



# UMSEBENZI

ONLINE

**PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN IN HLOKOZI**  
**COMPASSION, DISCIPLINE, SOLIDARITY!**



**Nersa tariff hike - act of class war**

**HANDS OFF IRAN!**

# CONTENTS

## EDITORIAL

**1. The revolution is not abstract – it lives in Hlokozi**

## PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN

**2. SACP there where it matters**  
Yunus Carrim

**3. Hlokozi at Ixopo: a Caravan of history and hope**  
Mokweni Evelyn Mswetsa

**4. Building socialism in Hlokozi**  
Nhlanhla Zungu

**5. Community uplift in Zamafuthi**  
Sanelisiwe Ngubane

## ELECTRICITY CRISIS

**6. Workers pay the price for bourgeois blunders**  
Awiwe Rapelang Mohapi

## STRUGGLE HISTORY – 50TH ANNIVERSARY MEMORIAL OF DAWOOD SEEDAT

**7. Militant, fiery Communist, unfortunately forgotten**  
Yunus Carrim

## STRUGGLE HISTORY

**8. Remember the Lowveld massacre**  
Tenanile Mngomezulu

## ARTS AND CULTURE FOCUS

**9. Vonani Bila – writing the personal and the political**  
Exlira Giose-Davids

## RED BOOK DAY

**10. Beyond commemoration: Renewing the spirit of the Communist Manifesto in South Africa today**  
Sanelisiwe Ngubane

## INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

**11. Hands off Iran!**

EDITORIAL

# The revolution is not abstract – it lives in Hlokozi



*Hand-over and report-back meeting in Hlokozi, Zamafuthi Village, KwaZulu-Natal, PRC.*

**There is a moment in this issue that says everything about what the South African Communist Party is and what it must become.**

**O**ne hundred and sixty people — women mainly, many of them in red — march behind a brass band playing the Internationale into a tent in a rural village in KwaZulu-Natal. Children walk alongside. Elders watch. The music rises over the hills of Zamafuthi.

In a country where 32 years of democracy have not delivered running water, reliable electricity or economic dignity to millions, this is not a small thing. It is a statement. The SACP was there. Not in a press release. Not in a parliamentary chamber. There — in the mud, in the fields, planting spinach and potatoes, fixing halls, processing identity doc-

uments, building poultry structures, testing water, confronting crime.

This edition of Umsebenzi Online is dedicated to that presence.

The 5th People’s Red Caravan in Zamafuthi, Ixopo, is the lead story of this edition — and rightly so. Cde Yunus Carrim’s overview captures both the achievement and the honest reckoning that must follow: the PRC matters not as spectacle but as the foundation of sustained community self-reliance.

Cde Nhlanhla Zungu situates the Caravan in its deeper ideological context — the living proof that socialist politics is not a doctrine of waiting, but a practice of building. And Cde Sanelisiwe Ngubane documents, with commendable precision, exactly

what was done and what remains: 20,000 spinach seedlings, 1.5 hectares of beans, water tanks connected, a community hall restored, cooperatives on the way.

The test now — as Carrim reminds us — is what comes after the red tents come down.

While the SACP builds from below, capital continues its assault from above. Our electricity article by Cde Aviwe Rapelang Mohapi names the class war for what it is. NERSA's approval of R54.7 billion in additional Eskom "allowable revenue" — correcting errors the regulator itself admitted, errors a high court judge described as little more than a thumb-suck — will push tariffs up by nearly 9% in each of the next two financial years.

This follows a near 900% real increase in electricity prices since 2008. Working families like Malakia's in Midrand, paying R2,200 to R2,500 a month for electricity alone, are not statistics. They are the human face of a system that socialises losses and privatises gains.

President Ramaphosa's SONA offered structural reform and long-term horizons. It offered nothing to the family choosing between food and the lights. The SACP's position is unambiguous: energy is a right, not a commodity; Eskom must not be unbundled into private hands; and free basic electricity must be expanded, not eroded. With the SACP now contesting the 2026 local government elections independently, these commitments must become the coalface of our electoral campaign.

