

## THE ANC VETERANS LEAGUE MOURNS THE DEATH OF ITS STALWART WINNIE MANDELA.

It is with great sadness that we learnt of the untimely death of Mama Winnie Mandela, the recipient of the Order of Luthuli Award in Silver for bravery.

Winnie Mandela was a pillar of our struggle for liberation in the struggle against the most atrocious apartheid regime. The ANC Veterans League sends its deepest condolences to the Madikizela and Mandela families.

Following is a poignant account from the President of the Veterans League, who knew and worked with this giant of our movement during those dark and seemingly horrid times of our struggle.

“I was introduced to the ANC when I was very young, angry and militant, by Winnie Mandela and worked with her when it was not fashionable to be associated with our glorious movement.

it is unimaginable that she is no more.”

He elaborates: “I remember vividly when I met her in 1966 in down town Johannesburg where she was working as a secretary. We spoke quietly in hushed tones on how evil and atrocious the apartheid system was, a system which denied millions of South Africans their birthright. The topic then focused on the hated Bantu education system designed for black South Africans, the appalling and segregated living conditions, how workers’ rights were trampled upon on a daily basis, and the daily harassment and torture of those who dared raise their voices in defiance of the obnoxious system where blacks were made hewers of wood and drawers of waters.

It was only when she invited me to her home in Orlando West in Soweto that she spoke freely and we started planning on how we could mobilize and organize the youth to become active participants in the struggle against apartheid.

Winnie never revealed her identity then. She was a leader in her own right. She was not in the struggle because she was married to Nelson Mandela, but was a committed and dedicated member of the ANC.

She later introduced us to incorrigible leaders like Samson Ndou, Marita Ndzanga and her husband Lawrance Ndzanga, Elliot Shabangu, Joyce Sikakane, and Sam Poloto,

As the militant youth of the day, we wanted to be trained on how to handle weapons and explosives. We had already identified targets that were going to disrupt the South African economy.

Winnie was very patient by then and insisted on us receiving political training especially on the aims and objectives of the ANC and the Freedom Charter.

I recall that we had to recite the Freedom Charter like a bible and only then were we introduced to underground training in the handling of sensitive information. The training included production of leaflet bombs, distribution of ANC underground material, manufacturing of Molotov cocktails and learning how to infiltrate MK cadres who would train us internally.

Yes, we researched oh how we can procure weapons from the armaments factories of Denel and Armscor. We became responsible for distributing and setting up of leaflet bombs in the Johannesburg City Centre.

It was in May 1969 when more than 120 ANC activist were rounded up, arrested and detained under the notorious Section 6 of the Terrorism Act of 1967. The notorious Act allowed the state to detain members of society who were opposed to apartheid for 180 days without trial.

Twenty one of us spent 12 months in solitary confinement and 6 months on trial, first under the Suppression of the Communism Act and were later detained and charged under the Terrorism Act.

We were severely tortured, but our spirits and the resolve to fight the apartheid regime were never dampened.

Comrade Benjamin Ramotse, who was kidnapped from Botswana and brutally tortured, stood trial with us and was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment on Robben Island.

After our trial in September 1970, we were all banned under the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. A banned person endured severe restrictions on their movement, political activities, and associations intended to silence their opposition to the government's apartheid policies and stop their political activity.

Later, when some of us left the country in 1974 to re-enforce the activities of the ANC in exile in Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania, Angola and Bulgaria, comrade Winnie Mandela remained as the pillar of our struggle in the country, soldiering on without let or hindrance.

She was banned, harassed and banished to Brandfort. She, however, stood firm on her political convictions. She expressed her bravery, always fighting for the interest of the poor. She strived to overcome the terrible conditions of apartheid and never gave up.”

Comrade Winnie Mandela, “Mother of the Nation”, you will always be remembered for the contribution you have made in the struggle for liberation. The ANC Veterans League dips its revolutionary banner in honour of this extraordinary giant of our struggle.

Lala ngo Xolo. Hamba Kahle Qhawe la Maqhawe

Snuki Zikalala  
President of the ANC Veterans League