



SACTWU

Tribute to the late Violet Seboni



1965 - 2009

**A New Growth Path for Decent Work in the
Clothing, Textile, Footwear and
Leather Industry**





Violet Seboni Tribute Book

**This book is produced in honour of the late
Violet Jacobeth Seboni**

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SACTWU shop steward since 1989
A Deputy President of SACTWU since 2001
The 2nd Deputy President of COSATU since 2003

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Violet Jacobeth Seboni passed away in a car accident on the 3rd of April, 2009.	

In this booklet we capture parts of some of the many tributes we received. Unfortunately due to space constraints, we cannot reflect all the tributes received, but they are acknowledged.

Funeral oration for Violet Seboni by SACTWU ex-General Secretary and current Minister of Economic Development, Ebrahim Patel.



Dear family of Violet Seboni

My dear leaders

My dear comrades

Violet Seboni was born on 18 September 1965. It was to be a turbulent start to life for this young girl who never got to know her father, in a story that started in sadness. And shortly after her birth, it was her mother too that she lost in circumstances that no one should experience. She knew pain and later in life she stood up for those in pain.

Young Violet was raised by her grandmother for the first few years of her life, and when her grandmother died, it was her granny's friend – in a culture where ubuntu requires that we reach out to others – who took on the responsibility to rear the young girl and to become her comforter, her provider, her mother.

Violet went to primary school and later to Madibane High School in Diepkloof, where she developed a love for netball and a passion for activism.

After high school, she became pregnant and her beloved daughter Lesego was born.

She looked for work, and like generations of young, working-class women before her, she turned to the clothing industry, to use her hands, her dexterity and her skill to earn a living to feed her young family. The role the industry plays, to give work, bread and life to those in need, is in itself a reason not to let the industry die simply due to the cold, harsh winds of global competition and indifference or inaction from those who have the power to intervene, to use trade measures and to use industrial policy tools to save jobs and absorb our people into decent work opportunities.

The industry that young Violet chose is one whose factories in Joburg grew with the discovery of minerals and the rapid growth of an urban population that needed to be clothed. Violet's predecessors in the industry were white women sewing machinists, mainly Afrikaners, often the wives and daughters of the Afrikaner mineworkers who as 'by-woners', were like their black brethren, driven off the land and into the cities hungry for labour.


Trade unionism took root among the male mineworkers – Die Mynwerkers Unie was their vehicle – and among female garment workers – through the Garment Workers Union.

"We have lost a revolutionary heroine, who devoted her whole life to the struggle to liberate her people and build a socialist world" – COSATU

But while the men allied themselves to a race-project and turned to right-wing politics, the women were a beacon of struggle for all workers and their left-wing union was led by socialists like Solly Sachs, the father of Constitutional Court Judge Albie Sachs.

By the time Violet was born in 1965, the state had acted against the Union, banned its leaders and outlawed racially-integrated unionism. At the same time, more black workers were entering the industry, young African woman desperate for jobs. The union clung on in a semi-clandestine existence during the years of repression, and the cause of worker organisation was energised in the 1973 Durban worker strikes and the 1976 students uprising in Soweto. Following the labour reforms forced onto a reluctant government, African unions registered and eventually the different parts of the union in Joburg reunited as the National Union of Garment Workers. In 1987 it merged with unions elsewhere in the country to form the Amalgamated Clothing & Textile Workers' Union of South Africa (ACTWUSA) and two years later it merged again to become the South African Clothing & Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU).

On the day before Violet's 24th birthday, the founding Congress



of her union adopted a new constitution and name and in that period leading up to its formation, there was a great excitement, an optimism and a hope in the industry – a giant is coming, a unity of African, Coloured and Indian workers was coming, a merger of unions in the Cape, Natal provinces and Transvaal will take place, textile workers will unify with clothing workers, and Violet became a union activist and was elected shop steward, a decision that was to change her life.

She threw her energy and passion into the young organisation and the struggle for democracy.

