

16 labour

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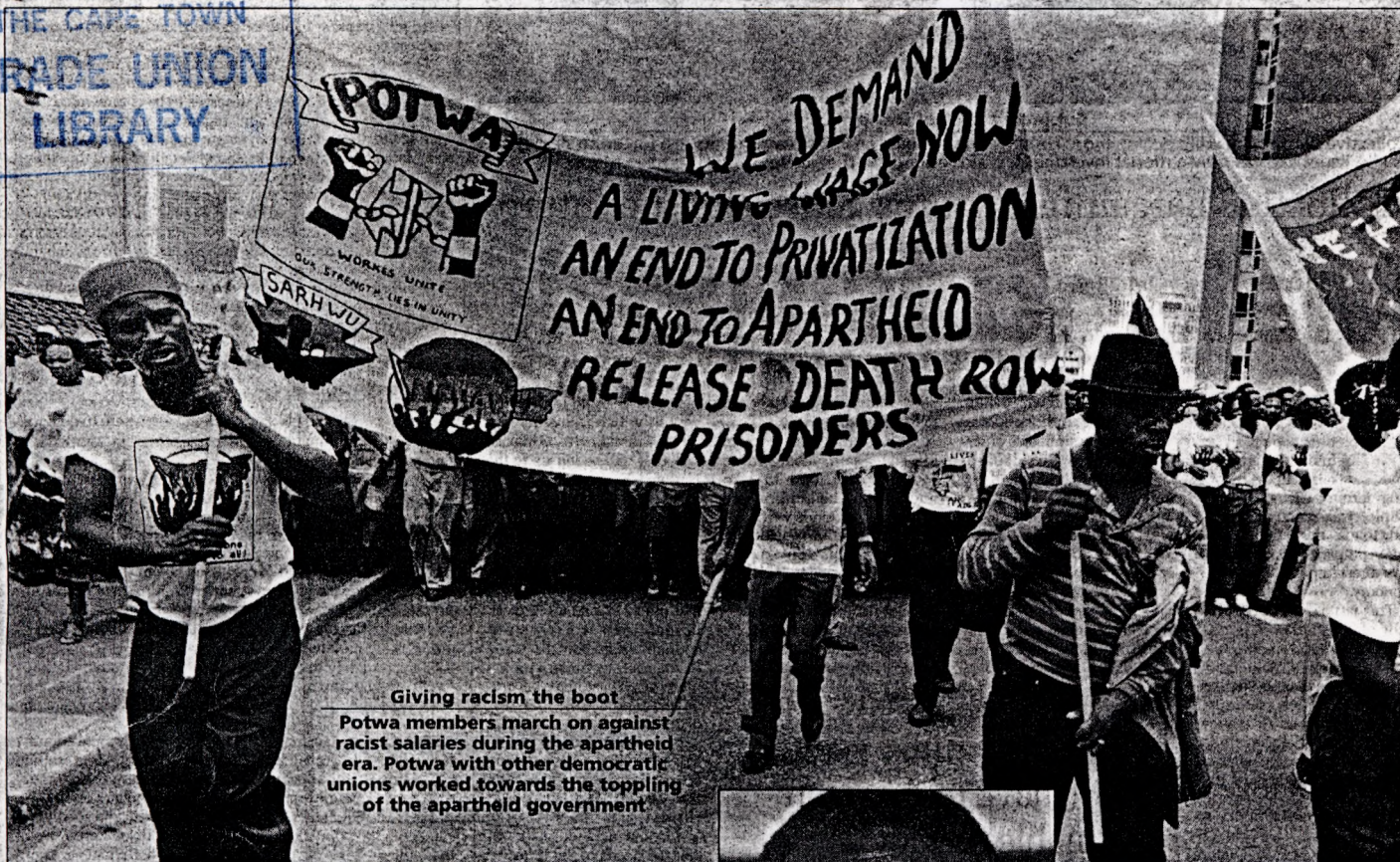
ESSED

SAHLA: 28: POTNA

Profile on

POTWA

Post and Telecommunications Workers Association (Potwa)

THE CAPE TOWN
TRADE UNION
LIBRARY

Giving racism the boot

Potwa members march on against racist salaries during the apartheid era. Potwa with other democratic unions worked towards the toppling of the apartheid government.

POTWA was formed in August 1986 in Soweto after workers' rejection of the liaison committees and workers' councils tailored by management for black workers in the Department of Post and Telecommunications. Racist salaries also helped to mobilise workers into the union. At the launching congress, Potwa had already signed-up 10 000 members in nine regions.

Membership and Regions:

The union boasts 28 000 paid-up membership nationally. It has nine regional offices - Gauteng, Western Transvaal, Northern Transvaal, Eastern Transvaal, Northern Cape, Free State, Eastern Cape, Western Cape and Natal.

Membership profile,

- Blue and white collar,
- Labourers

Affiliation:

Potwa is an affiliate of Cosatu. Internationally, it is affiliated to Postal Telegraph and Telephone International (PTTI).