This edition also marks Red Books Day — the 21 February anniversary of the publication of The Communist Manifesto in 1848. Cde Ngubane's reflection reminds us that Marx and Engels' central insight — that history is shaped by class struggle,

and that the working class cannot simply inherit existing state machinery but must transform it — loses none of its force in a South Africa of mass unemployment, land inequality and governance failure. The Manifesto was not written for settled times. It was written for exactly this moment.

We remember, too, the fallen. The 50th anniversary memorial of Dawood Seedat — that "militant, fiery Communist unfortunately forgotten" — is a reminder that struggle history is not nostalgia. It is the debt we owe to those who built what we now carry. And we remember the Lowveld massacre, because the dead of our movement demand that we keep their names in our mouths.

Our Arts and Culture focus on poet Vonani Bila, who writes the personal and the political in the same breath, underlining something this edition embodies throughout: the revolution is cultural as well as material. The brass band. The red dress. The Internationale over the hills of KZN. These are not decoration. They are the revolution making itself felt in the body and the spirit of the people.

Finally, our International Solidarity section reminds readers that the struggle is never only local. Hands off Iran. Hands off all peoples fighting for self-determination against imperial arrogance. The working class has no borders.

This edition of Umsebenzi is a voice of the South African working class in motion. Not waiting. Building. Planting. Marching. Demanding. Organising.

The foundation has been set in Zamafuthi. The class struggle burns brighter than the lights they keep pricing us out of.

***Forward to a People's Power! Amandla Awethu!***

**PEOPLE’S RED CARAVAN**

**SACP there where it matters**



*The Hlokozi PRC ended with a march of about 160 people, including children, behind a brass band performing the Internationale before the final handover meeting, 22 February.*

**What? When? Where? Why?**

- The 5th SACP People’s Red Caravan (PRC)
- Zamafuthi Village, KwaZulu-Natal, 16–22 February 2026
- Grassroots community self-development and self-sufficiency.
- Tackle infrastructure and service problems,
- Develop food security
- Build local leadership, cooperative farming and address social issues.

**Yunus Carrim**

**O**ver 150 comrades from several parts of the country converged on Hlokozi in Zamafuthi, about 40 kilometres from Ixopo in KZN from 16 to 22 February for the SACP’s People’s Red Caravan (PRC) campaign.

Of course, it matters how much the PRC stirred the residents into action and, together with them, made concrete improvements in the area. But that we were there at all, for a full seven days, splashing the village with our red presence, was in itself an achievement.

People knew the SACP was there – and welcomed us. As was shown in the high levels of public participation. This was the main point – to get people to take greater responsibility for their own lives. To activate them. To as far as possible nudge them to sustain the PRC activities beyond the seven days and create community structures to do so. To demand from the state what is rightfully theirs but to also fend for themselves through their own creativity and initiative.

To foster this, we were divided into several streams, including:

1. Infrastructure
2. Food Security, Livelihood and Agriculture
3. Health, Education and Social Protection
4. Community Safety
5. Culture, Sport and Youth Development

### Crucial support

Nehawu fully supported the campaign and provided material support for it. Its President, Mike Shingange, 1st Deputy President Nyameka Macanda, General Secretary Zola Saphetha and several other national and provincial leaders took part in the PRC.

The traditional leaders also fully supported the PRC and hailed the SACP repeatedly for the work being done.

Given the scope and range of activities taken up and the limitations of resources and capacity, it would not have been possible to complete all the immediate tasks. But a good amount was done and more will be done in the days ahead through cooperation between the SACP branch and District, the residents and the Izinduna.



*Cde Yunus Carrim (right) with local activist residents of Hlokozi, Nehawu and SACP comrades handing over groceries at a local creche.*

The exact figures for what was done and what remains to be dealt with in other articles in this issue. This article provides an overview.

The main focus was on food security. It was reported that, for example, 20,000 spinach seedlings, 1,5 hectares of beans, 800 potato seedlings and 53 av-

ocado trees were planted. Four hundred chickens were also secured and a poultry structure is being erected. A beehive project has also been initiated. Other activities included creating a water tank, grass cutting and waste management.

Water and electricity have been restored in Ntapha Hall and it is now available for use by the community.

*“To demand from the state what is rightfully theirs, but to also fend for themselves through their own creativity and initiative.”*

Schools were assisted with infrastructure improvements, shoes for learners, toiletry bags and IDs.