In 1992 she was attacked at Cleveland Station by IFP members and her leg was badly hurt, and she was in hospital for a considerable period.

A few years later her youngest daughter, Lesedi, was born and Violet was filled with joy.

In 1999 she was elected as the first female chairperson of the East Rand branch of SACTWU. She brought a new energy to the branch at a time when there were many battles to save jobs and to fight for a living wage. We all recall seeing this young, strong woman who showed an organisational maturity beyond her years.

Two years later that recognition of leadership qualities by her fellow shop stewards led to her election as treasurer of SACTWU's Gauteng region and then to her assumption of duties as a SACTWU Deputy President, a position she has held for the past eight years.

In that period we worked closely together.

She was there as a national leader when SACTWU launched the save jobs campaign, and she picketed with us at the stores of Mr. Price, Woolworths and Edgars.

She was there when the Labour Relations Act (LRA) was negotiated and it was amended, as she mobilised workers to

action in Gauteng, and I recall the sense of pride I felt when COSATU leaders spoke of the young SACTWU shop steward who defended the Federations' position on the LRA in often stormy regional shop steward council meetings, this authentic voice from the shopfloor argued passionately in support of the settlement we had proposed.


She was there when wage negotiations took place and played a leading role in defending the right to a living wage, marching and holding her constituency together in the big clothing strike in Joburg in 2001. And she was there to build the relationship with employers. She worked for two decades at Supreme Hat & Cap and developed a constructive and close relationship with Robert Pozniak, her MD.

"Violet never shied away from tackling difficult situations head-on and she was always out to speak her mind no matter the circumstances. There are very few individuals of Violet's calibre and we have lost a great leader and activist."

– Botswana Federation of Trade Unions (BTFU)

She was there also at times of sadness, as when we lost our other dear president, John Zikhali, also in the month of April on Easter Sunday in 2006, this month of death of Chris Hani, and OR Tambo and sadly too a week ago, of Philip Nyai, a previous vice-president of SACTWU.

The Violet we recall is not only a SACTWU leader – she represented all workers when she was elected at a packed Congress of COSATU as deputy president and from there she played a key role in the Federation, presiding over Central Executive Committees (CECs) in often complex and sometimes heated debates, this strong woman who was a clothing worker by trade and who brought the perspectives of the factory floor to the discussions of the union movement. We were proud as SACTWU when she chaired the session of the COSATU National Congress and her eyes in turn glowed with pride when her union spoke from the floor.



I am sure Sdumo Dlamini, the COSATU President, will talk of her role in the Federation – including her leadership of the COSATU delegation that was forced out of Zimbabwe, and her international work.

Violet was a proud African and a passionate internationalist, arguing strongly for the rights of Chinese workers to join real trade unions and to a living wage, and recognising that our gains in South Africa are provisional unless we can globalise social justice.

In December 16 months ago, Violet and I were at the Polokwane Conference of the ANC. During the many days there we took walks across the grounds at the University where the Conference took place and I asked her about her family. While delegates debated policy and the developmental state, and cast their votes for a new ANC president, I listened to her story – of her parents she did not know, of her own children that she passionately loved.

Our mothers are all special to us. For Lesego and Lesedi at this time of immense grief, when all the words in the world cannot still the pain and the grief that you feel, you need to know that your mother was an exceptional woman, a leader of people, who worked tirelessly that this world we live in should be a better world, and so often she would talk about her two daughters, her hopes and her dreams for the two of you, you who were her family, who made the pain of her own childhood go away, who shared her with her other family – the family of workers, of the union movement.

A few weeks ago Violet was with us in Cape Town, at a SACTWU National Bargaining Conference, chairing the session where we discussed the global economic crisis, a crisis unrivalled in the recent history of capitalism. She pointed to the challenges: of job losses and factory closures, of rising levels of poverty, but her faith in what organisation and solidarity can do was inspiring – she pointed to the steps we can take to fight the effects of the crisis and also to intensify the struggle for a new world order.

