

# 17 ZOLLIE MALINDI

## *Athlone ANC Branch*

In one respect Zollie was one of the luckiest comrades in the Region, as he was always able to keep his job at a garage in Sea Point. Obviously he was a very important person to his boss, even indispensable. Many a time during our struggle we would be arrested and detained often for a long time. When we were released some would be sure to find we had lost our jobs, but Zollie would be welcomed back by his sympathetic employer with both arms open. I should explain how valuable this job security was. Losing a job for some of us meant losing the right of residence in Cape Town followed by deportation. Those who had exemption from

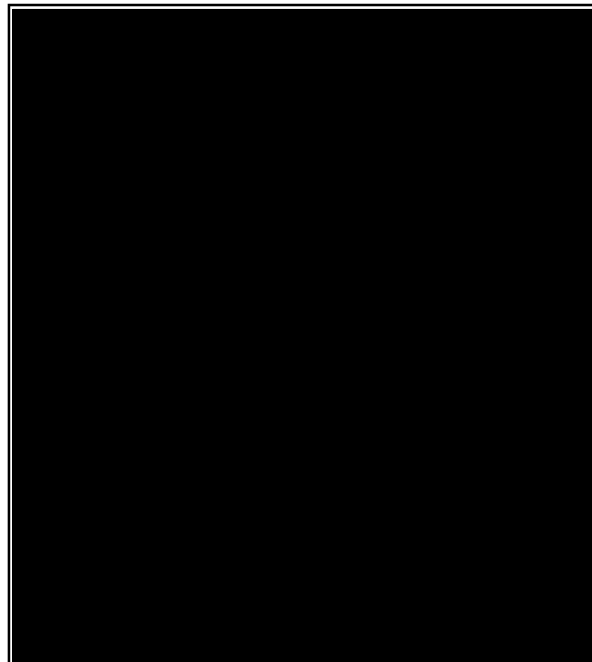
this, because they were born in Cape Town or had worked in the city continuously for at least 10 years, were punished in other ways. They were black-listed by the Special Branch police as trouble makers and employers were warned they should not take us on if they employed a lot of workers.

Zollie was a dedicated man, one of those I call a powerful leader of our region. He was a calm person with extensive patience when dealing with people's problems, as well as an excellent speaker.

Every working day at lunchtime in Cape Town there was a public meeting at the

Parade. Zollie was always there, in his greasy work overalls, having come straight from his work in Sea Point on his scooter or in a car he had borrowed from the garage, and he always had to rush back at work by 2 o'clock.

He was very important to the meeting, because some of the speakers could not speak English or Xhosa, the common languages of Cape Town. Zollie would be there to rescue the situation by interpretation. If the speakers were not very good Zollie would do what I call "parallel interpretation", and improve on what the speaker had said. Of course the meeting would applaud the interpretation instead of the speaker! In fact Zollie was an important person for all ANC public meetings, as speakers usually spoke in Xhosa and his interpretation into English was essential.



Zollie Malindi (Right) and ANC President Albert Luthuli in Cape Town 1959. Christmas Tinto is behind on left.

Zollie also played important roles in ANC internal meetings. As long as I knew him he was Chairman of his branch, which meant he was ex-officio a member of the Regional Committee and there too his presence was always felt.

Others can relate better than me Zollie's continuing contribution after 1963. I did not see him again until the late 1980s when I went with OR Tambo to Lesotho to the funeral of ANC personnel who had been murdered by South African Defence Force in an attack on Maseru. Zollie, who was working underground in SA happened to be there

too and it was very good to see him and learn news from the struggle at home.

Since 1990, I go to visit him every time I am in SA, and I find he still has wise comments to make about our country, in spite of advancing age and the loss of a leg. He still has his sense of humour too and we still tease each other. I always argue that his lost leg should have been buried in a coffin carried by soldiers of the Luthuli Brigade, with Zollie himself addressing the crowd, praising his wonderful leg that supported him during the struggle for freedom. This makes him laugh and respond that I haven't changed one iota, I am still a silly person.

# 18 REV SIKOLAKHE MARAWU

## *Kraaifontein ANC Branch, later Nyanga East ANC Branch*

Sikolakhe Marawu was born on January 9<sup>th</sup> 1922, near Lady Frere in the Eastern Cape. He was one of the many Africans from the Eastern Cape who went to Cape Town looking for work. He settled in Kraaifontein and married, was widowed, and married again, having 13 children in all.

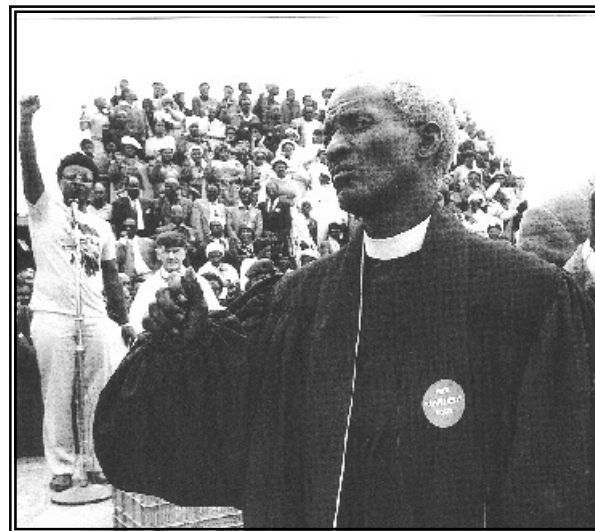
By the time I met him he was already an ordained minister. He had decided early on that religion and ANC politics coincide in many respects and we recognized his commitment to both the church and the struggle by calling him Comrade Rev. (Of course, the ANC's anthem, now the national

anthem, is a religious hymn, calling on God to bless Africa)

He was a born organizer in both his causes. In the church he was a believer in uniting different churches. The SACTU slogan 'Organise or Starve' was his favourite starting point in his speeches at ANC public meetings and he sincerely believed that our freedom depended on every one of us working together. He believed that everybody should be an organizer, simply because everybody wants to live and not only live but have a good life. He would say that every one had to work to make these things come about.

Comrade Rev acted as chaplain to our Region. The visiting of bereaved families fell on him and almost all deceased ANC comrades were buried by him, a contribution that was appreciated enormously by ANC members and their families. It is important to note that the racist regime did not like that kind of reverend as the funerals he conducted often gave the stature of martyrdom to our dead comrades. Other ministers, even if the dead person was a parishioner, were often afraid to be associated with the ANC, and of course we ourselves did not want ministers like that to bury our people. In fact Comrade Rev became indispensable when one of our members died.

There was another important contribution of Comrade Rev and that was his commitment to trade unionism. I know of no other minister of religion who organized



workers to join trade unions in South Africa, before or since. Most of the reverends I know are delicate specimens, not rabble rousers. Organising trade unions can be a rough job, in particular in a country like South Africa then. African trade unions were not

recognized and had no protection under the law. In fact, as far as the racist regime was concerned, trade unionists were communists to be imprisoned, or, at worst, made to “disappear”. The last I heard of Comrade Rev, when I was already overseas doing my military training, was that he was organizing dock workers in Durban. Later I learned that he was a trade union organizer up until the time of his death in 1987, when he was also involved at the top level in the UDF.

Looking back, I can see that it cannot have been easy for Comrade Rev to work with us. Most of the leaders in the Western Cape were not religious people and religion was not at the top of our agenda. In fact, many of us were communists or at least pro-communist. He did not find himself among people who talked nicely about religion and to be there with us he must have had strong

convictions about both his political and his religious beliefs.

I am happy that the Provincial Government of the Western Cape acknowledged his contribution by awarding him “The Order of the DISA” posthumously in 2004. How sad that he did not live to see achievement of the freedom that he fought for all his life and to receive the award in person.

In seeking further information and a photograph of Comrade Rev, I wrote to his daughter, Ms Zou Kota-Fredericks, MP, Chair of the Housing Portfolio Committee. This is an extract from her reply.

‘Allow me to thank you on behalf of my family for writing this book which includes my father. This will be a testimony for generations to come. It is now clear that Rev’s hard work in the struggle and that of his fellow comrades like you was not in vain,

especially our history from 1953-1963. We need that history as it is missing especially the unsung heroes and heroines of that time.... I have enclosed a photograph and a copy of the certificate of The Order of Disa

which was bestowed on him posthumously by the Premier of the Western Cape, Mr Ebrahim Rasool, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2004 in recognition of his role in the struggle for a democratic South Africa.'



**"The inexorable march of civilization has finally caught up with us."**

("Net vir Hereros" translates into "Hereros (or 'Bantu') only"

David Marais (1963)  
Out of This World

# 19 PATRICK MATHANJANE

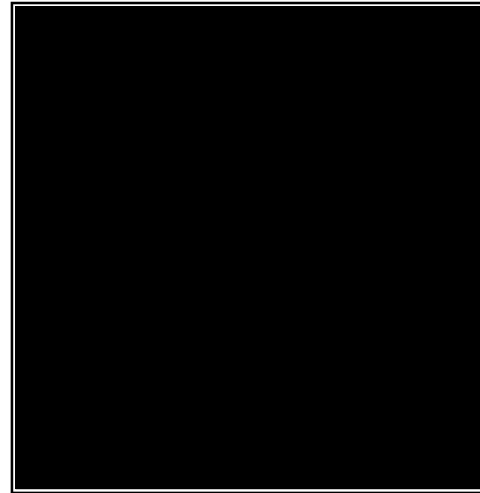
## *Langa ANC Branch*

Patrick was born in 1942 kwa Langa in Cape Town. The father was a man called Gasela, a well known name kwa Langa.