Industries organised:

- Postal and couriers,
- Telecommunications,
- Broadcasting,
- Paging,
- Electronic and computing,

- Information and technology,
- Information systems.

Minimum wage:

Postal industry = R1 450 per month,
Telecommunications = R1 500 per month.

Highlights of some of the victories:

- Last year, the union settled wage claims at Telkom and SA Postal Service at 11,5% and 10,5% respectively for the first above the inflation rate. The lowest paid worker earns R1 450 per month, which is five times higher than what they earned before Potwa was launched in 1986.
- In 1993, the union won the right to participate and influence the grading system of workers. The union now also has a say in promotion or demotion of workers.
- Potwa also succeeded to opposing the Post Office bill which was meant to privatise the department.
- Potwa also prides itself for contributions made jointly with other democratic unions under the umbrella of Cosatu towards the toppling of the apartheid government.
- The strike by Potwa's wing in Transkei - Transkei Post Office Workers Association - over parity with their SA counterparts, unleashed a whirlwind of strikes which led to Oupa Gqozo's downfall.

Current campaigns:

Key union campaigns are of affirmative action and the transformation of companies



President:

RAMATEU MONYOKOLO
HEAD OFFICE (JOHANNESBURG)

Monyokolo joined the Department of Post and Telecommunication as an apprentice electrician in 1985 but could not qualify as a technician because then the department did not provide funds for blacks who wanted to qualify as technicians. In 1986 while training at the department's college in Ophirton, Johannesburg, he recruited other trainees to join Potwa. The following year, Monyokolo was instrumental in organising for the national strike in 1987, which lasted for seven weeks. In the same year, 1987, while employed by the department's branch in Alrode on the East Rand, co-workers elected him vice-chairperson of shopstewards committee. From 1988 until 1990, he was acting chairperson of the union's South Eastern Transvaal region before being elected vice-chairperson of the region in 1990. Between 1991 and 1994, he served the union as national treasurer. He was elected by the national executive committee of Potwa as president in March 1994 after the then president, Kgabiso Mosunkutu, was released from the union as an ANC national legislature candidate. Monyokolo is also a member of Cosatu's executive committee.

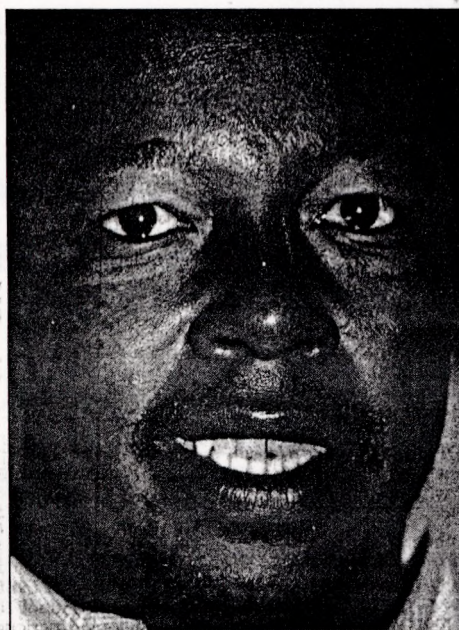
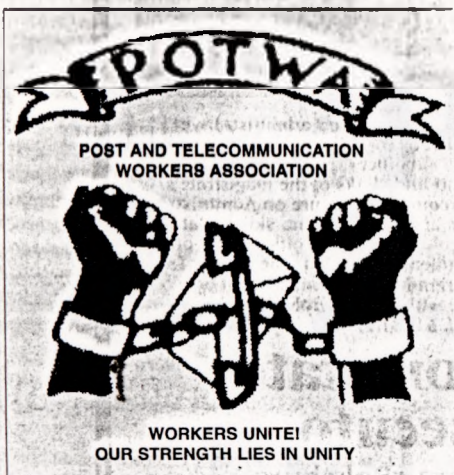
which may result in redundancies. The anti-privatisation campaign is also very topical and the union remains strongly opposed to privatisation of state assets.

Mergers:

Potwa is in the process of finalising a merger with two other unions operating in Post and Telecommunication industry - SA Postal Telecommunication Employees Association (Saptea) and Postal Employees Association of SA (Peasa).