And in her very practical way, she brought it back home – to the election campaign, to the need for a strong COSATU, to the duty of SACTWU to fight for jobs and for decent work. She told delegates the story of the ANC's Manifesto – of how COSATU helped shape its content, of her pride in her organisation and its leadership, of her satisfaction that the Manifesto promised to address the problems of vulnerable workers and it identified the clothing and textile industry as needing special attention by government.

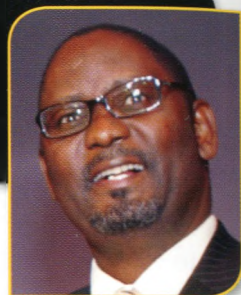
This talented, strong garment worker was dealt a hard hand by history but she drew on an inner strength that we will always remember. In a different world, Violet would have been given an easier life, completed a university degree – perhaps she would have been a partner in a law firm, perhaps together with her friends and comrades, Busi Msimango, Tshepo Makhene and Glacier Maduna, fighting human rights cases in the Constitutional Court. But destiny gave her a bigger job – it made her a clothing worker and a trade unionist and gave us her talent and her energy.

We remember that smile, the laughter, the voice that led us in song, the rough beautiful diamond, Violet, that you were. Many older people would have been proud to have achieved what you did in your 43 years on earth.

We bury you today with your SACTWU cap on top of your coffin as you requested it. On behalf of my presidents Themba Khumalo and Beauty Zibula, of your fellow NOB's Freda Oosthuysen, Andre Kriel, Chris Gina and Wayne van der Rheede, on behalf of the shop stewards and leaders in your region Gauteng, of Western Cape, KZN, Eastern Cape and Central regions, on behalf of all the SACTWU staff and our members, thank you, Violet, for what you gave. We will take forward that struggle, for decent work, for social justice, for the rights of workers, for jobs security, now in the middle of the economic crisis, now at the start of a new political moment after the elections, now in this 20th anniversary year of your SACTWU.

Hamba Kahle, dear Comrade.

Eulogy and tribute to an ordinary worker through and through - a shop steward and worker leader. By COSATU General Secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi.



Allow me before I read the messages of condolences to just say a few words to bid the woman I called MaVoi-Voi goodbye.

I can't recall exactly which year I first saw you, my dearest comrade and friend. But it was during your tenure as the chairperson of your union's East Rand branch.

You struck me as the ordinary worker, a shop steward and activist bubbling with confidence and full of energy. You loved singing and at every turn when your comrades in the Gauteng shop stewards council meeting started a revolutionary song you were the first to jump to your feet and the last to sit down. You were full of laughter and your heart was lily white and spotless.

Over time I grew to admire you after listening to you debating with other shop stewards in our Gauteng province. You were militant but calculating. You were prepared to do everything to protect and advance worker rights. I was not surprised to see you rise quickly in the past two decades to occupy the national positions in your union you loved so much, SACTWU, and the Federation you so admired - COSATU.

I worked very closely with you following your election to the position of 2nd Deputy President of COSATU in 2003. I know you regarded this as the highest point of your colourful career as a unionist. We fought hard battles together. You never once wavered nor showed any sign of weakness. You did not buckle under pressure.

I saw your pain when the former President of our COSATU, from 2004 until he left the union movement in 2008, threatened the unity and cohesion of our Federation. I know how happy you were when the Federation overcame that crisis and achieved the current high levels of unity and cohesion.

You were one of the most trustworthy friends and political allies I ever had. Those who did not have the honour of working with you would never know that in you we had one of the best trained and polished worker leaders. You taught us new lessons about loyalty to the organisation, its principles, procedures and policies.

On a personal note let me say this because I am certain you would have liked me to say this. I was very close to you. You and I enjoyed a very privileged relationship. I admired you for the things I have already mentioned. I know you were perhaps one of the most ardent supporters of my leadership style.

You admired me and I equally admired you. You called me “the workers’ general secretary or tata kaAphelele”, my son. You knew how much I love that boy. No two days would pass without us exchanging SMS’s and/or intimate telephone discussions about the challenges of our organisation. I will miss those conversations.

