

Women in the Anti-Apartheid Movement

Lilian
Ngoyi

RESOURCES



Women in the Anti-Apartheid Movement



Lilian Ngoyi RESOURCES

DWN

Continued from Page 13

be reminded that SACTU was founded in 1955, 53 years after the birth of the ANC. At its founding Conference, SACTU adopted its own National Executive Committee, and this is still the post-1955. It grew without changing its name, but it was a component part of the Congress Alliance led by the adopted the Freedom Charter in 1955. It was committed to a constitutional change to South Africa. SACTU was the largest trade union in the country and was one of the most active in the struggle for workers' rights and better working conditions. It is inextricably linked with the struggle for political rights in the land of our birth. Therefore SACTU's role is to build the necessary unity in order to overthrow the oppressive exploitative state. We know no other path of struggle.

But there is a growing attempt by the detractors of our struggle to divide the trade union struggle from the struggle for political rights in the land of our birth. Therefore SACTU's role is to build the necessary unity in order to overthrow the oppressive exploitative state. We know no other path of struggle.

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CONSTITUTION

Perhaps those who have chosen to spread and believe this big lie need to

UNITE UNDER SACTU

What progress do we want to see in our country? The trade union movement is the only force that can lead our people to a better life. We say that for which we stand!

HEROES OF OUR REVOLUTION

Lilian Ngoyi was born in Pretoria in 1912. Her father was a miner and her mother a domestic servant. Her religious background made an indelible imprint in her life. Lilian's childhood was that of poverty-deprivation as is the case with many African children. In later years, she had to ask herself this question: 'Why can't God answer my parents? Something is wrong. The more we pray, the more poor we are.' This is when she realized that something more than praying had to be done.

LILIAN NGOYI

BOY NXUMALO



Early in her married life she was widowed and with her meagre wage she had to support her three children, her mother and other members of the family. She resolved to take action against all forms of injustices perpetuated against Africans. At time she had to leave her ailing mother to participate in campaigns against apartheid. Continuous exploitation led her to join the Garment Workers' Union which later elected her to its executive committee. In 1952 she was involved in a protest march with her daughter against the banning of the Secretary General, Solly Sachs. Incidentally Helen Joseph and Mary Moodley who later became outstanding leaders of her women, were also in this demonstration.

In the same year, Lilian found her place in the African National Congress Women's League. With Ida Mtwana, Bertha Mkhize, Florence Matomela, Ray Alexander and Helen Joseph and other women leaders, she led the way to the formation of the Federation of South African Women in 1954. In that founding conference she was elected the

... We were proud that we went there, although disappointed not having seen him in person. But the message was there. We left our message there. He knew by that ... we were a lot of people.

Vice-President. The valour of the South African women made his landmark when decreed that all African women are to carry passes. The enemy had "dislodged" women from various parts of the country, on August the 9th, 20,000 women strong besieged the Union Buildings in Pretoria led by Helen Joseph and herself.

"All processions in the Union Western Transvaal, and in one village in only 76 accepted passes. One shall renew their passes within the African community. She also forced to drink ken by banishment during the state of emergency and numerous prison spells were incurred through attending or addressing any gathering until November 1952. She died confined to her room in Orlando. In dipping our revolutionary banner in honour of Mangoyi a very

I must say I had a tough time, but my spirits have not been dampened. You can tell my friends all over the world that this old girl is still herself, if not mature after all the experiences. I'm looking forward to the day when my children will share in the wealth of our lovely South Africa.

J. G. Strydom, the racist prime minister then unaware of the developing march outside, ordered his troops to clear the crowd. He said: "I must say I had a tough time, but my spirits have not been dampened. You can tell my friends all over the world that this old girl is still herself, if not mature after all the experiences. I'm looking forward to the day when my children will share in the wealth of our lovely South Africa."

Heroes of our revolution: Lilian Ngoyi

Dawn, Vol 7, No. 1 Jan 1983
by Roy Nxumalo

Lilian Ngoyi was born in Pretoria in 1912. Her father was a miner and mother a domestic servant. Her religious background made an indelible imprint in her life. Lilian's childhood was that of poverty-deprivation, as is the case with many African children. In later years, she had to ask herself this question: 'Why can't God not answer my parents? Something is wrong. The more we pray, the more poor we are.' This is when she realised that something more than praying had to be done...

