

Garment Workers Union which exposed her to the injustices of the Apartheid regime, In 1951 Helen took a job with the Garment Workers Union, a move which exposed her to the injustices of the Apartheid regime and also became a founding member of the Congress of Democrats. She was also one of the few white people to get involved in the ANC activities of the 50's and one of the one of the leaders who read out clauses of the Freedom Charter at the Congress of the People in Kliptown in 1955.

Appalled by the plight of black women, she was pivotal in the formation of the Federation of South African Women, and with the organization's leadership, spearheaded a march of 20,000 women to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest against pass laws on August 9, 1956. A day which is still celebrated in South Africa as the Women's Day.

She was arrested on a charge of high treason in December 1956, then banned in 1957. The treason trial dragged on for four years but she was acquitted in 1961. In spite of her acquittal, Helen became the first person to be placed under house arrest under the Sabotage Act that had just been introduced by the apartheid government. She narrowly escaped death more than once, surviving bullets shot through her bedroom and a bomb wired to her front gate. Her last banning order was lifted when she was 80 years old.

Helen had no children of her own, but frequently stood in loco parentis for the children of comrades in prison or in exile. Among the children who spent time in her care were Winnie and Nelson Mandela's daughters Zinzi and Zenani and Bram Fischer's daughter Ilsa.

Despite the severe restrictions placed on her, Joseph refused to go into exile and in 1992 she was awarded the ANC's Isitwalandwe/Seaparankoe medal for her devotion to the liberation struggle. The Isitwalandwe/Seaparankoe is the highest honour awarded by the ANC to those who made outstanding contributions and sacrifices to the struggle. She was also admitted to the Order of Simon of Cyrene 1992, which is the highest honour the Anglican Church of South Africa bestows on its lay members of the church who have provided outstanding service.

RAHIMA MOOSA (8 April 1905 - 25 December 1992)

Grave National Heritage Site declaration: 5 November 2012

Shop Steward of Cape Town Food and Canning Workers Union, member of the Transvaal Indian Congress and the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW), Rahima Moosaworked as a Secretary at a food factory where she joined the Cape Town Food and Canning Workers Union in 1943. She was elected as a shop steward and worked tirelessly in the Union. Moosa was also a member of the FEDSAW and, together with Helen Joseph and Lilian Ngoyi collected signatures for a petition against the pass laws.

In 1956 while heavily pregnant, she together with Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph and Sophia Williams-De Bruyn, led a 20 000 strong delegation of women to the Union Buildings to hand over the thousands of signatures.

In the 1960s Rahima was "listed" by the Apartheid regime despite becoming ill after a heart attack in the 1960s. She died on 26 May 1993, a year before South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 Her husband and her children remained active in the African National Congress after her death.

MODJADJI DYNASTY MEMORIAL

The Balobedu dynasty is part of the national estate. The Balobedu dynasty is based on divine kingship with rainmaking powers which enhanced their ruling power and influence tremendously. The breakaway of the Balobedu from the Mwanamutapa kingdom of Zimbabwe was led by a royal princess, Dzugudini. They traversed the Limpopo River and the Zoutpansberg mountains and turned eastward at Soekmeaar and settled in the middle lowveld between the two Lehlaba Rivers. They founded four capitals during the years 1600-1894: (Khumeloni, Tlatša, Lebjeni and Mudzhidini) for military strategy during the terms of six kings and queens.

Modjadji III (Khesetwane) and her uterine brother Ramathithi (Masopa Molokwane Nathaniel) and their uncle Mpatatla Phetole and royal elders founded the present capital Khehlakoni in 1894. It's been 120 years that the Balobedu have governed from Khehlakoni. They have grown into a large community organised into 134 large towns and hamlets under 128 local traditional leaders. They have been consecutively led by six kings and queens. Today at the head of the tribe is a royal regent.