Programmes on youth skills development have been initiated and will be taken further.

Applications for IDs, late registration of births and converting the old Green IDs to the new card IDs were processed at the Home Affairs Department and SASSA grant applications were also made. Cases of identity theft were also addressed. A steady stream of people kept flowing into the main PRC tent looking for assistance on these and other issues.

Plans are being advanced to set up agricultural, waste management, consumer and other cooperatives.

Needless to say, a big issue was unemployment. Some of the projects started during the PRC could develop further and absorb labour but clearly the need far exceeds that potential.

### Anti-crime focus

Several meetings were held with the Izinduna and

residents to develop a campaign against crime. Letters were also written to the KZN Police Commissioner, Premier and Minister of Police about the failure of the police to act against crime, including GBV, in Zamafuthi. Among the options being pursued is the revival of the Community Policing Forum. The need for street committees in the longer term was also raised.

There were cultural and sports activities organised, including soccer and netball tournaments, with prizes awarded.

One of the more moving moments was the march of about 160 people, including children, behind a brass band performing the Internationale, into the tent for the final “handover” meeting on 22 February. Many of the adults, women mainly, were in red. In a rural village in KZN – where has that happened before?? Quite an unforgettable image.

Given the complexities of the politics of KZN and challenges within the SACP in the province, overall, the PRC went fairly well. The Thembisile Hani District in particular has to be commended for what it managed to get done in difficult circumstances.

Inevitably, there were glitches, incomplete projects and other difficulties. But these do not detract from the impact and value of the campaign.

Part of its value perhaps is the impact it has on us SACP comrades who live in homes with running

water, geysers, inside toilets and much else that most of the residents of Zamafuthi don't have access to – 32 years beyond our democracy!

Even if subconsciously, staying there for seven days serves to reinforce your commitment to do more to ensure that the inequalities that afflict our country are substantially reduced, and reaffirms your sense that you can never give up...

*“Inevitably, there were glitches and incomplete projects... But these do not detract from the impact and value of the campaign.”*

More fundamentally, the ultimate test, of course, of the KZN PRC is the extent to which the residents of Hlokozi and Zamafuthi become more active in shaping their own lives, creating structures to do so and take forward the projects initiated during the PRC. The SACP District and branch, assisted by the SACP in the province, will need to play a significant role in this regard. The foundation has been set.

***Cde Yunus Carrim is an SACP Central Committee and Politburo member.***

PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN

# Hlokozi at Ixopo: a Caravan of history and hope



*Hlokozi at Ixopo showed what true activation looks like: people mobilising, energised, and determined to do things for themselves.*

**Hlokozi highlights**

- Population: 2,685 residents
- Language: isiZulu (99%)
- Households: 45.6% women-headed, 21.6% child-headed
- Land: 4 hectares allocated for mixed development

**MOKWENI EVELYN MSWETSA**

Hlokozi, in the Ixopo region of KwaZulu-Natal, has always been a place of resilience. Its fertile lands, known for maize and amadumbe, sustained generations even through the harshest times of apartheid.

The Harry Gwala District, where Hlokozi sits, was a crucible of resistance—ordinary people mobilising against forced removals and poverty, determined to carve out dignity in the face of oppression.

I could not help but tap into this history. I have always taken Cde Harry Gwala as my role model—one of the few politicians I look up to. His spirit of defiance and people-driven leadership lives on in Hlokozi, where the Caravan became more than an event; it became a continuation of his legacy.

**The Caravan comes alive**

When the Caravan arrived in Hlokozi, mobilisation was effortless. The people did not need to be pushed—they were already energised, already



ready. Mothers woke at 4 a.m. to prepare for communal farms so that by 7 a.m., when the official work began, they were already in motion. Teams carried their own tools to start backyard gardens. Skilled volunteers offered their expertise—roofing specialists stepped forward to roof the crèche, others lent their hands to build and repair.

“We are not waiting for change—we are building it ourselves.”

This was not charity. It was solidarity.

### Tackling urgent issues

The Caravan did not shy away from pressing challenges. Identity theft was addressed with urgency, and the high rate of disability led to the registration of a new NPC, Mpelonhle-Mpilonde, dedicated to people living with disabilities. This was a structural intervention, giving dignity and organisation to those often excluded.