Patrick was close to his mother who battled to bring up her son on her own. He never attended school but began to be educated when he joined the ANC Youth League. The ANC ran political education classes for their young people and those who were keen were helped to learn to read and write as well.

He became a very good and keen student and was allowed to join the Mamre group and afterwards went abroad for military

training as an MK officer. Patrick is still alive and an active ANC member. Perhaps he will write his own history some day.



## 20 ELIAS MATINYA

### *Kraaifontein ANC Branch*

I first met Elias at the regular Regional meetings of the ANC, where he represented his branch. He was already in his 60s but he was still very active. He was working at the huge cement factory in Kraaifontein.

When SACTU was formed Elias invited us to come to his factory to help form a union. SACTU responded and within a short period we had established a union in the cement industry.

Once his own union was formed, Elias did not stop there. He started organising in other factories in the area, and he introduced a resolution at the

Regional Committee that there should always be an item on the agenda about organising trade unions. This was in line with the policy advocated by AJ Luthuli, the President General of the ANC, that it was not enough to be a member of the ANC. Those who were working should join their trade union, or if there wasn't a union in their place of work, they should organise the workers to form one.

To promote this policy the ANC Regional office got application forms for joining a union from SACTU and copied them and distributed them to all branches.

Everybody liked Elias and he seemed to be able to get on with everyone. He was the sort of comrade who, when there were troubles anywhere in the region – and there were many in our region- would be delegated to go to the trouble spot and use his powers of persuasion to make peace. Whenever he was speaking everybody listened attentively, even smokers who had gone out for a smoke would come back to listen when he stood up! He was obviously recognised as an experienced and wise comrade and his skills as a

peacemaker were known throughout our region. He died while I was out of South Africa, and I do not know any details of what happened.

Sometimes I feel we have been robbed of the wisdom of our old comrades because so few wrote anything and we have no records of what they gained from their experiences.

This even applies to prominent national figures, like the great JB Marks – what a loss!

## 21 JIYANE MBANE

### *Langa ANC Branch*

Jiyane was born in October 1932 in the village of amaKhuze. His parents were Livingstone Mbane and Mmyira Mbane. He started his schooling at Gilton Primary School but when he was 14 he moved with his family to Cape Town. There he went to a Methodist Church School to complete Standards five and six.

After leaving school he got work in a garage in Salt River, later moving to a garage in Mowbray. At this time SACTU was starting to organise garage workers and Jiyane was amongst the founder members of the Garage Workers Union. This meant that he was already becoming aware of the political

situation in South Africa, but what made him decide to join the ANC was the arrest of the Treason Trialists in 1956. An additional factor was the removal of Africans from various areas of Cape Town as a result of the passing of the Group Areas Act

There were many like him. These regime actions contributed to raising the political consciousness of most Africans and provoked an upsurge of defiance of the unjust laws of the racist regime. Things were moving fast and the intensification of oppression did the opposite of what was intended and people joined the ANC in droves.

Later the ANC Regional leadership of MK decided to set up an under cover military training camp at a remote farm in a place called Mamre, north-west of Cape Town. Jiyane was one of the young men who trained there. The camp was closed for security reasons and all the youth who had been there were to be sent out of the country for intensive military training abroad.

The comrades travelled up to Johannesburg in small groups and there met the comrade who was to arrange their route to Botswana. This was a man called Mthembu, who apparently had become an informer. He did immense damage before he was discovered, and Jiyane and the others were arrested at Zeerust on the border, ending up on Robben Island.

Picture from Althea at Ditsela

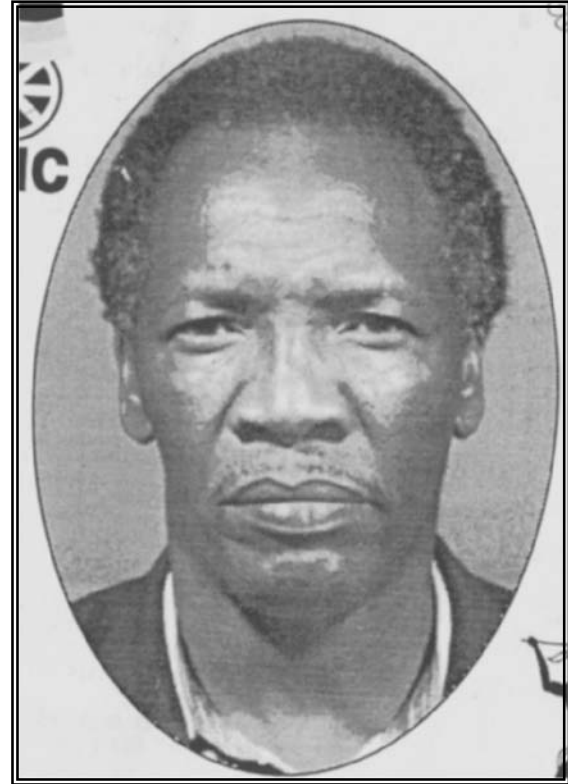
When he was freed from Robben Island he decided to go back to his village and organise there for the ANC. He is still doing that today.

## 22 VUYISILE MDALA

### *Nyanga East ANC Branch*

Richard Mdala was born on 30th of October 1939 in Hout Bay. He was the son of Resisi Thomas and Xoliswa Violet Mdala. He was the last born in a family of four. His father died when he was about fourteen years old. He was brought up by his mother Mamcira.

He attended his early education at a Dutch Reformed Church school in Parow. After the forced removals, his family was moved to Nyanga East and he continued his schooling at another Dutch Reformed Church school in Nyanga. In 1959 he left school and went to work at a sweet factory called Bendsorp. After that he went to work at



Volkskas Bank in Bellville. During this time he was already an active member of the ANC Youth League.

He was involved in the mass campaign against Bantu education. He was also involved in Isintu Discipline Peoples Heroes, a group led by Teddy Nqaphayi, which was fighting ‘spoilers’ who were terrorizing people in the townships.

In 1962 he was one of the first volunteers to join MK cadres training at a camp in Mamre. They were arrested and their case was remanded until 18 January 1963. In order to avoid sentencing, Looksmart Ngudle and I decided that they should leave South Africa in January 1963. He left Cape Town with Teddy Nqaphayi, Siphetho Willie and Leslie Spellman.

## 23 DAVID MGUGUNYEKA

### *Langa ANC Branch*

David was the chair of Langa Branch. Langa was never as strong and reliable as most other branches, but this was not to say that there were not many outstanding and committed leaders there, like David himself and other comrades such as Comrades Ngwevela, Xamlashe and Kukulela and others. No, the explanation was the nature of Langa township itself.

Langa was one of the oldest settlements of Africans in the Western Cape, the only older one being Ndabeni, a nearby township. There were two very different sorts of people living in Langa, in two different

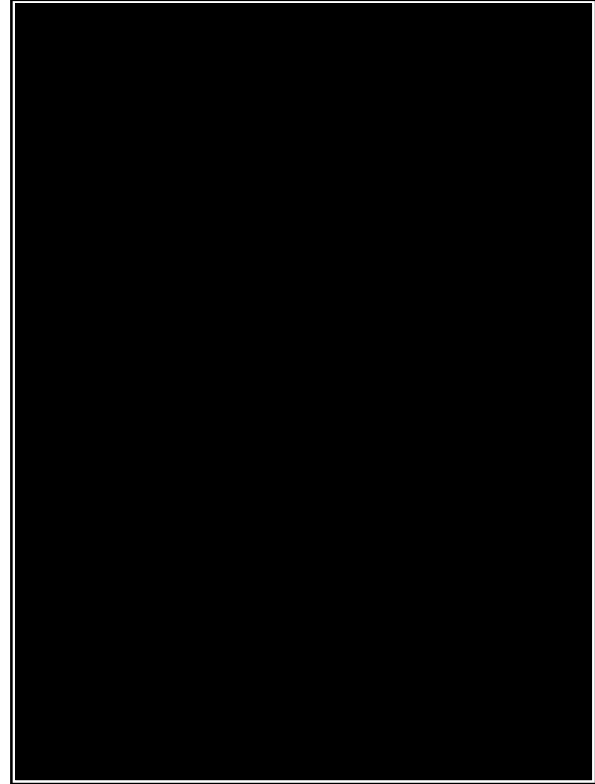
types of accommodation, married quarters and bachelor's quarters. Most of the residents of the married quarters were people who had been born in Cape Town and so had the privilege of being granted exemption from the need to carry passes.

By contrast, those who lived in the very poor facilities of the bachelors quarters were migrant workers, part of a group of 'home boys' whose hearts were still in the villages they came from, and who were (often rightly) very suspicious of those born and bred in towns, who looked down on 'red-blanketed' people like themselves. Generally

they did not want to get involved in anything that might interfere with them earning some money and returning home.

There was another thing about Langa that made it a difficult place. It was the site of the hated Cape Town Pass Office. Every African who came to Cape Town had to register there to get permission to be in Cape Town, permission to work in Cape Town, permission to reside in Cape Town, permission to exist in Cape Town.

Every morning in Langa, in the area around the pass office, where migrant workers were queueing for a pass, it was like a cattle market, only instead of animals it was people who were for sale. White farmers, white 'madams' looking for maids, or any business wanting labour 'bought' Africans who were clamouring for work. If you hadn't yet got your work permit, the employer could



get you one after you had been taken on. This covered working for that particular employer only. If you were not wanted there any more, or if you caused any trouble, you would be deported. No wonder the migrant workers were not an easy recruiting ground for the ANC.

And who staffed the Pass Office? Africans who had exemption from carrying a pass, like many of the residents of Langa married quarters, were often employed to do the dirty work of the Apartheid regime, including issuing, or not issuing, passes and this corrupted many of them. They were selling passes to our desperate people who needed work. Even some ministers of religion got corrupted and asked for money to issue fake birth certificates.