“Beyond the sweet person of comrade Seboni, we also lost a fighter who dedicated her life for better working conditions for workers not only in South Africa, but also for workers around the world”

– Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (CUT Brazil)

Since that fateful day when I was called about your untimely departure I have hardly spent a night without thinking about our long telephone discussions. I will always remember the introductions to these conversations - “Where is the workers’ general secretary, why have you not called me?”

Your entire life epitomised the hardships and the struggles of single mothers. Through you I want to pay tribute to all of these single mothers. You told me of how your grandmother single-handedly raised you. I remember your tales about the struggle to make ends meet with your meagre salary to raise your kids Lesego and Lesedi. I have seen your face when stress took its toll and at times forced you to move from your usual laughter, bubbling and singing into a very stressed-out woman, preoccupied with what to do next to feed your children.

Your response to these challenges was not to look at these daily struggles personally. You always retorted that this is what clothing; textile and garment workers had to go through everyday. You never wanted to be treated differently. You saw yourself as just one of these workers. I know you would have not have given up the association you had with these ordinary workers, even though that association meant continued suffering and poverty for you and your family. The unions do not pay this category of activists, who make supreme sacrifices to strengthen the workers' movement without expecting any reward in return.

"ITUC-Africa will remember Comrade Violet for her vivacity as well as for her robust and steadfast defence of the rights and interest of working people, not only of South Africa but indeed of Africa and the world as whole" – International Trade Unions Congress – Africa (ITUC-Africa)

I know that your passing spells a disaster for your children. After all the newspapers have written about what we said to you, and after all of us have returned to our normal hectic schedules, when our memories of you, MaVoi-Voi, fade and we no longer shout the slogan we are shouting today in your honour - "long live the memory of Violet Seboni", the question that your two daughters are asking is how will they survive from tomorrow. "Who will now struggle to borrow money from Peter to pay Leleti so we can have food every evening?" That is the question they should be asking today.

The only promise I can make to you MaVoi-Voi is that we will do the best we can to ensure that your kids do not go hungry a single day. We will work with your union and other unions of COSATU to ensure that they receive bursaries to take them through the remaining years of their schooling. Ebrahim Patel, the General Secretary of your union SACTWU - the man you equally admired - and I have already started to share views on what must be done to save your kids from a looming disaster. We will do this Violet so that your entire family can appreciate that whilst you hardly spent quality time with them,

you belonged to the family of millions, who understand that they must come to the party to ensure that your offspring do not suffer because their mother dedicated her entire life to the struggles of workers and humankind.

Bye-bye MaVoi-Voi, even though that is so difficult to comprehend. Farewell to you dear worker. I will miss you. I will miss the jokes including the many silly jokes I can't share in the presence of the church ministers. I am sure you will miss me too including my admiration of your beautiful body and its African assets. I can see you smile as I am saying this to you. I will miss you protecting me every moment. I will miss you telling your friends about how great I am and articulating my personal strengths to everyone who cared to listen. I will always love you MaVoi-Voi. I will always be your number one fan too. Pass our greetings to John Zikhali and John Gomomo as well as others who left before you.

The struggle continues!

"Violet was always on duty in the service of the working people. The singular fact that she was killed in a car accident on her way to Mafikeng, where she was to participate in ANC election campaigning is a testimony to her dedication such that she died while being counted on the side of the people"

– National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN)



Speech by COSATU President, Sdumo Dlamini, at the unveiling of a tombstone for Violet Seboni on 31 July 2010.



We are gathered here today to remember a mother, a friend, a fellow worker, a comrade and a revolutionary fighter – Comrade Violet Seboni.

She was loved and admired by everyone who ever came into contact with her and it is essential that we find ways to remember and honour her, both as an individual and a stalwart of the workers' revolutionary movement.

It was absolutely typical of Violet that she lost her life on active service, on her way to Mafikeng, where she was to participate in the ANC election campaign, in Heroes Month, April 2009.