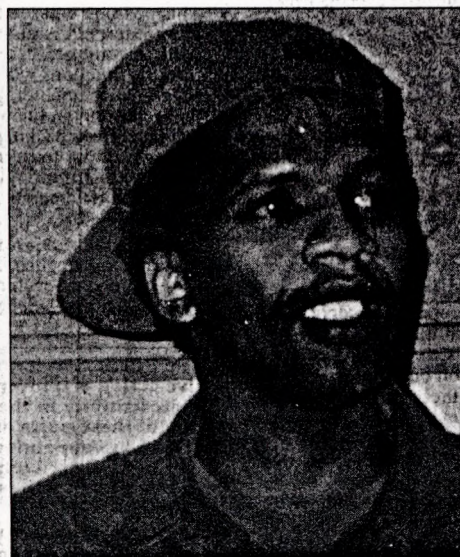
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Johannesburg - Tel: (011) 333 4351/5
By Sello Seripe - Pics: William Malope

National office bearers

**First deputy president:**

TLHLEFANG SEKANO
HEAD OFFICE (JOHANNESBURG)

Sekano joined the Department of Post and Telecommunications in 1980 as a trainee electrician and qualified as a technician in 1983. In 1985 while employed at the department's Lenasia branch, he was elected into the liaison committee. A few months later, committee members in the Witwatersrand decided to form union and Sekano was elected into the steering committee to facilitate the formation of the union. When the union was launched in August 1986, he was elected national organiser. In 1988, he was elected assistant national general secretary. Sekano, who had previously occupied senior positions in the Soweto Civic Association and ANC at local level, was elected the first deputy president in 1994.

**General secretary:**

S'KHOMBUZO TYIBILIKA
HEAD OFFICE (JOHANNESBURG)

He started working for the General Post Office in Port Elizabeth as a labourer-cum-storeman in 1985, but was dismissed in 1987 during the national strike organised by Potwa. The following year, Tyibilika worked as a volunteer organiser for the union in the Eastern Cape. In November 1993, he was elected Cosatu's Eastern Cape regional secretary before his election in February 1995 to the current position. Tyibilika is also a member of Cosatu's executive committee.

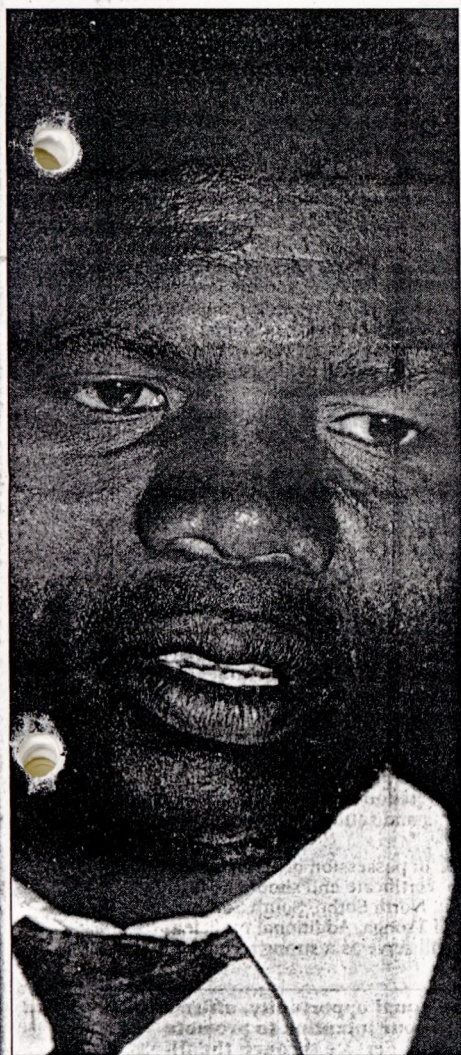
**Second deputy president:**

THEMBA MAJOZI
POST OFFICE (KWAZULU NATAL)

Majozi joined started working for the post office in KwaZulu Natal in 1970 as a clerk. During that era, black employees were barred by legislature from joining unions while their white, indian and coloured counterparts belonged to staff associations or liaison committees. However, black workers pestered post office bosses until they (workers) were also allowed to set up their own staff association. A dedicated unionist, Majozi coordinated the affairs association and led a delegation to the launching congress in 1986. In the same year, the KwaZulu Natal regional congress of Potwa elected him chairperson, a position which he occupied until he was elected second deputy president at the fourth national congress in 1993. In line of duty as Potwa official, he had represented Potwa at a Post Telegraph and Telephone International (PTTI) workshop in Maseru and also at a PTTI congress held in West Germany.

**Assistant general secretary:**

SIZWE MATSHIKIZA - HEAD OFFICE (JOHANNESBURG)
Matshikiza joined Potwa in 1988 as a media officer after serving a jail term on Robben Island for his political activities, including membership of the then banned organisation (ANC) and possession of dangerous weapons. He was elected national assistant general secretary in 1991 and re-elected to the same position in 1993.

**Treasurer:**

NAKANA MASOKA - TELKOM (WELKOM)

He started training as an electrician under the Department of Posts and Telecommunications in 1985 in Bloemfontein in the Free State province. Masoka was part of the team which mobilised for the formation of Potwa in the Free State and led a delegation from the province to the launching congress in 1986. After the launch, he was elected chairperson of the Southern Free State region and played a major role in the seven-week national strike by post office workers. In 1993, he was elected regional secretary of Potwa before his election to the current position of national treasurer. Previously, Masoka was also involved in the formation of the ANC in Northern Free State and represented the area in negotiations which led to the formation of SA National Civic Organisation.