David and his comrades had the difficult job of organizing such a divided

community. As well as the pass office employees there were policemen and informers everywhere. They had to assume that one out of every twenty or thirty people was a collaborator of the regime.

It was not a surprise that David Mgugunyeka was among those who were arrested for High Treason in 1956. For the whole year we were together in prison in Johannesburg. There were unintended consequences of the regime's decision to conduct this trial. For many of us that year was a rest from the pressures of the struggles in the townships and it was like a year at university studying politics and in particular learning about the history of South Africa and the unfolding of the struggle against Apartheid.

When we were discharged we were automatically banned and confined to our

respective magisterial districts, so after that we saw little of each other.

When I returned to South Africa in 1990, I was told that David had disappeared, like so many of our comrades. Perhaps one day someone somewhere will reveal what happened to this comrade who battled against the odds in Langa.

David Marais Collection,  
Manuscripts & Archives,  
University of Cape Town Libraries



## 24 NOMALIZO MKONTO

### *Kensington ANC Branch, then Nyanga West ANC Branch*

I first met Nomalizo at Kensington ANC branch meetings. She was always with her mother, an ANC supporter in her sixties. She was obviously a 'Mummy's girl', apparently under her mother's thumb, but it seemed that this suited her. She had her own children, but she lived with her mother and could always leave them with her mother and go out as much as she pleased, for work or other reasons. There was only one condition; that Nomalizo attended ANC meetings and reported back, which she was happy to do. So both women were pleased and of course the ANC gained too, because Nomalizo got

addicted to ANC politics. This was what the mother had hoped would happen.

Nomalizo was a typical black urban woman. She had a partner, the father of her children, but they could not marry because he had a wife and another family back in the village he came from. This was a common pattern as the Apartheid system would not allow men to bring their wives to town because they were regarded by the government as unnecessary appendages. The man lived with Nomalizo in her mother's house and no doubt contributed some income, but the women would have to supplement

that, probably by doing cleaning in white peoples' houses, or taking in washing. That was easier for Nomalizo than for some women because of her mother's help.

As time went on Nomalizo was able to play an active role in many structures of the ANC and related groups, like the ANC Womens' League and the Federation of South African Women.

She also took part in the important preparations for the Freedom Charter, going with others from door to door asking people what demands they wanted to be incorporated in our Charter. This Charter, of course, became the ANC policy that drove our struggle for the democracy that we enjoy today.

Sadly when we returned from abroad in 1990 I could not trace many of my old comrades, including Nomalizo and it seems

that this daughter of South Africa, who did so much for the struggle, did not live to enjoy the fruits that she was struggling for.



## **25 BONISWA PRISCILLA MNGENI**

### *Kensington, later Nyanga West ANC Branch*

Priscilla was born in 1926 in Port Elizabeth. Her mother was Rwangqa and her father was called Mfama Thuswa. After passing her Junior High School Certificate she went to Cape Town to look for work and there she married Isaac Mafu Mngeni and had four children.

I first met Priscilla through the ANC while we all lived in Kensington and then again later when we had been removed to Nyanga West. There she was part of an ANC Women's League group, together with Gertrude Mtyekisane, Normaliza Mtonto, Lettie Sibeko and others, who organized

door-to-door during the day, recruiting women and men who were not working. They were helped by Looksmart Ngudle who by this time had given up employment and had his own shop, also which acted as an ANC centre in the township.

Priscilla had a wonderful pondoki, designed so that it was easy to escape or hide if the police suddenly appeared, carrying out one of their daily raids in the township. The pondoki had false doors and hidden exits and reinforced ceilings so that someone could stay comfortably in the roof space. This sort of house design arose from the needs of women

who had to find ways of surviving and who resorted to selling liquor illegally. The political struggle also called for places for people and things to be hidden and so we copied this clever invention.

Boniswa took the risk of looking after comrades who had to go underground during the many declarations of states of emergency. From time to time I was one of those hiding there, and it so happened that I was the father of her fourth child, Shula.

She was taking a big risk by getting involved in this underground work. If it had been discovered that she was hiding wanted people she would have faced imprisonment or deportation to a remote rural area. She was fully committed to the struggle, regardless of the dangers she faced.

She did not spare her family either. As her son grew up in the seventies, he showed



no signs of doing anything worthwhile. She was not a person to accept nonsense from any one, not even her own son. She told him that he should join other young people who were going abroad for military training to free his country. If he didn't he was not welcome at her home.

It did not surprise me then to discover that she was still very much involved in the struggle more than twenty years after I left

the country. When I visited Lesotho in the late 80s I learned from Zollie Malindi that I had just missed Boniswa by an hour. She had come to Lesotho to lead some comrades, who had been abroad for training and were returning to work underground, back into South Africa. Unfortunately soon after this she became ill and died in 1987, so she did not live to see the fruits of her labour, a free, democratic South Africa.

## 26 JAMES MNINZI

### *Kensington ANC Branch, later Nyanga West ANC Branch*

James Mnzini was born in 1942, so he was only a boy at the beginning of this period, but he became an exceptional and outstanding youth leader in the Western Cape. Later he married Sheila Mafanya and they had two children.

When we were all moved as a result of the racist Group Areas Act from Kensington to Nyanga West, James was still living with his parents. This was good from the ANC point of view because it meant that he had a lot of time for political work. He was able to get to know many young people from the families who were flooding into the new township from different parts of the Cape

Peninsular, and so find out something about who these newcomers were.

Nyanga West was a boiling pot. We found ourselves with people we did not know at all. We all had in common that we were fed up because the regime had forced us to move to this place from our old houses. We had to start from scratch to build ourselves some sort of shelter from any material we could lay our hands on, old zinc sheets, cardboard, newspaper or whatever. The place was crowded and we had no choice but to build too near to each other, so that if a fire broke out the place was very dangerous.

In this boiling pot we needed to know who was who. The strangers included people who were police or police informers sent there by the regime to infiltrate our organization and inform the authorities about what was happening politically in the township, and particularly about our leadership. There were some who were not interested in our struggle, whilst others were comrades from neighbouring branches of the ANC and we needed to get in touch with them as soon as possible. The last group was people with whom we disagreed politically, like the breakaway PAC.

The role of the Youth was to help us find out about our new neighbours, so that we could protect our people and our organization and prepare to implement the M-Plan. We needed a strong and disciplined leader for the



young people to take on that task and James was the young comrade who became that leader.

The M-Plan (called 'M' after Mandela who was delegated to take responsibility for it) had been prepared by the ANC National Executive so that the ANC would still be able to function when the organization had been

banned, as we all knew it would be. It was a plan for us to carry on our work underground.

James showed his strength as an organizer when we had to make the M-Plan work, as we had to be able to call together a large group of comrades within 30 minutes, at any time that it was needed. One example of this being done was one night when we heard that ANC comrades in the Bachelors Quarters in Langa were about to be attacked by some thugs organized by the PAC. James immediately mobilized more than a hundred of the youth to put a stop to that menace by being there when the thugs arrived.

A second mobilization took place when the regime attempted to force stooge Urban Bantu Councillors on our township, as a pilot before imposing them on all the council-controlled communities. An attempt to have a Bantustan leader hold a meeting

was rudely stopped in its tracks by force of numbers. The incident actually proved helpful to us, as it caused the regime's stooges in the township to expose themselves - and subsequently have to leave in a hurry! The Youth made sure that both Nyanga East and Nyanga West were at least temporarily clean of informers and stooges.

When the ANC decided that we had to prepare to fight, the Western Cape leadership organized a military training camp at a place called Mamre. James was the leader of the youth who went there for training and then he was sent overseas for further military training.

He was a shining example to other young people both inside and outside the country as a MK soldier. He never changed. When we returned home and the time came for MK soldiers to be integrated into the new

South African Army, the white senior officers tried to demoralize our comrades by refusing to give them the rank they deserved. Some resigned in disgust, but James remained in the army. Unfortunately before long his health let him down and he died in 1998.

I am glad that before he died he at least saw the cause that he gave his whole life to, the goal of a free and democratic South Africa, achieved. There are not enough words to thank him for his contribution, and we must never forget this hero of our people.

Perhaps I should add a note about someone important in James's political life, who helped to make him the man he was, that is his father. He was an ANC member and set James on the right lines and helped other young people, including James's comrades. This man was the bread-winner for his family and so he felt he had to avoid the front line, but his support for the young people was very important and also contributed to our struggle.

## **27 JOE MOROLONG and THOMAS ESETANG**

### *Cape Town ANC Branch*

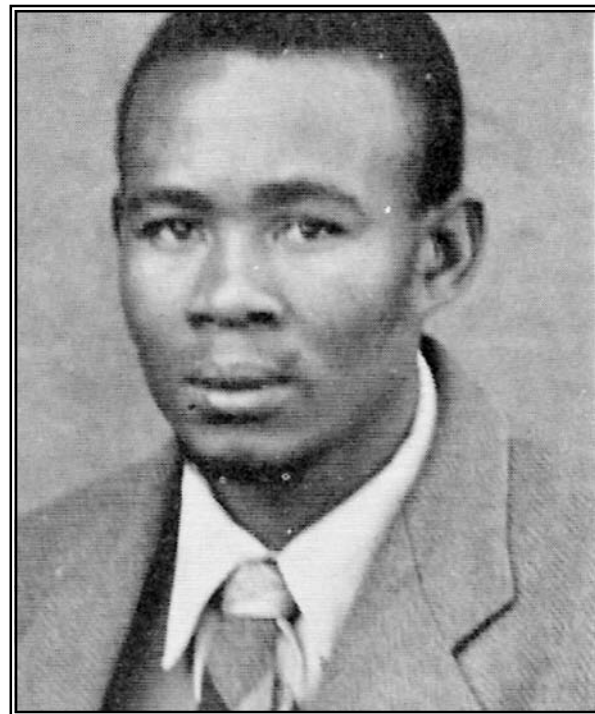
Joe Morolong was born around 1930 in Vryburg in the North-West Province. He was a trade unionist and became General Secretary of The African Commercial and Catering Union. The Chairperson of that union then was Thomas Esetang, also from the North West, although I do not know from which town. They were both ANC leaders. Joe was the secretary of the Cape Town Branch and Thomas was the chairperson.