MAKWENA MATLALA

Makwena Matlala's unyielding opposition to betterment policies made her a marked woman by the apartheid government. She was hated by the government because she refused to betray her people by adopting betterment. As Siphamandla Zondi notes in his article 'Peasant Struggles in gaMatlala and Zeerust in the book "The Road to Democracy in South Africa" "Makwena refused to take decisions on her own and insisted on consulting her subjects which made her unpopular with the authorities." In other words she refused to be manipulated by the government to implement its unpopular policies. Consequently, the government complained of the 'attitude of the Acting Chieftainess' as 'much difficulty was and is still experienced'.

When the government decided to bring betterment to gaMatlala in 1949, Makwena Matlala refused to cooperate with the State. As a result in 1949, she was deposed as the Chieftainess by the Native Affairs Department (NAD) and instructed to go back to her father's kraal. In the early 1950s, Percy Carmichael Tweedie the Chief Native Commissioner began pushing for Makwena Matlala's banishment.

Amongst the reasons cited by the government was her refusal to cooperate with the NAD in implementing the betterment scheme in the Matlala location. She was also accused of refusing to call meetings when requested by the NAD officials and sabotaging any programme initiated by the government. As a result, she was summoned to Pietersburg (Polokwane) and informed of her banishment to Temba in Hamanskraal near Pretoria. In his book The Forgotten People: Political Banishment under Apartheid, Saleem Bedat states that Makwena was "...among the first, and certainly the first woman, to be banished by the new apartheid state."

Upon being banished Mme Matlala stubbornly refused and stated: "I, Makwena, will not go and stay in a house that I did not build, a house that I did not labour on... and I will not leave my own house. Above all I do not intend to move from my home, as I have never been out of Matlala's Reserve before." Instead she hired a lawyer to represent her in challenging her removal from the Chieftaincy, and to delay the execution of her banishment order. Mme Matlala left her area on 3 October 1950 and went to live in Attredgeville



Heroines



ABOUT SAHRA

The South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA) is a statutory organisation established under the National Heritage Resources Act, No. 25 of 1999, as the national administrative body responsible for the protection of South Africa's cultural heritage.

VISION

A nation united through heritage.

MISSION

SAHRA's mission in fulfilling its mandate is to promote social cohesion in South Africa by:

- Identifying, conserving and managing heritage resources in South Africa so that they can contribute to socio-economic development and nation building;
- Developing norms, standards and charters for the management of heritage resources in South Africa and codes of international best practices; and
- Contributing to skills and knowledge production and transformation in heritage resources management in South Africa and beyond.

We commemorate our heroines in South Africa to remember the history of women struggle in South Africa and to continue writing our history. Celebrating our heroines is an opportunity to reflect upon and reaffirm the intrinsic roots of our nation and the continuing relevance for nation building and social cohesion.

South Africa has a great history of national liberation struggle and, in particular, a rich heritage of revolutionary moral values which were born out of that struggle. Our revolutionary morality of the women we celebrate in our struggle for liberation, continue to inspire other nations and peoples.

CHARLOTTE MAXEKE (7 April 1874 - 16 October 1939)

Grave National Heritage Site declaration: 30 July 2010

In 1905, Charlotte Maxeke became the first black woman in South Africa to earn a Bachelor's degree from Wilberforce University in Ohio, USA— through a scholarship she received on tour to the US with a choir group. As school teacher, social worker and politician in 1918 she was also greatly influenced by the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), and through connections with the Ethiopian Church, Maxeke played a significant role in founding the AME in South Africa. The church later elected her President of the Women's Missionary Society. When she returned to South Africa, she and her husband established the Wilberforce Institute. She later established an employment bureau for Africans and was appointed the first African woman parole officer.

Through this she was exposed to the effects of migrant labour on family life and what this social disruption caused. Both she and her husband became active in politics whilst in Johannesburg and both attended the launch of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) in Bloemfontein in 1912. From this she helped organise an anti-pass demonstration in Bloemfontein in 1913 which led to her involvement in establishing the Bantu Women's League of the SANNC in 1918. As a leader of this organisation, Maxeke led a delegation to discuss the pass laws for women with Prime Minister Louis Botha. She remained politically active throughout her adult life, participating in various protests against low wages, supporting multi-racial movements, a

fight for voting rights for women as well as assisting in the formation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union. Through her many achievements and her lifelong activism, she was honoured as the "Mother of Black Freedom in South Africa" by Dr AB Xuma at the All African Convention in 1935.