**Cde Mokweni Evelyn Mswetsa (second from left) with SACP GS Solly Mapaila and Cde Jenny Schreiner at the Hlokozi PRC.**

Unemployed graduates arrived in numbers, not as job seekers but as shareholders in economy-creating activities. Their vision was clear: to build enterprises, not wait for employment. Among them were young graduates in community development, some travelling from as far as Lesotho, eager to contribute their knowledge and energy.

Departments like Social Development (Sassa) and Home Affairs were activated—not only to provide their core services but to forge lasting relation-

ships with the community. They planned information-sharing meetings to warn against the dangers of forging documents and to assist children and adults born at home without proper registration.

### Beyond work: culture and sport

Sport became a unifying force—not just for the youth but for adults too. Clubs were formed that continued to play beyond the Caravan, proving that recreation is as much about community spirit as it is about competition. Cultural evenings and storytelling sessions connected modern activism to Hlokozi’s heritage, reminding everyone that history and the future are intertwined.

### Voices of Hlokozi

- *“The Caravan is more than a project; it is a promise.”*
- *“We are shareholders in our future, not seekers of jobs.”*

### A lasting activation

Seven days after activation, the Caravan’s activities continued with the same intensity as during the official programme. Unlike other Caravans, Hlokozi’s people were truly activated—they did not need to be pushed. They had taken ownership of the process, embodying the principle that development is not delivered from above but built from below.

Standing in Hlokozi, I felt history and present converge. This is a place long associated with struggle and resilience, and now it is a place where people are writing their own future. The Caravan was not just an event—it was a turning point. Hlokozi at Ixopo showed us what true activation looks like: people mobilising, energised, and determined to do things for themselves.

***Cde Mokweni Evelyn Mswetsa is a SACP Moses Kotane PEC and PWC member and a Senior Education Specialist in the North West Department of Education.***

**PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN**

# Building socialism in Hlokozi



*Songs of struggle, poetry of resistance, and dances of solidarity echoed through Hlokozi.*

**NHLANHLA ZUNGU**

The People's Red Caravan, held from 16 to 22 February in Hlokozi, Ixopo, was a week-long mobilisation of working-class unity, revolutionary education, and grassroots empowerment.

This caravan was not merely an event; it was a living embodiment of the communist vision for a society free from exploitation, inequality, and oppression.

It was really a Caravan of the People. It brought together workers, peasants, youth, and elders in collective dialogue and action. Through political education workshops, cultural programmes and community solidarity initiatives, the Caravan reaffirmed the timeless truth: the liberation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself.

In its own way, the Caravan also advanced the struggle against capitalist exploitation. In Hlokozi, where rural poverty and unemployment remain scars of colonial dispossession and capitalist neglect, the Caravan emphasised the urgent need to dismantle the structures of exploitation. The SACP called for:

- **Land redistribution to empower peasants and ensure food sovereignty.**
- **Worker control of production to end the tyranny of profit-driven bosses.**
- **Universal access to education and health-care as fundamental rights, not commodities.**
- **Strengthening of cooperatives and community-owned enterprises as building blocks of socialism.**

The Caravan was not only political but cultural. Songs of struggle, poetry of resistance, and dances of solidarity echoed through Hlokozi, reminding



***The Hlokozi PRC carried out renovation work on Luswazi Secondary School to improve conditions for learners.***

*“The PRC in Hlokozi, Ixopo stands as a beacon of hope and determination.”*

all that revolution is both a material and spiritual process. The people celebrated their collective identity as builders of socialism, rejecting the false promises of neoliberalism and capitalist consumerism.

The PRC Ixopo stands as a beacon of hope and determination. It demonstrated that the Communist movement is alive, rooted in the daily struggles of ordinary South Africans, and committed to the vision of a democratic, socialist South Africa where wealth and power are shared by the many, not hoarded by the few.

The SACP calls on all workers, peasants, and progressive forces to join hands in advancing the struggle. The formal part of the Caravan may have ended on 22 February, but the campaign and the march toward socialism continues — in Hlokozi, in Ixopo, and across the nation.