It is worth noting that the ANC in the Cape, particularly perhaps in the Western Cape, in the 1950s and the 1960s was largely

led by comrades from far away, from Lesotho or from places in the north like Vryburg, or from even further away, like Botswana, where Comrade Putego came from. The General Secretary for the whole province was Comrade Matji from Lesotho. Although Xhosas were in the majority in the Cape, they had the ability to judge who would make the best leaders, wherever they were from. I think their level of education and the fact that they were committed to staying in Cape Town (they were not migrant labourers) were what determined the choice of Morolong and the others as our leaders.

So Joe was one of this group of comrades who made Cape Town their home, who thought of themselves as, and acted like, residents of Cape Town with no intention of going back to Fryburg. Joe was also one of the advanced working class comrades who knew that trade unions without political freedom were useless. He himself was actively involved in ANC and he worked hard to persuade those in his union to join the ANC too, or any other political organization that they were comfortable with.

Because of his political maturity, the white Commercial and Catering Union respected Joe Morolong and regularly consulted him when they were in negotiation with employers. This was very important, as it meant that the voice of the African workers reached the negotiating table, even though they were not directly represented there.



Joe Morolong

Both Joe Morolong and Thomas Esetang were ex-officio members of the ANC Regional Committee, because they were Secretary and Chair of their ANC Branch, so they were amongst those leading the political struggle in the Cape. As many of us went to central Cape Town every day to work, it was very convenient to have comrades whose homes were in the city centre, where messages could be left or meetings held. This meant that we relied on them a lot, particularly for emergency meetings. Luckily for us, Joe was using his sitting room as an office for the union, so we met in there and did not much disturb the rest of the home. It meant that he could not avoid being a reliable and regular attendee at our irregular meetings too!

Joe was arrested in 1956 and charged with high treason in the infamous

Treason Trial. He was the only member of the ANC Central Cape Town Branch to suffer this.

Joe and Thomas dedicated all their lives to the struggle, even foregoing having a family which for an African at that time was a very big sacrifice.

Did they live to see the fruits of their struggle? I do not know. Somehow, as the racist regime was coming to an end, some wonderful comrades seemed to disappear. When I got home and asked about these two great men, those few still alive who had known them seemed to be confused and did not know what had become of them. This is disappointing and I hope that future researchers will be able to complete their stories.

## 28 JOHN MOTLHUELA

### *Elsies River ANC Branch*

I first met John Motlhuela in Cape Town, at the Grand Parade, which was a popular place for ANC public protest meetings to be held. There were so many racist laws being produced at breakneck speed by the Apartheid regime that these were a very frequent occurrence.

John was selling *Advance*, the Communist Party newspaper, the only paper which came out against Apartheid at a time when there was almost no opposition from the white community to what was being done to the black majority. John was a very uncompromising salesman of *Advance*. Like

the Communist membership in general he was quite undeterred by the persecution that resulted.

John was confident that the people of South Africa would win their freedom, which sounded like a dream to people like me, a recent arrival in Cape Town and new to the movement. How I wish John was alive today – to say “I told you so”!

The most striking memory I have of John was at a regional meeting of the ANC when he said mysteriously “Do not ask questions now - you will be told later.” I did not know what he was talking about. About 2

years later at a Regional Executive meeting a report was given that John had successfully stowed away on a ship and had gone to the USSR. By then he was already back in Jo'burg. What a surprise this was to us all! We had known he had been missing all that time but did not know what had happened to him. The only clue was his "Do not ask questions".

John gave a rousing report at the Parade about his experiences in the USSR, knowing of course that this would be the last time he would address a public meeting, as he was sure to be banned. We were very proud of this man, a wonderful freedom fighter, a brave comrade who dared to defy the racist regime by going to the arch enemy of the so-called free world, the USSR, a country which

would prove to be a good friend to us in our struggle.

However, when he came to the ANC Regional Committee he was very critical of us. His family had been desperate and his wife had got mixed up with people who were not friends of the movement and everything had gone wrong. He claimed that if some of us had been there to help this would never have happened. We were so ashamed to hear his criticism of us that nobody even attempted to apologize.

He was later deported to Lesotho where he had been born. There he was as defiant as ever, carrying on campaigning and organizing just as he had in Cape Town, right up until he died.

## 29 OSCAR MPETHA

### *Nyanga East ANC Branch*

Oscar Mpetha was born about 1920 in Matatiel in the Eastern Cape, and came to the Cape Town area as a migrant worker. He found work in the fish canning industry along the west coast and became a local leader and a shop steward there.

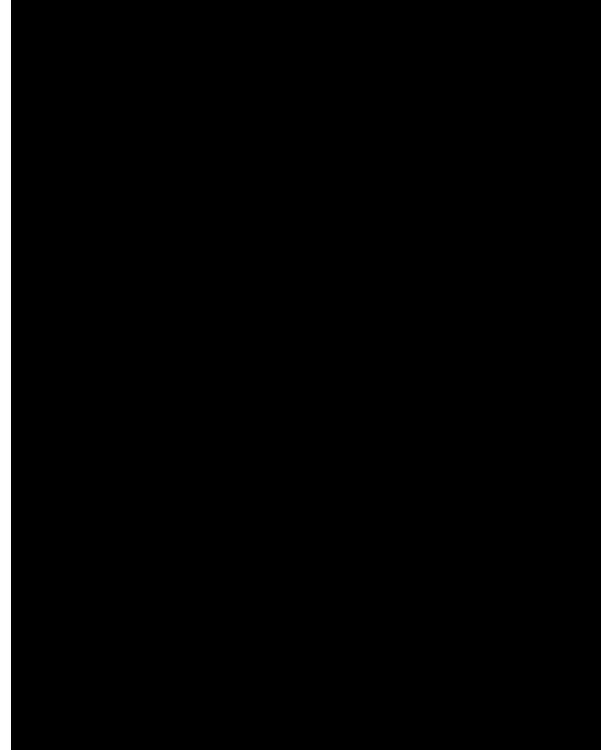
At this time Ray Alexander was at her most active in the trade union movement and she persuaded Oscar to consider coming to Cape Town to be a full time trade union organizer, to organize Africans in the food industry. Apartheid laws were beginning to have a damaging effect on the organization of food workers

as Africans were prohibited from being members of a registered union. The leadership of the formerly multiracial Food and Canning Workers Union (FCWU), of which Ray was the General Secretary, had decided to remain registered, but then had to decide the best structure to meet the needs of the excluded African food workers. One option was a parallel union with the same (not black) General Secretary, the other to have an independent union, with its own General Secretary, but working closely with FCWU. They decided to go for the independent union, and Oscar

was elected as the first General Secretary of the African Food and Canning Workers Union.

The two full timers generally went out together to try to organize a factory, but this was not always easy. In some factories the workers were nearly all black, in others there was a majority of coloured workers, so the priorities of the two unions could differ. This meant that they needed two cars to go on different assignments. Ray was not happy with the expense involved, but it had to be done.

I first met Oscar when I came to Cape Town for the second time. I was going from door to door in Plein Street, looking for a job. I went into the Stal Plein Building and, on knocking at number 44, I was surprised to see a black man open the door. He invited me in. When I told him that I wanted a job he told me that these were trade union offices, which meant nothing to me. He could see that I was



Oscar Mpetha with Ray Alexander (right)

confused, so he explained to me what a trade union was. I was impressed – but it did not help me!

Oscar suggested that if I was not lucky before Saturday, I could come in again then because members from different workplaces would be there and they might know where there were jobs available.

When I was just about to say “thank you” and go, a white woman appeared with two cups of coffee and biscuits for me and Oscar. I accepted this coffee awkwardly from the white woman. Oscar went on to introduce her to me as Miss Yon, secretary for the Sick Benefit Fund for the food workers. He explained how it worked- all workers paid in contributions and all received benefits, irrespective of their colour. It was the second thing that impressed me, in addition to being served

coffee by a white woman. This man Oscar was interesting to me, and I was already thinking about visiting these offices again whether or not I had a job meantime. Oscar had also said that they had talks there in that office and that I might gain something from coming to listen. He added that they would pay my fare to come.

The following Saturday I visited the Food and Canning union offices again. This time it was full of workers from different industries, talking about their experiences and how they had managed to solve any problems or asking advice from trade union activists from other factories. Among the workers that day there were railway workers, led by an older man, Johny Mtini. Oscar introduced me to him and he told me that there might be a job for me at the station. He said that I should come again the following Saturday when they

might know about a job. This I did and that is how I came to work on the railways.

It was not long before I came across Oscar again in a different setting. I had joined the Kensington Branch of the ANC and I met Oscar at ANC public and Regional meetings, as he too was an ANC man.

Oscar belongs to those brave sons of Africa who gave so much of their lives and made so many sacrifices for the noble aims of

the Freedom Charter. He struggled so that our country could be like any other, where all who live in it can be proud of it and can take part in things, regardless of their colour or anything else, where riches could be shared among all its people.

He was still alive at the time of our first free elections, but I was sad to find when I returned home that he was unwell and did not recognize me.

