

Name: Simon Marule

Date of birth: unknown

Date of death: December 23, 1986

In summary: Simon Marule, a black South African political activist, was detained during apartheid due to the 1985 nation-wide state of emergency. Marule was denied sufficient medical care while detained at Modder B prison and, due to this negligence, died in detention from kidney failure. His family has been involved in an investigation regarding his treatment in detention and has received insight into the medical negligence that took place from a hearing conducted by the Truth and Reconciliation Committee.

South Africa's system of racial segregation, known as [apartheid](#), created a social hierarchy where the white minority obtained privileges and a far better way of life than the black majority. Due to this, South Africa's records of history are biased and unreliable, favouring the views and opinions of the white population living in South Africa. Because of this, there are few accounts of the wrongs that happened during apartheid, more specifically, records of [death in detention](#) during this time are not covered and many people's stories are not told. The very purpose of this paper is to tell the story of a man who died due to death in detention. His name and memory must live on and a record of what happened to him is important to further understand the effects of apartheid on the people of South Africa.

A neglect in medical care and the lack of attention itself are what led to Simone Marule's death in detention on 23 December 1986. This was the fault of police officers and surgeons in detention and research indicates the unwillingness of authorities to admit to fault. Simon Marule was detained (along with 30,000 other people) fighting for basic human rights in South Africa in the 1980s. Although he was detained with many others, he was mistreated and abused by police officers. This abuse was not right in itself. Marule was also denied basic treatment and health care, which lead to an 'unexpected' kidney failure. This kidney failure could have been observed

and prevented if medical officials and police officers listened to Marule and treated his symptoms.

Simon Marule was a black man who lived in the segregated apartheid state of South Africa. His social status resulted in his opposition to the South African government, therefore, involving Marule in fighting against it as a political activist. Through his political activism, Marule became caught in South Africa's nation-wide state of emergency. In 1986, the state of South Africa declared a nation-wide [state of emergency](#) in which over 30,000 people were detained. Reports indicate that the South African state declared this state of emergency because the removal of anti-apartheid leaders and activists was necessary in ensuring security and public order.<sup>1</sup> The government declared the state of emergency because they claimed they had information regarding plans made by anti-apartheid radicals that could potentially be dangerous and pose a threat to the general public. This state of emergency was declared in 1986, at the height of Marule's involvement. His involvement led to his detention in Modder B. prison, located east of [Johannesburg](#), the place Marule would soon be found dead. An investigation was done in order to discover facts about Marule's death in connection to the state of emergency in which he was detained. The investigation, conducted by the [Human Rights Commission](#), uncovered the truth behind allegations of torture and assault in detention.<sup>2</sup>

When Simon Marule was taken away and detained, he was assaulted by the police in the back with a wooden board. During his stay in detention, Marule shared concern of his physical state multiple times despite the medical teams dismissal of his concern. Not only did Marule share his concern, but fellow prisoners attempted to relay their concern for him as well, but were

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Cowell. 'State of Emergency Imposed Throughout South Africa, More Than 1,000 Rounded Up.' *The New York Times*. June 13, 1986.

<sup>2</sup> John Battersby. 'Pretoria Medical Policy Faulted in Detainee Death.' *New York Times*. February 12, 1989.

ignored all the same. When Marule was finally acknowledged, he was sent to the surgeon who did a simple test and sent him away. When medical examiners observed Marule and realised he needed surgical treatment, but did not act on it, the examiners practiced medical negligence and contributed to Marule's death.<sup>3</sup> More evidence reveals that the surgeon did not take a urine sample from Marule which would have revealed Marule's kidney disease that would later become fatal.<sup>4</sup> Simone Marule died in detention of kidney failure in 1986.

Police officers and surgeons that were involved in Simon Marule's detention played a key role in what lead up to his death. The police officers attacked Marule, giving him injuries that would be sustained and neglected during his time in prison. Officers also ignored Marule and his fellow inmates when concern was expressed regarding his health. Another account discusses further overall negligence of Simon Marule, medically and regarding his basic human rights, by the baseline medical tests that were performed. These tests were deemed, 'superficial, and were not thorough. A doctor was even reported saying, '*When he is in a cell he is not my patient.*'<sup>5</sup> This further emphasises the ways in which no action was taken in saving, or simply caring about, Simon's life.

Simon Marule's family demanded an investigation into his case. Marule was the eighty-fourth black prisoner to die in detention and this high death rate was beginning to be seen as systemic violence. Not only was Marule's family concerned with the death rate in the prison, but the international community was also beginning to raise questions about brutality and abuse

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Abel. *Politics by Other Means: Law in the Struggle Against Apartheid, 1980-1994*. Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group. New York, New York. 1995.

<sup>4</sup> John Battersby. 'Pretoria Medical Policy Faulted in Detainee Death.'*New York Times*. February 12, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> Laurel Baldwin-Ragaven . Jaenella de Grouchy. Leslie London. *An Ambulance of the Wrong Color*. University of Cape Town Press. 1999.

taking place in detention.<sup>6</sup> Marule's family was also upset with the South African government because they were told by police that Marule was to be transferred from Modder B. Prison to the hospital, shortly before his death.<sup>7</sup> This appears to be an attempt to hide the brutality and neglect that took place, resulting in the death of Simon Marule. However, the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) conducted a hearing on 17 June 1997 in which they examined violations against human rights in the context of medical collusion, mistreatment, and negligence.<sup>8</sup> This hearing allowed for medical professionals to confess their wrongdoings and provide insight and reconciliation for the families of victims like Simon Marule's family.

Simon Marule was not given the attention and medical care that he needed during the time he was detained in Modder B. prison. He was brutally berated with a board in his back and suffered police brutality in this act. Surgeons ran baseline tests on Marule, however, did not test his urine and failed to discover kidney disease. Surgeons report that they did not give him the care he needed, even when they knew his health was at risk. Not only did apartheid government employees neglect Simon Marule's basic health needs, but they also neglected his basic human rights. The South African Apartheid government was at fault of Marule's death and this can be proven through medical documents, witness accounts, and testimonies. By ignoring Simon Marule's requests for medical attention, the South African apartheid government cost him his life.

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Godspeed. 'South Africa Has to Face New Evidence of Brutality.' *Toronto Star*. December 5, 1987.

<sup>7</sup> Reuters. 'Tribal Clash at South Africa Mines Kills 8.' *Los Angeles Times*. December 25, 1986.

<sup>8</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Committee. 'Human Rights Violations: Health Sector Hearings.' Cape Town. 17 June 1997.

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