***Cde Nhlanhla Zungu is the Secretary of the Thembisile Hani District.***

**PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN**

# Community uplift in Zamafuthi



*The People's Red Caravan restores the provision of safe and drinkable water in Zamafuthi Village*

**SANELISIWE NGUBANE**

**The 5th People's Red Caravan was held in Zamafuthi Village, Ixopo, Moses Mabhida Province (KwaZulu-Natal), 16 to 22 February.**

**T**he initiative addressed a wide range of community challenges through coordinated work streams led by the SACP.

Zamafuthi Village faces major developmental backlogs that affect people's daily lives and access to basic services. Several urgent infrastructure concerns were identified, among them being poor roads, which require upgrading to improve accessibility, and electricity challenges.

Some 30 households are currently living without electricity or basic utilities, while others face on-going water supply issues.

Activists identified the Ntapha Community Hall, which required attention, and ablution facilities at Luswazi High School, which remain a matter of concern requiring intervention. These infrastructure gaps directly impact the quality of life and social development.

### Health services

Regarding health services and access to care, a field visit was conducted at Hlokozi Clinic to collect data and assess health challenges in the community. Community members travel approximately 6.7 km to access health services.

There is a clear need for a mobile clinic to improve accessibility, and a high number of residents are living with disabilities, requiring improved healthcare support and social services integration.

Limited healthcare access remains a significant barrier, particularly for elderly residents and persons with disabilities. Sanitation issues at schools affect health and dignity.

Infrastructure upgrades are necessary to ensure a conducive learning environment, and ongoing community engagement is needed to identify additional educational needs.

### Roads and agriculture

Poor road infrastructure and limited services contribute directly to reduced emergency response access, increased vulnerability in isolated areas and safety risks for pedestrians and school learners. Community mobilisation is being encouraged to strengthen local safety structures.

Zamafuthi Village is recognised as one of the communities endowed with highly productive soil, creating strong potential for sustainable agricultural development.

During the seven-day programme, several households banded together to carry out ploughing and planting activities, cultivating crops such as avocados, beans, potatoes, spinach, and other seasonal produce. These activities form part of a structured seasonal cropping plan designed to sustain pro-

duction over the coming years.

The intervention strengthens community-based



*Food security: the PRC prioritises creating and expanding community food gardens.*

agricultural mobilisation and reinforces household food security while laying the foundation for future commercial-scale yield projections. The planting process is now 100% complete, ensuring optimal plant population density aligned with commercial production standards.

### Water safety

Water testing was conducted and demonstrated by SACP General Secretary Cde Solly Mapaila. The water source showed characteristics of potable groundwater, confirming its suitability for both domestic and agricultural use. Water tanks have been connected to the natural reservoir system, ensuring stable and reliable domestic water access for the community. This infrastructure fur-

ther supports ongoing agricultural production and enhances long-term sustainability for Zamafuthi Village.

The PRC is a community development initiative launched on 2 June last year by the SACP. The programme was introduced to strengthen direct engagement between the Party and local communities, particularly in disadvantaged and working-class areas. Its main aim is to promote practical, grassroots-driven solutions.

*“The PRC reflects the SACP’s broader strategic commitment to building working-class power at the grassroots.”*

### **Self-reliance and local capacity**

Ixopo and the surrounding rural communities face socio-economic challenges, including unemployment, poverty, food insecurity, and underdeveloped infrastructure. As with the previous ones, the Moses Mabhida edition of the PRC was rooted in a clear vision: working directly with the identified community to build sustainable self-reliance and local capacity.

The programme seeks to empower the community to become less dependent on external assistance by encouraging collective organisation, strengthening local leadership structures and promoting community-driven solutions. The emphasis is on participatory development, ensuring that residents are active partners rather than passive beneficiaries, strengthening food production and combating hunger.

### **Fighting hunger and malnutrition**

Food insecurity remains one of the most pressing challenges in many rural areas. The PRC prioritises creating and expanding community food gardens.

Training community members in sustainable agricultural practices, promotion of household and

cooperative farming and building long-term food production capacity helps to develop independence and food security in the long term for community members.