## 30 JOSEPH MPOZA

### *Worcester ANC Branch*

Joseph was born in the 1920s in the small town of Molteno in the Eastern Cape. The area around Molteno and the other small towns nearby, Aliwal North, Queenstown, Jamestown, Steynsburg and Burgersdorp were dominated by big white farms and the only work for African men was providing cheap labour on these farms.

When he grew up Joseph, like so many rural South Africans, soon left the poor conditions and lack of opportunities where he was born to go and look for a better life in one of the big towns. People went to Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban etc, but Joseph

chose to go to Worcester in the Western Cape, where he had relatives.

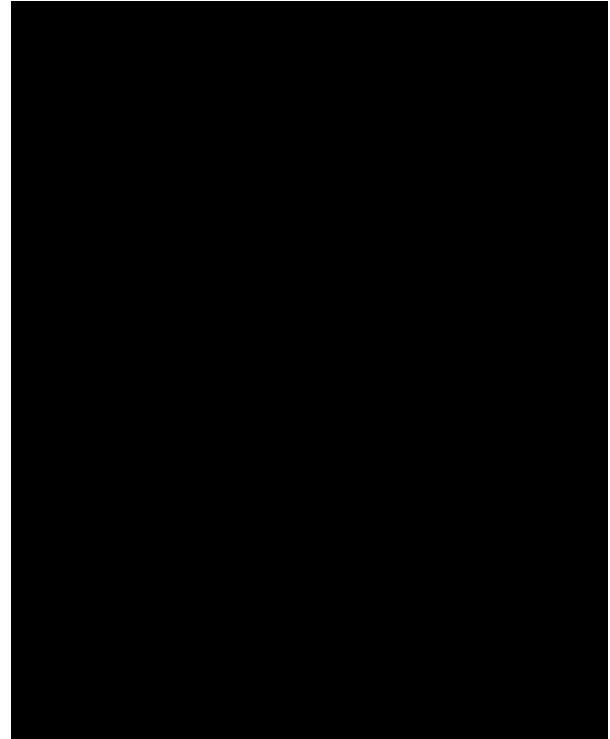
A year or two after he settled in Worcester and found work, young men who had been working in other parts of the Western Cape started to come and join him. These were 'home boys', people he had grown up with in the Molteno area; men like Ben Baartman, Joseph Ngulube, Julius Busa, Joe Ndamoyi and George Mpinda. It was not long before these men showed what wonderful people they were.

Because he was already settled and had a job, it was our tradition that Joseph had

to care for the new arrivals, to take them in, feed them and help them to find a job. There was nothing new about this of course, it was an obligation for all of us, and somebody had done it for him too.

The attraction of Worcester was that it had a lot of work. There were big textile mills and food and canning industries, as well as seasonal harvesting of fruits of all sorts. The town is surrounded by mountains with wonderful valleys which are ideal for vineyards and pear and apple orchards. And then there are the auxiliary industries which service the agricultural machines which till the fertile valleys etc, as well as small shops and other services.

When the newcomers joined Joseph in Worcester, they found that, not only was he a member of the ANC, he was already Chairperson of the Branch. Soon he worked



out a strategy to build the strength of the ANC in Worcester. He decided that his young friends should be deployed across the town in different factories, mills and shops etc and he set about helping them to find jobs in all the key workplaces. The idea, of course, was that when the ANC or the trade unions sent out a call for action, the message could be passed on quickly to all workers and whatever action necessary be taken.

Joseph had no problem of trying to find out what sort of people these men were. He knew every one of them from home and had known them and their families from childhood. The trust that was so important between comrades in the struggle was already there. Under his leadership Worcester became the best organized and most reliable branch in the region. It seemed that Worcester did not have the problems that we had in Cape Town

of divided communities. Even the Coloured community seemed to have no problem working with Africans.

Perhaps one of the key factors that united communities in Worcester was language. Everyone seemed to speak Afrikaans. Probably most of the Africans, like the men from Molteno, had worked on white farms for farmers who spoke only Afrikaans and had had no option but to pick up the language.

Worcester Branch paid a high price for its strong organization. When we were arrested and charged with High Treason in 1956, they had more comrades collected than many much bigger places in the Western Cape. Joseph was a Treason Trialist and so were Julius Busa and an Indian woman comrade, Issa Dawood. By that time Ben Baartman had already been banished to a remote part of Zululand.

During the Trial, when we were all in prison in The Fort in Johannesburg, some foolish local bus company put up its fares by one penny and the ANC called for a boycott of buses in the Transvaal, as it was then called. The people responded well and everyone marched to work for more than a month.

ANC then called for sympathetic bus boycotts in all provinces. Natal, the Free State and the Eastern Cape responded well, but the Western Cape did nothing at first. Then the

comrades from Worcester sent a message from their prison cells to their branch, signed by Joseph, Julius and Assa, asking them to join in the solidarity action, as the other three provinces had done. As a result, buses were boycotted in Worcester for two days.

All the Treason Trialists saluted Joseph, Julius and Assa and the people of Worcester for their magnificent response and Chief AJ Luthuli, the ANC President, called these three our heroes.

# 31 CHRISTOPHER MRABALALA

## *Kraaifontein ANC Branch*

Christopher is the son of Minta and Kleinboy Marabalala born on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1945 in Kraaifontein Cape Town. Influenced by Teddy Nqaphayi he joined the ANC Youth League.

At the beginning their main interest was in football but afterwards the young comrades were encouraged to be conscious of their surroundings. They helped old people by cleaning their houses and gardens and began to develop cultural activities to provide alternatives to the mischief that some of the township youth tended to get drawn into.

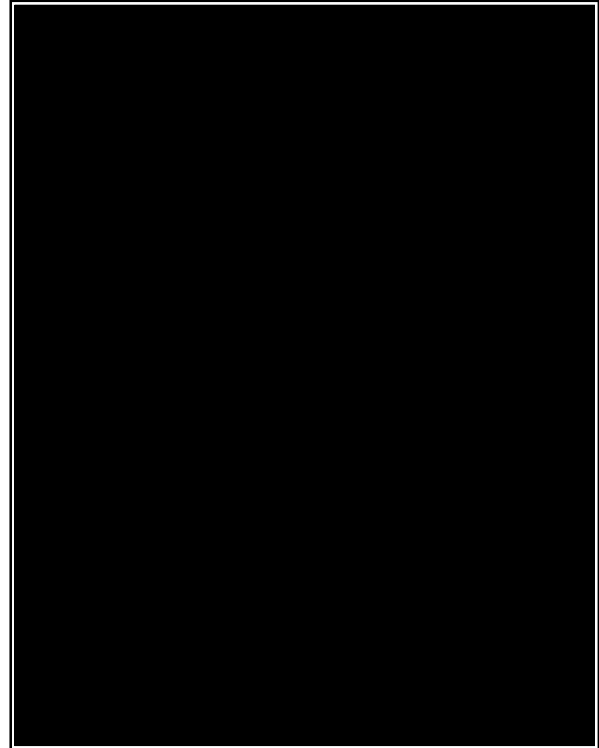
Later Teddy Nqaphayi extended the cultural activities to include political education and young people like Christopher began to mature politically. Almost every campaign unleashed in the Western Cape was led by this group of ANC Youth League cadres. They became role models in waging the war against the brutality of the Apartheid regime and defending the movement as a whole.

When the underground ANC leadership decided to have a military camp to train young people and let them taste military life before going outside the country's border

to join MK in exile, Christopher was one of the trusted group who were selected to join the camp at Mamre.

Overseas he was trained in engineering skills by Dalaboy and he went on to become the mechanical engineer of the wonderful Luthuli Detachment of MK which played such an important part in the Wankie campaign.

Christopher was one of the lucky ones amongst our heroes who lived to see the fruits of what we were fighting for. Perhaps one day he will write his own biography.



## 32 JOHNNIE MTINI

### *Elsies River ANC Branch*

The second time I went to Cape Town to work, I got a job on the railways. There I met a founder member of SAHRWU (South African Harbour and Railways Workers Union), Johnnie Mtini, a tough and mature worker. Although I am sure he must have been born in a rural area, if you asked him where he came from he would have said Elsie's River. To him Cape Town was home, the place where he belonged.

He was thoroughly urbanized, unlike most of us. He saw himself as a black urban worker and nothing else. He was immersed in

politics, a trade unionist and a member of the ANC and the Communist Party.

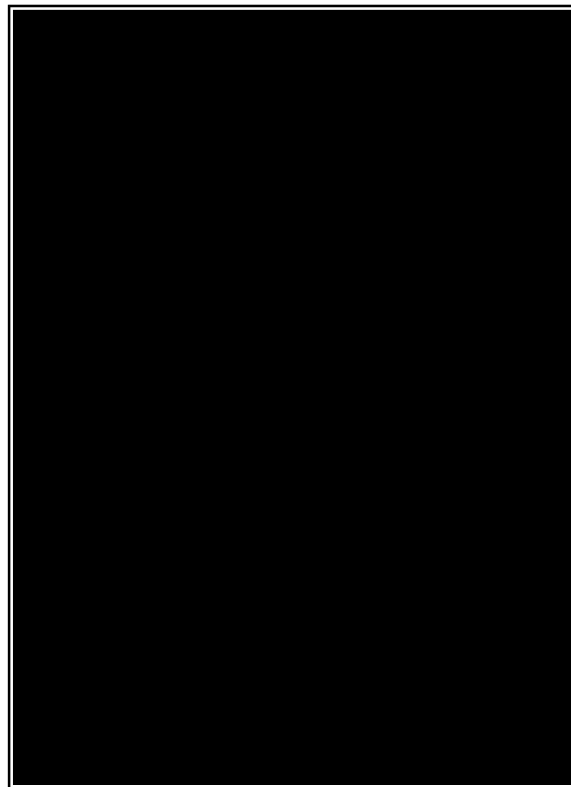
It would probably be right to credit Johnnie with the political development of many of the leaders in the Western Cape, and certainly for me he was the one who gave me guidance and practical experience in trade unionism. He suspected I would not last long in the employment of the railways because I was getting involved in defending fellow workers, and he had a plan in mind.