... Lilian left high school in the first year because her family could no longer bear the expenses of her taxing education, which included an annual 12 pounds ten shillings for school fees. She worked to help support her family and immediately came to learn of the South African realities.

Early in her married life she was widowed and with her meagre wage she had to support her three children, her mother and other members of the family. She resolved to take action against all forms of injustices perpetuated against Africans. At time she had to leave her ailing mother to participate in campaigns against apartheid. Continuous exploitation led her to join the Garment Workers' Union which later elected her to its executive committee. In 1952 she was involved in a protest march with her daughter against the banning of the Secretary General, Solly Sachs. Incidentally Helen Joseph and Mary Moodley who later became outstanding leaders of her women, were also in this demonstration.

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... [Ngoyi's] determination made her the victim of repression and police harassment... Her indomitable spirit was never broken by banishment during the state of emergency and numerous prison spells that she went through. From 1961 she was barred from attending or addressing any gathering until November 1982. She died confined to her house in Orlando... In dipping our revolutionary banner in honour of Ngoyi, we remember her inspiring message during the 1952 March in which she said: 'I must say I had a tough time, but my spirits have not been dampened. You can tell my friends all over the world that this old girl is still herself, if not mature after all the experiences. I'm looking forward to the day when my children will share in the wealth of our lovely South Africa.'

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Lillian Ngoyi

Women in the Anti-Apartheid Movement

Opponent of Oppression: Lillian Ngoyi

Wits Student Newspaper

With Lillian Ngoyi's Passing last Wednesday South Africa lost yet another of its historically outstanding leaders, a leader who devoted her life to the continuing struggle against oppression, exploitation and injustice. May Day 1950 - police kill 18 demonstrators - this precipitated a national day of protest - 26 June 1950 - this was the first time the ANC called for national work stoppage - it was regarded also as a day of mourning for those who had died in the struggle for liberation. As a political strike June 26 was an outstanding success and was subsequently adopted as South African freedom day. Years later the Defiance Campaign began in Port Elizabeth... the campaign spread throughout the country- by the end of the year thousands of people of all races had defied apartheid, curfew laws, pass laws etc. The campaign involved a large number of black women and it was during this campaign that Lillian Ngoyi began her political career. She was later to become President of the ANC Women's League and the Federation of South African Women. Many people were forced to sacrifice their jobs and many suffered imprisonment as a result of their participation. The South African government reacted to this mass political action by arresting leaders, bannings, prohibiting

defiance, the Public Safety Act, the Criminal Laws amendment Act - under this act defiers (including women) could also be whipped. The tide of defiance was therefore forced to recede...

...Lillian Ngoyi must be seen as a leading light in the history of women's resistance in the 1950s. She was charged in the massive treason trial of 1956. Her personality, and flair for public speaking thrust her to the forefront of the political struggle, but their energy as an organiser made an obvious target for persecution and prosecution by the state. In 1961 she received her first banning order. In 1963 she spent 71 days in solitary confinement, under the 90 day detention without trial lawful stop she later described this as her worst experience. Lillian Ngoyi was banned almost continuously and was prohibited from attending any social gathering. A constant dedication to the struggle for liberation will ensure that she will be remembered and her actions serve as an inspiration to those who continue.

