

Harry Gwala, John Nene, William Khanyile, Azaria Ndebele, Joseph Nduli, Cleopas Ndlovu aka Cass, Matthews Meyiwa, Zakhele Mdlalose, Anton Xaba (in the box before you) and Truman Magubane, the last accused is alive. If he has a good memory after the torture he endured, he will help you with Anton.

## *Footprints*

**CHARGES:** They were charged with recruiting for MK!

**DEFENCE:** Their defence was that they were recruiting for SACTU the forerunner to COSATU. They were sending cadres for trade union studies to the UK, and not MK.

The dilemma was that while there were some trade unionists on trial, there was also two kidnapped accused – Nduli and Ndlovu who were involved in MK activities with Joseph Mdluli who had already been kidnapped. Some MK recruits, who once they were in Swaziland, refused to go further and wanted to return home.

While Mdluli was murdered, the young recruits were on the list of the State's list of witnesses, and ready to give evidence against the accused.

### **Who were the lawyers?**

Senior Advocate George Muller,  
Junior Advocate Chris Nicolson (now judge),  
Rowley Arenstein consultant on SACTU – wanted by Gwala, Attorney Navi Pillay, Arenstein wanted her. Pillay had done trial work before (now judge in International Criminal Court in Geneva)  
Phyllis Naidoo, comrade and attorney for their welfare.

The trial lasted until July 1977.

I had to leave the country before the decision to appeal the sentences was taken. The underground cell I worked with was blown with the arrest of Shadrack Maphumulo, murdered later in Swaziland. I went to Lesotho. Judson left via Botswana.

Anton's footprints in the struggle against Colonialism/Apartheid are firmly imprinted in our democracy.

I won't traverse the obituary that you would have found in The Witness, The Mercury and the Sowetan.

He is survived by his wife, Ncongwana Regina Xaba. There were no children. Thirty years in prison does not help either!

There were two sisters Theodora Xaba and Florence Xaba and their children were known as Anton's grandchildren.

## *Footprints*

These family members must have contributed to Anton's well being whether in detention or in prison.

Anton joins our hallowed ancestors – Chief Albert Luthuli, Comrade Moses Kotane, Late President Oliver Tambo, Comrade Joe Slovo, Comrade Lillian Ngoye, Comrade Helen Joseph, Amah Naidoo, Comrade Stella Damons and so many icons of our struggle.

Thank you Anton, we salute you!

Hamba Kahle comrade!

Phyllis Naidoo

Durban.

31 July 2009.