SAHRWU had never had a full time organizer and he persuaded me to take on that challenge. He managed to raise funds from

the union and other sources to cover a small wage for me and minimum office expenses. Without Johnnie it would have been very difficult to make progress in organizing railway workers in the Western Cape.

He seemed in a hurry to build up the leadership of SAHRWU, perhaps because he was about to retire and did not want there to be a vacuum after he went, after all his hard work to create a union for black workers in the transport industry.

Johnnie Mtini was convinced that trade unionism and politics were closely intertwined and that he and all workers had a duty to show solidarity with other workers wherever they were. As a founder member of the SACTU Local Committee in the Western Cape, he was one of those who had a profound influence on the development of my political understanding.



It was no surprise that this veteran, a leader in all the three key components of the struggle, the ANC, the trade union movement and the Communist Party, was one of those arrested and charged with High Treason in 1956 in the notorious Treason Trial.

It should be obvious to everybody in South Africa that although Johnnie and others who were his contemporaries did not live to see the changes they worked for come about, they did not fail. The flag that Johnnie carried was

picked up by others, including myself and today we have a powerful Transport Union which has fought for and won recognition and better working conditions but above all was part of the successful struggle for political freedom, without which improvements at work could never have been achieved.

Let us hope that flag will continue to be carried forward, because victories fought for and won have to be defended with vigilance or they can be weakened.

## 33 GERTRUDE MTYEKISANE

### *Kensington ANC Branch, later Nyanga ANC Branch*

Gertrude was born in the Transkei. She married Joseph and they had three children. She came to join her husband in Cape Town in the 1950s. When we were all ejected from Kensington in 1957, she and Joseph built their pondoki on a ridge that ran across Nyanga West, overlooking on both sides the mass of rusted old corrugated zinc roofs that made up the township. This was a very advantageous position for keeping an eye on what was going on everywhere.

It was probably this geographical location that started Gertrude on the path of playing such an important part in the struggle in this part of Cape Town. She became the

leader of a group of women, including Boniswa, Lindiwe and others, who met at her place to monitor the township during the day when most of the men were far away at work.

If there were police raids anywhere they would notice and a child would be dispatched to inform other comrades of what was coming so that houses could be cleaned of any political papers or other incriminating material and people who had no permit to be in Cape Town could disappear. They also looked out for troubles of other sorts. Townships were boiling, troublesome masses of restless people and they would try to be a sort of people's police, solving what

problems they could and reporting others to the men later on. Gertrude and her group knew a lot about Nyanga West. They knew who were stooges of the racist regime and watched their activities during the day and they also watched political troublemakers like ANC deserters who were PAC leaders, such as Lawrence Mgweba. They were able to report where they were and what they were up to when ANC men came home from work.

At one time we had a secret ANC unit within the township police at the Phillipi Police Station, and Gertrude organized a rendezvous for us to meet them in a safe place. In other words, Gertrude was acted as leader of our intelligence group in Nyanga West, a sensitive and dangerous task which she undertook fearlessly and effectively.

I saw her when I returned in 1990, and I was happy that she had lived to see the defeat of Apartheid and to vote in our first democratic election in 1994.



## 34 JOSEPH MTYEKISANE

### *Windermere ANC Branch, later Nyanga West ANC Branch*

Joseph was a product of the Windermere ANC Branch, but he was driven out of that area to Nyanga West, together with all the African population. We became neighbours in Nyanga West and our families were close. He had three children, a son and two daughters, exactly the same ages my oldest three.

This was the period when the South African regime was implementing Apartheid by creating Bantustans. Kaiser Matanzima, the tribal chief of the Thembu clan, was the leading stooge in this policy and was appointed Prime Minister of the Transkei Bantustan. To win support, Matanzima had a

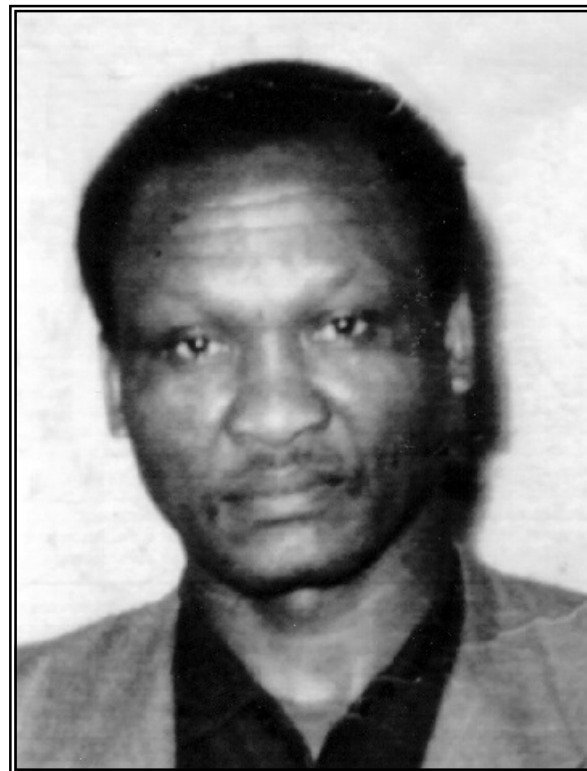
plan of speaking in all the big towns in the Cape, East London, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town etc.

The ANC Western Cape Region formed a sub committee to oppose this, led by Mtyekisane and Gilbert Hani who both came from the Transkei. They set about organizing the Amagoduka (migrant workers) to prevent Matanzima from being able to hold any meetings in the Western Cape. Joseph was delegated to organize in the Cape Town dock compound, while Gilbert was to organize in Langa Bachelors quarters. Their organizing was very successful and was strengthened

when the Youth League, led by Loza, got involved. Matanzima could not address any meeting in the Cape Town area and in fact had to be rescued by the police when he tried to speak in Langa.

The second major campaign which sticks in my memory in which Joseph played a big part was when PAC youth started to use intimidation to try to force people to join the PAC. We knew who was behind this. It was a man called Lawrence Mgweba, a former ANC leader who had broken away to become a founder member of PAC.

Joseph took the lead in hunting Mgweba down to his secret hide-out and confronting him. There a group of us had a straight talk with him and warned of repercussions if the intimidation did not stop within 24 hours. Again, this mission was a



success and our people were freed from Mgweba's thugs.

When I was able to return from exile I was told that he was among those had been on Robben Island with our leaders, which did not surprise me. Unfortunately he had died

soon after his release, no doubt as a result of the ill-treatment he received on Robben Island.

People like me who knew Mtyekisane, this son of our country, will never forget the contribution that he made to our freedom.



Gado, New Nation, 16 February 1996

## **35 FALDON (CASTRO) MZWONKE**

### *Windermere Branch, later Gugulethu Branch*

When I first met Faldon he was the foreman of a small group of workers in the boiler section of a factory. Previously he had been working in the mines in Johannesburg as a boiler attendant. His foreman there had decided to quit the mines to manage a factory in Cape Town and had asked Faldon to go with him. Obviously this foreman trusted him and we too in the movement soon had great confidence that we could trust him. We found that he was fully committed to the struggle.

My last appearance in the racist's courts was with Faldon. Three of us were arrested in a car - James Tyeku, whose car it

was, myself and Chris Hani. The car boot was full of reams of banned ANC literature to be taken to the townships. We had worked the whole day printing the propaganda material in an 'underground' house belonging to Comrade Stone, a teacher living in Lansdowne. Faldon was with us all the time, but had then left to go to work. We thought he had escaped arrest, but on the day we appeared in court suddenly he was brought in by the police. Jokingly he said "One of you gave me away to the police" and at first we thought he must be right, and started looking at each other. He laughed and reassured us

“No, don’t worry, it was my finger that arrested me”. Faldon had lost part of a finger in the mines, and his distinct finger print on the leaflets had exposed him, not us. These arrests and the long prison sentence we were sure to get, followed by indefinite detention without trial, caused the ANC to order us to break bail and go out of the country for military training, as part of MK.

Faldon was a natural leader and he became a great Commander of MK. There was no retreat when he was in command; he was very brave, perhaps sometimes too brave. Bravery can sometimes be troublesome and lead to recklessness.

In 1968 the MK Luthuli Detachment, under my command, was based in the Zambezi valley in Zambia, infiltrating ZAPU and ANC soldiers across the river into Rhodesia. One day I took a small group of

comrades to the Zambezi bank to look for a better site to use for crossings, as we were not happy with the one we had been using. We found a possible place and prepared to cross the river to observe the territory, in particular if there was any sign of the activities of enemy soldiers. Amongst this group was Faldon, now known by his MK name of Castro. When we were about to cross a comrade came to me to say he had overheard Castro say that he would not come back across the river, meaning that he planned to try to make his own way across enemy territory back to South Africa. I decided to abort the mission because I knew that if Castro had said that, he meant it, and we all returned to camp.