She was, at the time of her tragic passing away, the COSATU 2nd Deputy President and the 1st Deputy President of SACTWU. But she played a broader role to advance the interests of the labour movement in general, in many other areas, as you will recall from the many messages of condolences read out at her funeral which came from many people and organisations in South Africa and all over the world.

We all had the greatest respect for Violet's work over the years, and we can only hope that the things she struggled for in life will yet be achieved. Please be assured of the continuing solidarity between British and South African workers.

– Trades Union Congress, UK (TUC)

There are so many instances I could recall of her commitment and enthusiasm for the workers' struggle but one that will always stand out was her brave leadership of the COSATU fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe in 2004 whose members were arrested, forced onto a bus and deported across the Beit Bridge border in the middle of the night.

But equally important as her national and international work was Violet's determination to remember her roots. She never lost contact with the members at her factory and SACTWU Branch, and she was always deeply involved in the personal problems of workers and people in general. It was typical that Violet should have devoted so much energy to the battle to combat the scourge of HIV/Aids and constantly reminded us of our responsibility to make this issue a top priority.

"In her, workers have lost a fearless leader. In her, the movement has lost a dedicated foot soldier. She will be sorely missed for her forthrightness and discipline to the organisation" – SACP

The trade union movement lost a great worker leader, who cared deeply about the clothing, textile and leather workers yet was also an internationalist who understood the true meaning of "Workers of the World unite!" We are here today to pay tribute to a real revolutionary heroine.

As with any great leader however, the best way to honour Violet is not by making speeches, but by learning from her example, teaching young workers the lessons that she taught us and putting those lessons into practice by continuing the fight for workers' rights and socialism to which she dedicated her life.

We have to be frank and say that the big problems, which Violet had to grapple with, remain unresolved to this day. Some have got even worse - the unprecedented levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality, the breakdown of our public education and healthcare services, the continued existence of squatter camps with no running water, electricity and sanitation.

We see the re-emergence of xenophobic attacks and violent protests in which desperate community members destroy the very institutions that should be offering them hope – schools and libraries. While of course we condemn such acts unreservedly, we have to understand the desperate plight of the growing number of South Africans who are living in dire poverty.

These include the 5.5 million people who have joined the ranks of the poor as a result of the loss of 1 100 000 jobs that have been lost since the beginning of 2009.

Even among those still with a job, the curse of casualisation of labour, driven by labour brokers, is getting worse. Relatively secure and reasonable well-paid jobs are rapidly being replaced by casual, low-paid and temporary jobs, which swell the ranks of the working poor.

Yet business leaders, and their mouthpieces in the media and universities, still preach to us about a “too rigid labour market” and “excessive wage demands”. Yet these are the very people who vote themselves massive increases, which have turned South Africa into the most unequal society on earth.

“She struggled alongside others to ensure that the working class becomes the main beneficiaries in the second decade of our democracy as opposed to an elite few who generously benefited from the neo liberal policies of GEAR” – NUMSA

We owe it to the memory of Violent Seboni and all the other fallen heroes and heroines of our movement to take decisive action to put an end to these social evils. The World Cup showed us, and showed the world that we have the skills and the ingenuity to organise a brilliant international class event.

Why can we not use those same qualities to build good schools for our children, provide a comprehensive national health and social security system and in so doing create thousands to bring down the horrific levels of unemployment.



COSATU issued a declaration the day after the World Cup Final, which we hope all South Africans will sign, setting the goals we need to score if we are to overcome all these problems and move speedily towards the kind of just and equitable society promised in the Freedom Charter.

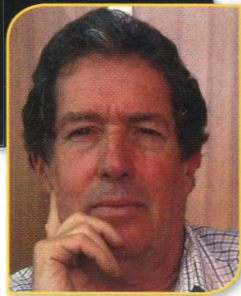
COSATU is also about to launch a major policy document setting out the strategies and policies we need to adopt as a nation if we are to provide decent jobs and living standards for the workers and the poor. Violet would have been one of the most passionate crusaders for these initiatives. Let us, on this solemn day of remembrance, dedicate ourselves to the struggle to which our comrade devoted her life.