Wits Student Newspaper, 1980

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WITS STUDENT

Opponent of oppression Lillian Ngoyi



Lillian Ngoyi - inspiration for the 1980s

With Lillian Ngoyi's passing last Wednesday South Africa lost yet another of its historically outstanding leaders, a leader who devoted her life to the continuing struggle against oppression, exploitation and injustice. May Day 1950 - police kill 18 demonstrators - this precipitated a national day of protest - 26 June 1950 - this was the first time the ANC called for national work stoppage - it was regarded also as a day of mourning for those who had died in the struggle for liberation. As a political strike June 26 was an outstanding success and was subsequently adopted as South African freedom day. Years later the Defiance Campaign began in Port Elizabeth... the campaign spread throughout the country- by the end of the year thousands of people of all races had defied apartheid, curfew laws, pass laws etc. The campaign involved a large number of black women and it was during this campaign that Lillian Ngoyi began her political career. She was later to become President of the ANC Women's League and the Federation of South African Women. Many people were forced to sacrifice their jobs and many suffered imprisonment as a result of their participation. The South African government reacted to this mass political action by arresting leaders, bannings, prohibiting defiance, the Public Safety Act, the Criminal Laws amendment Act - under this act defiers (including women) could also be whipped. The tide of defiance was therefore forced to recede...

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Oppression: 1980 style

For as long as the system has existed in South Africa, oppression by the state has been glaringly apparent. Numerous groups have organised in opposition to this oppression and have, to turn, been brutally repressed as well.

Recently however, there has been a resurgence of groups, who despite their apparent, numerous setbacks (outbreaks and often violent confrontations) against the state, have managed to survive.

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ACADEMIC FREEDOM COMMITTEE

FOCUS ON
TUESDAY 19 MARCH
RISHOP DIAMOND TUTU
10:00 AM - 12:30 PM
MOVIE - THE BANGMAN
THURSDAY 21 MARCH
SHEILA (Dr. SRE. PEARL)
MAX PHICHA (Dr. PHAN CAN)
and Black South
S2, 12:30

Join the FREE MANDELA CAMPAIGN GET YOUR PETITION FORMS TODAY



Lilian Ngoyi

Black History Month: Lilian Masediba Ngoyi (1911-1980),

Women's History Network Blog

In 1954, Lilian Masediba Ngoyi took to the stage of the inaugural conference of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) and stated to the gathered group of multiracial delegates: "Let us be brave: we have heard of men shaking in their trousers, but who ever heard of a woman shaking in her skirt?" As the cheers, applause and laughter subsided, Ngoyi, a textile worker and mother of three from Orlando, Johannesburg, concluded her speech in typical fashion: with the declaration that all South African women, regardless of their race or background, should be willing to die for the future of their children.

Born into a poor family in 1911 in Pretoria, Lilian Ngoyi became one of the leading lights of anti-apartheid protest. In a political career that spanned three decades Ngoyi, a garment worker by trade, became the Secretary General of the ANC Women's League (ANC-WL), the National Chairman of FEDSAW and the first female to be elected to office in the main body of the African National Congress (ANC). She would lead the members of FEDSAW to the doors of the Union Buildings in Pretoria on the 9th of August 1956, to present petitions protesting the pass laws on behalf of the 20,000 women from across South Africa who had gathered outside. Later that year she was arrested for high treason along with 155 other leading activists. An event that would mark the beginning of a succession of banning orders and censorship attempts aimed to silence her.

Women in the Anti-Apartheid Movement

In her words and actions Lilian Ngoyi combined her identities as an African, woman, mother and worker to mobilize South African women in the fight against apartheid. For Ngoyi, the restrictions and limitations that apartheid laws placed on black women were at the heart of the system of white supremacy. Therefore, it was only natural that black women be in the vanguard of anti-apartheid resistance. She highlighted how the pass laws, Bantu Education, forced removals and other state sanctions, aimed at the separation of the races through the restriction of black movement, hit African women the hardest and were deliberately designed to erode the African family and deny a future for African children. Ngoyi dedicated her life to struggling against these oppressive measures and to securing a better future for her children and the children of South Africa. She mobilized a brand of militant motherhood that laid bare the oppressive nature of apartheid and allowed her to simultaneously address the specific plight of women in South Africa and the broader racial struggles against apartheid. As a result, the 'women's struggle', and the struggle of every South African opposed to the policies of the minority Nationalist Government, became one.