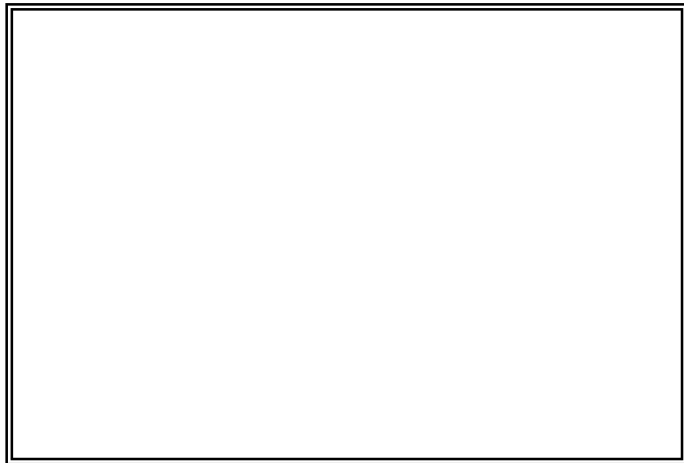
That afternoon I had to travel to Lusaka to collect more supplies. When I got back I noticed that Castro had gone missing. I

was informed that Flag Boshielo (an NEC member) and two other comrades had disappeared too. I suspected that this had been planned by Flag and that Castro could not resist the temptation of crossing the river and heading for home, however dangerous it was.

They never reached home, and we never saw or heard of them again. They must

have been detected and killed by the Smith/South African forces in what was then Rhodesia.

Comrade Faldon Mzwonke had struggled all his life for a free South Africa and in the end he gave his life for that struggle.



Findlay, City Press, 18 February 1996

## 36 ERIC NDUNA

### *Langa Bachelors' Quarters*

Eric Nduna (this was his MK name, but I have forgotten his original name) was basically a rural young man who had come to Cape Town as a migrant worker from Thembuland in the Transkei, from the same village as the Hanis. He was living in the bachelors' hostels in Langa when he first joined the ANC.

He was recruited by Gilbert Hani in the course of the ANC's campaign against Kaiser Matanzima, who came to Langa to promote the Apartheid regime's racist policy of Bantustans. Gilbert quickly passed him on to his son Chris, as they were the same age

and he thought it would be easier for two young people to work together.

However, it was not very long after that a group of our young men were sent out of the country to go for military training abroad. Chris Hani and Eric Nduna were amongst them. When they came back from training to the ANC's camp in Kongwa, we soon discovered that Eric was very capable, a man who could command, and he was quickly promoted to become Chief of Staff.

As the wheel of our freedom fighting rolled south and fighting intensified in Zimbabwe, some of us moved to Zambia for

the next stage, and Eric was one of those who volunteered to cross the mighty Zambezi near Livingstone, towards the Wankie area of Zimbabwe. Our cadres were accompanied by ZAPU fighters who were to help them on their way through the relatively deserted Wankie Game Reserve on their way back to South Africa.

Unfortunately it did not work out as planned. They found their passage blocked by a reconnaissance team of the joint Rhodesian and South African forces and soon they were having to fight their way forward. In a number of small encounters they inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy and this of course led to the enemy calling up reinforcements.

During the battle that ensued some of our comrades succeeded in making their way through and pressed on to reach South Africa. Others, including Eric and Mziwake, fell

there in Wankie, although not before they had inflicted further casualties on the enemy. Eric was already badly wounded and Mziwake decided to stay with him.

They refused to surrender and fought a heroic battle whilst heavily outnumbered, carrying on until they ran out of ammunition. Their intention was to delay the advance of the pursuing troops, giving their comrades time to move on, and they succeeded in this. When they could no longer fire, the enemy murdered them both.

Whilst I have been writing this I could not help remembering the directives that our then ANC Secretary General, Walter Sisulu, sent out in 1963. He said that all Regions of the ANC should select disciplined and trusted young cadres for military training abroad, who would later become the nucleus of a new democratic South African Army.

Eric and Mziwake were two such young cadres who were selected by the ANC in the Western Cape. They proved in action that they were trustworthy, disciplined and brave and if they had lived, I am sure they

would have formed an important part of that nucleus. I was at that time National Operational Chief of MK, and I was, and still am, very proud of the heroism of these two men.

## 37 ELLIOT NDZIBA

### *Langa ANC Branch*

Elliot Ndziba was born in January 1927 in a village called Sheshegu, near Alice in the Eastern Cape. Like many young Africans, when he grew up he migrated to a big city, in his case to Cape Town where he settled in Langa.

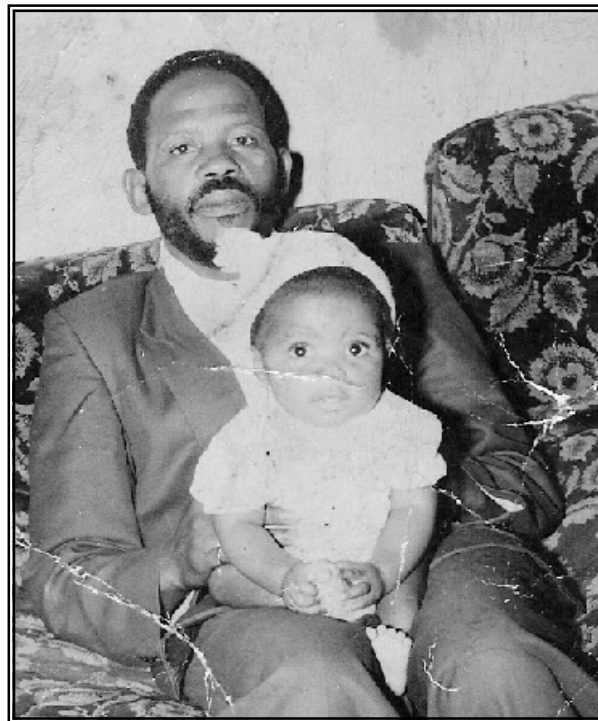
When I joined the ANC after coming to Cape Town, he was already a member. Sometimes he represented his branch at regional meetings and I met him there when I joined the Regional Committee. Because we both came from near Alice I became close to him, and I began to consult him often about the problems of ANC and SACTU members

that I came across. Newcomers to town were usually confronted with problems because of the complexities of the pass system and the permits they had to have.

Living in Langa, where the big Cape Town Pass Office was located, Elliot could often be helpful. He had built up contacts with people who worked in the Pass Office, and he was always ready to accompany comrades going there and help them negotiate. Although the Pass Office staff were Africans like us, they seemed very powerful, able to destroy you if they wanted to, or make life easy if they decided they liked you.

Some of the clerks were ruthless, expecting to be bribed with big money before they would be cooperative, regardless of the fact that most Africans had come to town to work precisely because they had no money and needed to earn some. Elliot's presence at the Pass Office helped to protect our people from this and he used to put pressure on clerks that he knew to cut through the bureaucratic webs that the regime had set up purposely to control workers. As well as being able to issue permits, they also had lists of employers who wanted labour, which was very useful for someone wanting a job.

Another danger that Elliot was able to protect us from was being issued with a permit that limited the holder to working for only one named employer or in one particular industry. If this happened it was something like being made into a slave as the employers



Elliot Ndziba and baby daughter

had a whip-hand over you - if you were sacked, you immediately became illegal, liable to deportation home. Permits like this were common in certain cheap labour industries, like mining, quarrying and domestic service and were intended to make it difficult for workers to organise for better wages and conditions.

Today it is easy to forget how important it was for an African to have a pass or a permit. If you did not have that piece of paper, in that country of ours you did not exist. The contribution that Elliot made in accompanying a person to the Pass Office was very significant. People would always

want to thank him by giving him something, but he refused those offers, and told people that the ANC was fighting against these injustices and the best thing for them to do was to join the ANC so that we could all fight together.

He also used to tell them about SACTU and our important slogan, 'Organise or starve'. It seems to me that this slogan is still relevant today. Although our country is democratic, and we have a wonderful constitution, there are still people who are starving. We still need to organise through the ANC and the trade unions. Elliot and his advice should not be forgotten.

## 38 GREENWOOD NGOTYANA

### *Athlone ANC Branch*

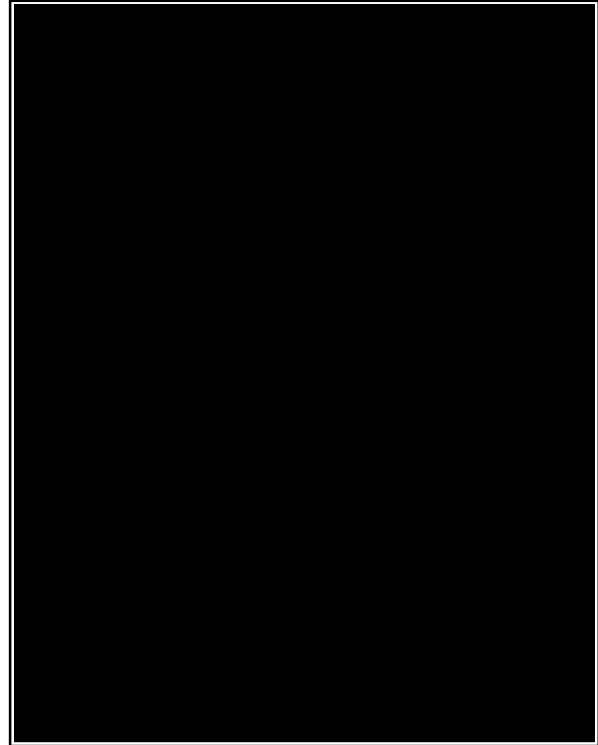
Greenwood Ngotyana was born in the Transkei and like so many others he came to Cape Town to look for work. When I met him he was secretary of the Athlone Branch of the ANC at the time when Zollie Malindi was Chair. They were both more educated than most of the comrades, probably self educated.

Greenwood was a gentle person who easily got on with others. He laughed readily and he had a relaxed approach to the many complicated problems facing us in the struggle. These were good characteristics for someone leading us in those difficult times, when we could not see the light at the end of the tunnel.