Ulale ngoxolo comrade Violet

*We in your workers' movement miss you so dearly,
We miss your smile, your easy laughter yet your lion heart
We miss your dedication to the workers' cause and freedom
of your people
We miss your organisational discipline and undying love
for your movement
We miss your internationalism and your commitment
to socialism
We vow to take forward all your teachings, your values and
your spirits live with us everyday!*



Letter of condolence from Robert Pozniak, Managing Director of Supreme Hat & Cap, where Violet Seboni worked for 20 years.



It is with great sadness and regret that I write this obituary to Violet Seboni our comrade, shop steward, colleague and friend. I like to believe that Violet and I epitomized a constructive relationship between management and labour that resulted in a mutually beneficial outcome to the betterment of the whole business enterprise.

We started our journey together in the turbulent times of the late eighties when she was an inexperienced newly elected shop steward and I an inexperienced manager trying to deal with labour dissatisfaction and unrest. We grew together often disagreeing vehemently but always resolving our differences. I empowered her and she me and we respected and acknowledged the different roles we had. With experience we gained mutual wisdom and trust. Eventually we decided that her skills and talents would be best utilised pursuing her union passions in which she reached the heights of becoming deputy president of COSATU.

"She was a dedicated and disciplined cadre of our movement who devoted her life to the struggle of the working class, the fight for total emancipation of women and deepening the National Democratic Revolution"

-SADNU

We are proud of her accomplishments and of the role we played in forging labour peace and development together. On a personal level I will miss her not only as a business colleague but also as a friend.

On behalf of all who work at Supreme Hat & Cap I extend to Violet's daughters and family our heartfelt sympathy and condolences. I also extend the same sentiments to the regional and national SACTWU structures and to COSATU.

Tributes of the National Office Bearers and other comrades of Violet Seboni.



Themba Khumalo
SACTWU President

"My leader, my sister, my friend and a dedicated cadre of our movement. Your selfless service to workers will always be remembered. Amandla!"



Cornelius Kodisang
SACTWU 1st Deputy President

"She was militant, vocal and never afraid to state her mind. She never forgot that she represented workers and was very loyal to our cause. We had the same character: always stuck to what we believed in and difficult to persuade otherwise."



Ntombizodwa Beauty Zibula
SACTWU 2nd Deputy President

"Violet was a strong shop steward, a leader, friend, and a colleague. She debated, discussed and campaigned for what was important for the workers, like decent jobs, HIV/AIDS, gender and international issues."



Freda Oosthuysen
SACTWU and COSATU National Treasurer

"Violet was a fighter. She mainly concerned herself with our working conditions, the job losses, and HIV/AIDS. Her struggle for women's rights will be remembered. We will continue with that fight for our rights, until we gain equality."



Andre Kriel

SACTWU General Secretary

"I received news of her death from Comrade Vavi on that fateful Friday night. It broke my heart.

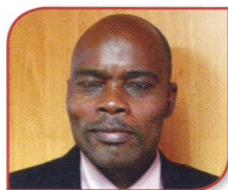
I couldn't believe our movement had so prematurely and suddenly lost the promise of decent work and better life for workers and the poor, which our bubbly, straight-talking and never-flinching Violet embodied. Now that the hurt has subsided, her memory brings strength."



Wayne van der Rheede

SACTWU Deputy General Secretary

"She distinguished herself in many ways. She spoke passionately at gatherings. She wasn't easily persuaded on matters of principle. But most importantly, she always put the workers' interests ahead of internal union politicking."



Chris Gina

SACTWU National Organising Secretary

"She grew up as a young and a committed woman. She was a brave leader of our movement."