Lilian Ngoyi was also a transnational figure who recognised the potential influence that international support could have on the struggle against apartheid and the emancipation of black women. With this in mind she embarked on an audacious (and highly illegal) journey to Lausanne, Switzerland in 1955 to participate in the World Congress of Mothers held by the Women's International Democratic Federation

(WIDF). Accompanied by her fellow activist Dora Tamana, and as an official delegate of FEDSAW, she embarked on a journey that would see an attempt to stow away on a boat leaving Cape Town under "white names", defy (with the help of a sympathetic pilot) segregated seating on a plane bound for London and gain entry to Britain under the pretext of completing her course in bible studies. With Tamana, she would visit

England, Germany, Switzerland, Romania, China and Russia, meeting women leaders often engaged in left wing politics, before arriving back in South Africa a wanted woman. At Lausanne, Ngoyi presided over the 2nd session of the conference, giving its opening address. Standing in front of assembled women and mothers from almost every continent, she declared: "The Federation of South African Women...has joined hands



Above: Lilian Ngoyi (centre) President of the South African Women's Federation and of the ANC Women's League. Charged and acquitted in the Treason Trial, detained in 1960-61, banned on release for eleven years and then again from 1975 until her death in March 1980. Photographer unknown.



Lilian Ngoyi

Women in the Anti-Apartheid Movement

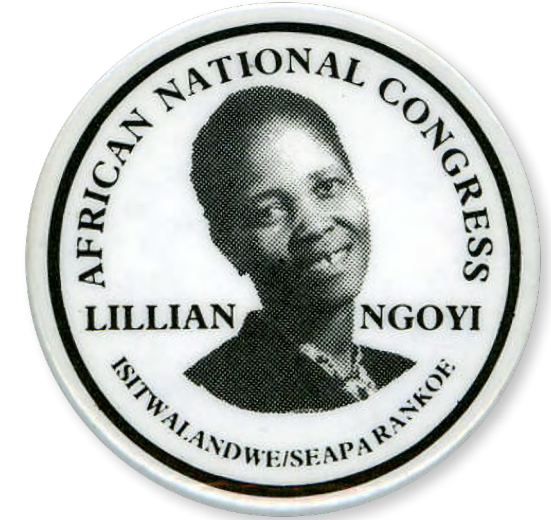
with all organisations fighting for democratic rights, for full equality, irrespective of race or sex.” She detailed the hardships faced by South African women to a global audience and appealed for support in bringing freedom and democracy to the nation in the name of the women’s international peace movement. The travels of Ngoyi and Tamana were made all the more remarkable when, back in South Africa, efforts were continually being made to

monitor and strictly control African movement and mobility. As a result, the trip effectively asserted Ngoyi’s right, as a black woman, to travel and move freely. By escaping the hold of the pass laws and making illegal border crossings these two black women struck at the heart of the doctrine of apartheid that sought to prevent the mobility of non-whites at all costs. As she traversed Europe, passing from London, through the iron curtain to

the eastern bloc, Ngoyi commented on the absence of racism and the potential benefits of communism. She observed that the women she met were not black, white or coloured, but mothers, stating: “I was a woman and a mother, my colour was not my problem.” Through her travels, Ngoyi collapsed racial and geographical divides. She was part of a global motherhood that brought people together in the name of peace, freedom and democracy – regardless of race.

As a result of her defiance and anti-apartheid organising Ngoyi was issued with her first banning order in October 1962. It lasted for 10 years and was renewed again in 1975 for a further 5 year period. In this time she was not allowed to leave Orlando or meet more than one person at a time (including family members). She was constantly monitored by the police and no news of her was allowed to appear in the press. Ngoyi’s physical isolation took an inevitable toll on her political activities and she struggled to earn a living using her skills as seamstress. Despite this, she remained outspoken both on African and women’s rights until her death in 1980. Lilian Ngoyi, by bringing together her concerns as an African and as a woman, promoted a militant black motherhood that would shape the struggle against apartheid laws in the 1950s. Reflecting on her life in 1972 she chose to look to her own mother to articulate the growing militancy of black women in South Africa that she herself represented: “My mother firmly believed our tears shall be wiped away in the next world. I believed we should start enjoying life here.”

