



LINDIWE
MABUZA



“YOU ARE AWARE AS YOU GROW UP. I GREW UP, I WAS BORN IN NEWCASTLE AND GREW UP THERE. AT THAT TIME APARTHEID WAS NOT THERE BUT DISCRIMINATION WAS ALREADY ENTRENCHED IN SOCIETY.”

- Born on 13 August 1938
- What are some significant moment of 1938?
- The founding of the South African Press Association.
- The cornerstone of the Voortrekker Monument is laid
- The 1930s are a critical period in the history of South Africa. From the industrial boom to the break out of the Second World War which leads to an ease in the segregationist system in place at the time, much to the opposition of the Reconstituted National Party.



- By Mabuza's milestone 10th birthday the NP takes power following elections on 26 May. By then she has witnessed discrimination but this particular event in 1948, the year marking the beginning of 4 decades of unjust laws sets the scene for the kind of life she will lead. It is the questioning typical of children that inducts her to the evil status quo of South African society at that particular time.
- That same year the African National Congress Women's League is led by the dynamic Ida Mntwana, one of the activists within the ANC who steered the organization to a more radical policy as it relates to the role of women: not simply as recruiters of other women to serve as a kind of 'help-meet' to the men of the movement.

70 YEARS OF THE DEFIANCE CAMPAIGN AGAINST UNJUST LAWS

- It is impossible to reflect on the life of Lindiwe Mabuza without acknowledging the women of the Decade of Defiance. The 1950s, the ways the organisations of the time mobilised support laid an important foundation for the kind of solidarity building that would be a feature of the years in which Mabuza served as ANC representative in Scandinavia.
- While the Defiance Campaign is gaining momentum in South Africa, The Civil Rights Movement launches following the murder of 14 year old Emmett Till, a heinous crime committed by white men and sparked by a lie by a white woman who has yet to be held accountable.





- Much of Mabuza's life was spent being a citizen of the world. We can argue that this was a consequence of apartheid in which the possibilities of young Black people were stifled. After completing secondary education she enrolled for a BA at Roma University in Lesotho. And after a stint in teaching in Swaziland, she moved to the United States of America where she pursued her Master of Arts at the University of Ohio, in the Midwest home of some major political figures who shaped the culture of resistance in the 1960s such as Malcolm X and Lorraine Hansberry (who is also a poet).
- Mabuza was exposed to the realities of Black life in America which were similar to South Africa. After all in the 1940s, the National Party explained that it's policy of Apartheid was influenced by the Jim Crow laws against which the Civil Rights Movement rose in defiance. And as with South Africa, there rose a young generation of students who added their voice to resistance against unjust laws: Mabuza would later reflect on on the ways she benefited from this saying:

- I was going to work in a department for African American Studies under the Black Studies Institute, which had been initiated by black students agitating about the discrepancies at university level, about the lack of black history, black studies in the universities. So, I went into that environment where the black people had actually created positions for us to be professors in this institute.
- It is here that we see an instance of the extent of renewal that the theatre of struggle can bring about. Mabuza herself is its beneficiary.

MABUZA AND THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS



- Mabuza joins the ANC 1975. She wants to play a role in bringing about an end to oppression in her home country and identifies the ANC as the custodian of her aspiration.
- The ANC welcomes her and initially requests that she remain in the USA and build solidarity from there. International solidarity was a strategy of the ANC since the days Oliver Tambo escaped out of the country; and at the same time Mandela toured Africa and parts of Europe to raise support for the ANC. In fact Mabuza's own journey out of the continent and into the United States coincides with the conclusion of the Rivonia Trial marking the end of the Defiance Campaign. But coincidentally through Mabuza's departure out of Africa, there is symbolised a process of reinvigorating this aspect of the ANC's approach to mobilisation.

- In 1977, the ANC deploys her to Lusaka, Zambia it's headquarters where she worked closely with ANC President Oliver Tambo. Two years later she was appointed Chief Representative of the ANC and deployed to the Scandinavia.
- Among her responsibilities were: **not only to raise money but to raise all kinds of support for all the projects and activities of the ANC and from Sweden the money would go to our account in London, and it was for the treasury department of the ANC to decide how that money is used, is distributed, how the people in South Africa get it through the frontline states.**



- According to Chris Hani biographer, Hugh Macmillan With the encouragement of Oliver Tambo, she continued to write poetry throughout her diplomatic career in exile and afterwards, publishing a number of books of poetry, including *Voices that Lead*, and *Footprints and Fingerprints*.
- Mabuza used her work as a artist to promote the resistance to apartheid in addition to her promotion of the cultural boycott. Under the alias *Sono Molefe*, she sent a call for submissions of poetry by women belonging to the ANC and stationed within the countries and in the camps. Among such poets was South Africa's third youngest published poet, Zindzi Mandela.
- So threatening was her work that in September 1986, at the height of resistance and calls for the release of political prisoners and the end of apartheid ANC offices in Sweden where she was stationed were bombed. She was moved to the United States and continued her work of mobilising support against the apartheid regime.

- In 1990, political organizations, including the ANC were unbanned marking the beginning of South Africa's transition to democracy. After liberation in 1994, she was permitted to remain only briefly in South Africa, serving in parliament for one year, 1994-5, before resuming her diplomatic career. She was sent into what she saw as a 'second exile' as ambassador in Germany in 1995, High Commissioner in Malaysia, and then from 2001 to 2009 as High Commissioner in London. She served with great success in all these places.
- Mabuza continued to write poetry and books including Oliver Tambo Remembered, a collection of reminiscences by a large number of people, and she was editor of Conversations with Uncle O.R. Tambo: Childhood Memories in Exile, a collection of reminiscences of Tambo written by ANC members who were in exile as children.