"Seboni, a committed cadre and a revolutionary of the Congress movement will be sorely missed for her commitment and dedication to working class struggles. Her untimely passing has robbed the Congress movement of one of the greatest daughters of our time" – NUM



Susan Khumalo

SACTWU Gauteng Regional Chairperson

"She was always in the forefront of the struggle for workers. A person who was passionate about a better life for clothing, textile, leather and footwear workers in particular, and all workers nationally and globally in general. You are sorely missed and your contributions will never be forgotten"



Busi Msimango

SACTWU Gauteng Regional Treasurer

"I miss her a lot. We were close when it came to fighting against poverty and for the empowerment of women. That was our chief goal: the upliftment of women. She was straight to the point; she was that kind of person and I will miss her for that."



Glacier Maduna

SACTWU ex-Shop Steward

"I've known Violet since 1993. When we became SACTWU shop stewards, we became more than friends, more than colleagues, and more than comrades. We became sisters. I lost a friend, a sister, and a comrade. We lost a future cabinet minister, and state president."



Alinah Rantsolase

COSATU ex-Treasurer and current ANC MP

"Violet was a very strong woman leader with a very strong character. She could stand her ground, she could say yes or no, or anything she wanted for that matter. Not a lot of women can do that. She was independent. Her character was unique among women. Violet was my everything. I will never forget the way we worked together."

Tribute from Violet Seboni's eldest daughter, Lesego Seboni.

My mother's motto is "I am not a POLITICIAN, I am a TRADE UNIONIST". She was not just some woman to me; she was a mother, a leader, a revolutionary and a trendsetter. Originally, she wanted to be a teacher but unforeseen circumstances forced her to give up on her dream. As the saying goes, "leaders are born and not made", hence the path of leadership appeared to her. TRADE UNIONISM is my mom's passion, her calling. I remember from a very young age, whenever I used to see people like Jay Naidoo, I would immediately point him out as my mother's friend and a man she admired. I didn't even know who Jay Naidoo was! Like a true worker leader, she died with her boots on.





The speech Violet Seboni was to deliver the day after her untimely death:

Message of Support to ANC Women's League in the North West Province by the 2nd Deputy President of COSATU.



The ANC National Executive Committee deployees,
The provincial leadership
The entire Alliance leadership present here today

Please accept warm and revolutionary greetings from the gigantic fighting federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions – COSATU.

As I stand here today we are exactly 18 days from the 22nd of April, an election date which cannot be reversed. It will be a day where diamond will be cutting diamond!

The battle lines have been drawn - there are two camps involved in these elections and there is no middle ground. On one side is the Right wing and reactionary camp fighting for the position to become the best opposition and to reduce people's power and on the other side is the popular people's camp-led by the ANC, prepared to assume leadership and continue to give more power to the people. One of these camps must win on 22nd April and the one that will win is the one under the tried and tested leadership of the ANC!

As COSATU we have come here today to salute women for taking up the 60 day non-stop campaign for the victory of the ANC. We know that women would not have taken up this campaign if there was no evidence that the ANC has the interest of women at heart. If anyone wants to understand what the ANC is saying about the interests of women, they must just look at the number of women holding strategic positions of power in government, in parastatals and in the private sector.


The painful reality is that even those who today want us to turn our backs against the ANC are the ones who benefited the most. The report by the Equity Commission shows that white women are the ones who have benefitted the most and yet we are told that some in the white communities say they have lost confidence in the principle of non racialism.

Some of these women have joined the dissidents and are now saying affirmative action must be scrapped because they as individuals have benefited. They even have the guts to say the ANC have veered away from the freedom charter and the South African people to believe them.

If anyone wants to know what the ANC stands for, all you need to do is visit the rural areas and see that there is hope. Water has been brought closer to where people live; there are cooperatives that receive support from government. Even though there is still a lot to be done but every day when the sun sets our people have hope that the following day will be better than the previous one. Those who are honest who have been to South Africa before 1994 will say it openly that the ANC government have given them a voice and capacity to improve their own lives. More is still going to be done!

No amount of attacks and lies against our organisation and leadership can stop the ANC victory even if these attacks are launched by Bishop Desmond Tutu. The Bishop must know that like him we will not keep quiet when he attacks our leaders instead of seeking a meeting to have issues clarified before he can go public on any issue. Comrades we must agree that we made a mistake during the struggle to allow some individuals to be free riders.