LILIAN NGOYI (25 September 1911 – 13 March 1980)

Grave National Heritage Site declaration: 30 July 2010

Lillian Ngoyi was a South African anti-apartheid activist who started her political activism in the Garment Workers' Union and joined the ANC's Defiance Campaign in 1952. She later joined the ANC Women's League and through her energetic and passionate approach she quickly gained recognition and became the first woman elected to the executive committee of the African National Congress. She was at that stage a widow with two children and an elderly mother to support, and worked as a seamstress.

Ngoyi was also a founding member of the FEDSAW, a multiracial organisation that fought for the equality of all South African women and the eradication of economic and social barriers impeding their empowerment and in 1956, she was elected president of the Federation.

On 9 August 1956, Ngoyi led a march along with Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, Sophia Williams- De Bruyn, Motlalepula Chabaku, Bertha Gxokwa and Albertina Sisulu of 20, 000 women to the Union Buildings of Pretoria in protest against the carrying of passbooks as part of the pass laws. She is the one that knocked on the door of Prime Minister JG Strydom's office to hand over the petition containing thousands of signatures which they had collected.

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.

Ngoyi was known as a strong orator and a fiery inspiration to many of her colleagues in the ANC. She was arrested and charged with high treason in 1956, together with 155 others, in what was to become known as the Treason Trial. Although they were all acquitted after a four year trial, she was again arrested and detained, mostly in solitary confinement, under the State of Emergency of 1960. After her release she received a number of restrictive banning orders which confined her to her home in Soweto until her death on 13 March 1980.

HELEN JOSEPH (8 April 1905 - 25 December 1992)

Grave National Heritage Site declaration: 30 July 2010

Helen Joseph was a British-born teacher who arrived in South Africa in 1931 after working as a teacher in India for three years. In 1951, she joined the

in Pretoria instead of Temba in Hamanskraal. She received support from several of her supporters who worked as migrant workers at ISCOR, a steel producing company.

Meanwhile in gaMatlala, Joel Matlala became Acting chief. However, after he was killed, the police arrested Makwena Matlala in Pretoria on suspicion of her involvement in his murder. She was detained and assaulted. The police ripped off her clothes as a way of humiliating her. She was then transported back to Pietersburg where was charged with incitement and fined £100 which her supporters raised and paid. The Chief Native Commissioner sent her back to banishment in Pelindaba Township.

Still fearing her presence and influence, the apartheid government banished her to Zwelitsha Native Reserve in the district of King William's Town in the Cape Province in 1951. She was given an empty house with little food, and for twelve days had no support from the government. She received assistance from people working on the roads, some of whom came from gaMatlala. As part of her campaign to highlight the plight of people banished by the apartheid government, Helen Joseph visited Makwena Matlala in 1962. She described Mme Matlala as a woman who bore herself with dignity and a Chieftainess despite her life of 'poverty' in a 'scantily furnished...tiny room...'

In 1965 Makwena Matlala and her son were allowed to return to gaMatlala, however her banishment order was withdrawn only on 9 February 1966. Mme Matlala's contribution to the struggle against apartheid rule and land dispossession makes her an important icon of resistance and struggle for justice and democracy.

MANCHE MASEMOLA: HER LIFE STORY

Manche was a young woman from Sekhukhuneland. It is believed that Manche was born around 1913 in Marishane. Father Augustine Moeka of the Anglican community of resurrection had established a mission at Marishane. It was with her cousin Licia that Manche first heard Moeka preach. She wished to hear more and began to attend classes twice a week. Fearful that she would leave them, or refuse to marry, her parents sought to discourage her. When she defied them, she was beaten. On the 4th February 1928 her mother and father took her to a lonely place, killed her, and secretly buried her there. Shortly after, her sister Mabule also died apparently of shock and was buried next to her grave. Her vow: "I will be baptized with my own blood"

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