He was very active in the ANC and it was no surprise when the Regional Conference elected him to be full time Regional Secretary. Of course we had no money to pay his wages, so it was proposed that we negotiate an arrangement with the Native Representative in Parliament. This extraordinary position was the “progressive” Cape’s gesture towards democracy. We were allowed to elect a representative (just one) to represent “natives” – but this person had to be white! A distinguished line of communists had occupied the post in the past, including Ray Alexander, Brian Bunting and Sam

Kahn, but these had all been banned, and the Native Representative at that time was Lee-Warden, a member of the Congress of Democrats.

Some, both outside and within the ANC, argued that because we rejected the concept of a “Native Representative” we should have nothing to do with him. Others, including me, replied that we had to take advantage of every opportunity open to us. Ngotyana put this case to the Regional Committee and convinced them, so he was mandated to approach Lee-Warden. Lee-Warden agreed that Greenwood would be employed as his secretary, thereby having access to an office, a living wage and travel expenses to go around the Western Cape - all at the Government’s expense!



In addition to these practical advantages, the arrangement meant that we were close to “our Representative” - perhaps closer than was comfortable for him. One result was that when Greenwood was arrested and charged with High Treason in 1956 Lee-Warden was arrested too and became one of the accused in the notorious Treason Trial. Another was that the position of Native Representative was abolished before long.

Meanwhile Greenwood was able to make good use of the opportunities of his position to strengthen our structures across

the Region. He got on well with Lee-Warden who also owned a printing press, so all our literature was produced at no cost. All these advantages were due to the good leadership shown by Greenwood Ngotyana.

I understand that after I left the country he was deported back to the Transkei, and no-one seems to know what happened to him after that. What we do know is that while he was in Cape Town he made major contributions to our struggle during very difficult times and that should never be forgotten.

## 39 GEORGE NGQUNGE

### *Windermere ANC Branch, later Nyanga West ANC Branch*

I met George for the first time at Cape Town Railway Station. He was a ‘permanent’ railway worker, something achieved by an African worker only after 10 or even 20 years in the job. I had gone there for a job, but George warned me that I might not last long in this work. He also told me if I was sacked I must not leave my railway overall behind, but make sure I took it with me, as it might come in very useful. When I asked what he meant about the overall he said he had heard Johnnie Mtini talking about me, saying they might want to engage me as an organizer, with some small pay, if I would agree to that. Then,

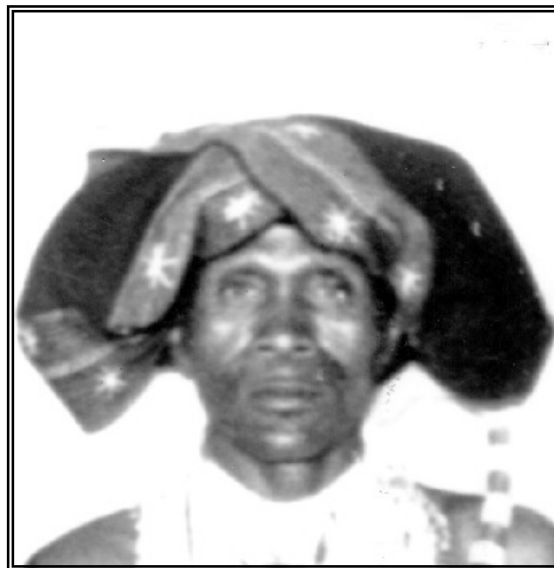
wearing the overall, I would be able to move about in the station without attracting any attention. Johnnie Mtini was the president of SARHWU, the Railway and Harbour Workers Union in the Western Cape.

George revealed to me that he was a committee member of SARHWU and that they had organized the railway job for me in the first place but a mistake had been made in allowing me to interpret for one worker who was in trouble with a foreman. George had overheard me “interpreting” and had seen that I was not just interpreting but also representing the man as well, something that

the foreman recognized too. Later George had heard the foreman remark that he must get rid of me, as I was obviously a trouble-maker and get rid of me he did.

George also revealed to me that he was Chairperson of the ANC Windermere Branch. What was running in my mind was that here was this man, who could neither read nor write, but who was very clever, much cleverer than me. He could not only lead workers to join a trade union and fight for their rights as workers, but could also go further and be a leader in the ANC. He understood that the industrial struggle was inseparable from the political struggle especially for blacks who had no political power.

Windermere where we lived was really a swamp, what we called “Emtsheko”, with no streets and no lighting, but George



could find his way around without any problem in the middle of the night. He could take you to every pondoki you might need to visit to see comrades at any time.

Comrades like George were inspired by stories of great heroes, and followed the success of Fidel Castro and others who freed their countries from dictators, and of course our own great leaders such as Govan Mbeki.

He was a great natural organizer and a peacemaker whenever trouble emerged in

different ANC branches. He had learned so much from his experiences as a worker, in the school of life, but you have to wonder what he could have done if he had some formal education as well. Surely his contribution would have been enormous indeed.

## 40 LOOKSMART NGUDLE

### *Kensington ANC Branch, then Nyanga ANC Branch*

The struggle throws up many great leaders, and to my mind, Looksmart Ngudle was one of the greatest of those heroes in the Western Cape. He was a good organizer, clear-headed and patient. However difficult the problems that confronted our group, he would not give up until we had agreed a solution.

He has a special place in this record of our heroes, alongside Elijah Loza. Both of them had their commitment to our cause tested to the ultimate and both of them gave their all.

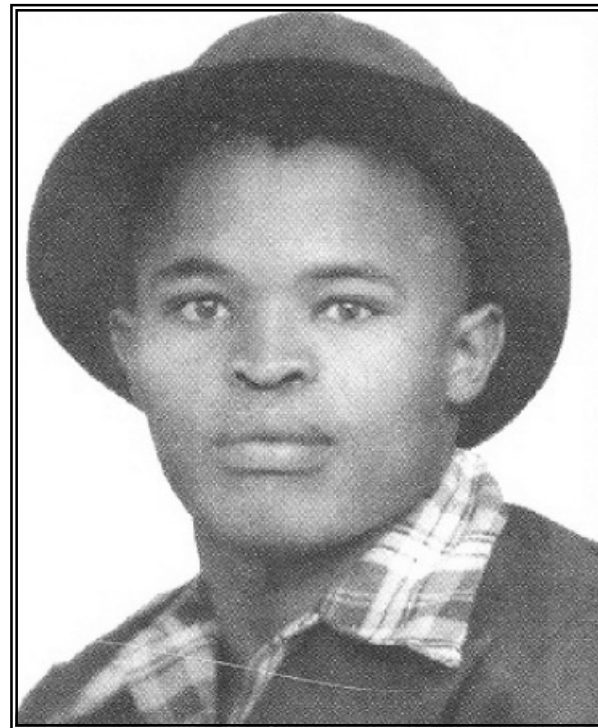
As the struggle intensified, the ANC had given instructions about what we should

try to do if captured. It was recognized that the enemy were prepared to torture prisoners to extract information about comrades in the struggle, their whereabouts and what they were doing. The instructions given were that anyone who found themselves in that position should try to hold out for twenty four hours, for example, by giving useless information that the Special Branch already knew, or that was out of date or referred to people who had already left the country. During this time it was up to everyone in their unit to disappear so that when, later, real information had to be given as the torture increased, they were

already somewhere safe. No-one who has not faced torture can know how they would have handled it. Most of those in that position did hold out for the twenty four hours, and so gave their comrades a chance to escape. Looksmart and Elijah did so much more than that. They held out until death. No person can do more for what they believe in.

Looksmart was born in a village called Ngcwazi, near a small town called Middledrift in the Eastern Cape. He was a family man with 8 children.

I first met him in Kensington when he was already both a member of the ANC and an active trade unionist, working in the chemical industry. He was foresighted enough to see that because of his activities he could be sacked at any time, and that then no employer in the Western Cape would take him on. Because of his family responsibilities



he prepared a fall-back position and opened up a small part-time shop which took in trousers, shirts and shoes for repairs.

His shop became the place for the ANC Branch to get together for all sorts of political discussions and he also sold *New Age*, the Communist Party newspaper, there. This had its own dangers because neither the ANC nor the Communist Party were popular with the regime. Eventually he left his job to spend all his time on his shop and his organizing activities.

When the ANC was banned, he was one of the seven people appointed by ANC Headquarters to lead the underground work in the Western Cape. I was appointed chair of the group, with Looksmart as vice chair. When the ANC decided to create MK, the military wing of the movement, our group of seven also took responsibility for that in the

Western Cape and Looksmart became a founder member of MK

We decided that to be able to implement this new policy of preparing to fight back against our oppression we needed to have a military training camp and Looksmart and Elijah Loza were given the task of setting one up, with the help of youth leader James Mninzi. A site was found on a small farm with a sympathetic owner, near to Mamre, north-west of Cape Town. Comrades like Wolfie Kodesh and Dennis Goldberg, with some military experience and technical skills were brought in to provide practical training. Political educators were also brought in to emphasize the policy that the ANC had adopted of attacking structures of the Apartheid state, like power lines and police stations, but not inflicting civilian casualties. This project lasted only a short time before it

had to be abandoned because of security leaks, but it fulfilled the purpose of changing mindsets and paved the way for people going overseas for military training.

When it was decided that I should be sent abroad for military training, Looksmart took over the chairmanship of the regional leadership. He also took over a red scooter that the ANC had bought for my use, and an old black Plymouth car that had been donated to us. This was probably a mistake. They were very useful, but they were well known to the police.

Looksmart was aware that his activities would put him in trouble one day, but he was prepared to take the consequences. Because of his selfless devotion to the cause of freeing our country from Apartheid, he was prepared, like most ANC people, to suffer. In his case, he paid the ultimate price. He

became the first person to be tortured to death by the torture specialists of the racist police in Johannesburg.

Looksmart gave his precious life for our freedom.