Below: Lilian Ngoyi, first woman elected to an ANC executive committee. <https://africanactivist.msu.edu/image.php?objectid=210-809-57>



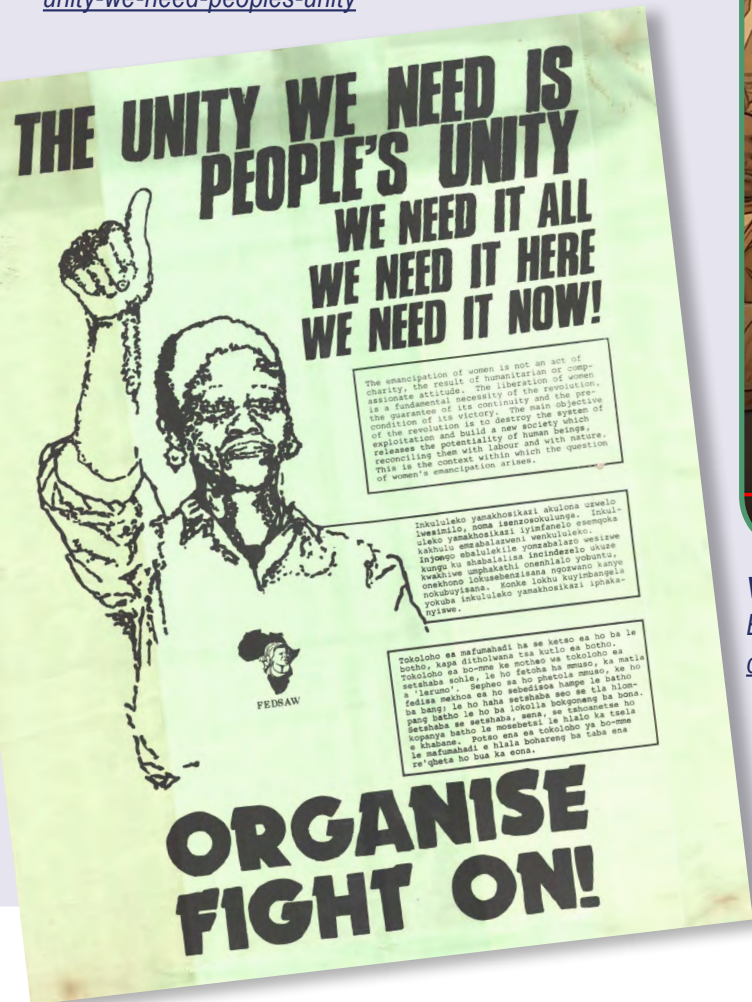
Above: Lilian Ngoyi at the head of a demonstration against the pass laws. Photograph Eli Weinberg



Lilian Ngoyi

Women in the Anti-Apartheid Movement

Below: Lilian Ngoyi; text: The unity we need is people's unity; we need it all, we need it here, we need it now; Organise Fight On, 1984 <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/unity-we-need-peoples-unity>



Ngoyi's legacy is remembered today

Video: Lilian Ngoyi: A Short Animated Biographical Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7kIFexP2Kk>

Below: Lilian Ngoyi known as “mother of the Black resistance” in South Africa. Source: <http://www.blackhistoryheroes.com/2015/07/lilian-ngoyi-mother-of-black.html>



About this resource...

Women in the Anti-Apartheid Movement

This presentation is part of a resource collaboratively developed by **The Anti-Apartheid Legacy: Centre of Memory and Learning (CML)** and **UEA**. It is part of the CML's work to promote the legacy and values of the Southern African liberation struggle, whilst supporting contemporary discourse around social (in)justice, inclusion and multi-racial collaboration for social transformation

Many of the images and linked documents are supplied with kind permission of project partners, **The Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives**. Other sources are referred to at the relevant places in the packs.

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The University of East Anglia

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The Anti-Apartheid Legacy: Centre of Memory and Learning (CML) promotes the legacy and values of the Southern African liberation struggle and the UK's central role within this world-changing history, whilst supporting contemporary discourse around social (in) justice, inclusion and multi-racial collaboration for social transformation.



AAM ARCHIVES

Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives

Forward to Freedom tells the story of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement and its campaigns to support the people of South Africa in their fight against apartheid. The AAM also campaigned for freedom for Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola, and against South Africa's attacks on its neighbours.



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