We do not have a problem with having many critical voices in what we do or not do but such voices must first be informed and not be biased. The Bishop knows that the ANC president is a phone call away and he chooses to go out there and launch an attack. The Bishop must know a simple fact that South Africa is not USA or New York!



In the 80's when the tempo of the struggle increased the Bishop threatened to leave South Africa, in the recent past he threatened that he will not vote. All these essentially put into question his patriotic commitments to South Africa and perhaps he would like to be a USA citizen, he is free to apply there and perhaps may be granted USA citizenship!

We have come here today to clarify a point that the ANC is our organisation too as the workers. The labour laws that we have today that protect worker rights are there because the ANC listens to the workers. The Manifesto that prioritises the creation of Decent Jobs and the reviewing of legislation on labour brokers is there because the ANC cares and listens to what workers say.

So we do not just look at the ANC as an outside organisation to support only but we also participate as activists in the political life of the ANC. The victory of the ANC is our victory and we are certain that the ANC will win. Dissidents or no dissidents, Black DA or no Black DA. The ANC will emerge victorious!

Now Willie Madisha and Moses Mayekiso think that workers can just desert the ANC because they as individuals have lost positions in the ANC and in the labour movement. These people are our product but they are a project that went wrong, they are a shame to the workers, the working class and the poor!

Comrades, you can change but you must never sell your soul and the principle. No matter what, the unity of the workers remains paramount. Any talk to divide the workers is a shame and worse if that is done by former worker leaders.

As COSATU we want to make a call to other leaders and workers in other federations to agree that the time has arrived for all us to join hands, put our egos and unimportant differences aside to form a single gigantic federation. Unity and organisation is the only means and instrument in the hands of workers to advance the struggle for their rights.

Comrades the 2 million members of COSATU said I must tell you that being positive about the victory of the ANC on its own will not make the ANC to win.

We need to do first things first and ensure that there is unity in action amongst our people. Let us stop hunting with salt in our hands.

As we campaign, others are already eyeing for positions and some are already talking about this and that tender which they must secure. We want to tell them that no one owes them anything; your participation in the activities of the ANC is a matter of personal choice.

If you think that by joining the ANC and participating in its activities you will be increasing your chances for positions and tenders, hard luck, not under the leadership of Umsholozzi! If that is not good for you please leave early and follow others like you who have left to pursue greener pastures in a promised land with many and endless positions of power.

The politics of the belly have destroyed many liberation movements in Africa. As COSATU we want say it loud and clear that you cannot be a business person and also be a genuine leader of the people at the same time. If you go to government stop being a business person, the two cannot co-exist!

For the last two terms of government the working class and the poor have been observing from the margins and accepting crumbs from the table of business who have been the biggest beneficiaries of Democracy.

This time we want to declare that as we move to ensure the ANC victory we want to make known that we have declared this term of office in government as the term of the working class and we shall spare none of our energy to ensure that this becomes a reality!

Amandla


Forward to the ANC decisive victory!

Violet has joined legends like Charlotte Maxeke, Madi Hall-Xuma, Dorothy Nyembe, Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Sophia Williams, Rahima Moosa and all our other heroines. As we celebrate achievements of Cde Violet, many of us will recall her passionate speeches and revolutionary statements. She often spoke about issues that were very close to her heart. She would speak of what she called "the job loss blood bath" and "grinding poverty". It is these words, uttered in her unique way, that will always serve to strengthen our resolve as the ANC and the Alliance to deliver on our 2009 election manifesto.

- Basic Education Minister and ANC Women's League President, Angie Motshekga at the Unveiling of a tombstone for Violet Seboni







"It is therefore comrades, that I do not wish you good luck for today, since I do not really put my faith in good luck. Instead, I wish you good struggle, since a struggle it is. And we expect to see you all... at our demonstrations against job losses and poverty"

-Violet Seboni. From the speech delivered at the South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) workshop on Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) on the 24th of June, 2005.



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