Beyond food production, the PRC seeks to address broader social issues affecting the community, including infrastructure shortcomings, youth unemployment, crime and social instability, as well as a lack of access to development resources. By increasing local food production, the programme aims to directly confront hunger while also creating opportunities for small-scale economic activity.

Through structured engagement, workshops, and hands-on activities, the PRC creates a platform for identifying priority needs and mobilising collective action.

### **Hands-on work**

The PRC is not merely a consultative or symbolic initiative. Its approach includes direct community engagement sessions, physical participation in development activities, identification of urgent service delivery needs, skills-sharing and capacity-building workshops and mobilisation of volunteers and local stakeholders.

*“Infrastructure gaps directly impact the quality of life and social development.”*

The goal is to ensure that the programme delivers on the needs and interests of the local community in a tangible and measurable way.

### **Power from the ground up**

The PRC reflects the SACP’s broader strategic commitment to building working-class power at the grassroots level, linking political leadership with practical community development, promoting sustainable, community-led economic initiatives, and demonstrating solidarity through action rath-

*“The PRC prioritises the establishment and expansion of community food gardens.”*

er than rhetoric. By embedding itself in the community for a full week, the PRC seeks to strengthen long-term partnerships and leave behind structures that can continue the work beyond the Caravan.

By addressing infrastructure gaps, strengthening education and health systems, enhancing safety partnerships, and implementing sustainable agricultural and waste management systems, the SACP aims to build long-term resilience and food security.

***Cde Sanelisiwe Ngubane is a media intern at the SACP head office.***

**ELECTRICITY CRISIS**

**Workers pay the price for bourgeois blunders**



*Electricity tariffs will rise by 8.76% in 2026/27 and 8.83% in 2027/28 – far above the originally announced 5.36% and 6.19%.*

**What? When? Where? Why?**

- Nersa’s R54.7bn tariff hike – far above what was originally announced, adding to a near 900% real price increase since 2008.
- Working-class burden – ordinary South Africans forced to pay for Eskom’s corruption, mismanagement, and state capture rather than holding executives accountable.
- Government rhetoric – long-term market liberalisation or privatisation by stealth.
- SACP’s socialist alternative – free basic electricity, no hikes, build a people’s energy policy under working-class democratic control.

**AVIWE RAPELANG MOHAPI**

**Nersa’s R54 billion ‘thumb-suck’ and the capitalist rot at the heart of Eskom’s crisis.**

**D**oes the state still govern in the name of genuine love for the people, a love rooted in unwavering working-class solidarity and revolutionary purpose? Or has power degenerated into an end in itself, detached from the masses it claims to serve, and weaponised against the very workers and oppressed whose emancipation the Manifesto so powerfully proclaimed?

This moment of dual commemoration – celebrating the timeless call to working-class unity and liberation while scrutinising the contemporary



exercise of state power – demands that we measure governance not by words or rituals, but by its fidelity to the revolutionary ethic of love as disciplined solidarity, accountability, and collective struggle against exploitation.

The latest decision by the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (Nersa) is not a mere administrative error. It is a naked act of class warfare. On 7 February, Nersa approved Eskom’s recovery of an additional R54.7 billion in “allowable revenue” over the next two financial years.

This follows calculation errors in the original Multi-Year Price Determination (MYPD6) that the regulator itself admitted – errors so blatant that even a high court judge described the attempted private settlement as “little more than a thumb-suck”.

The result? Electricity tariffs will now rise by 8.76% in 2026/27 and 8.83% in 2027/28 – far above the originally announced 5.36% and 6.19%. No retrospective increases, Nersa assures us, as if that makes the burden any lighter for the working class and poor. This comes on top of an eight-fold (nearly 900%) real increase in electricity prices since 2008.

What was once a public utility providing relatively affordable power has become a machine for extracting surplus from the working class to subsidise the inefficiencies, corruption, and profit motives of capital.

### Why must workers and the poor pay for Nersa and Eskom’s mistakes?

Because under capitalism, electricity is not a right – it is a commodity. The state-owned enterprise, Eskom, once a symbol of post-apartheid developmental ambition, has been hollowed out by de-

acades of neoliberal restructuring, state capture, and the drive to liberalise the energy sector.

The legacy of Gupta-era looting, irregular contracts worth billions, and the deliberate sabotage of maintenance and coal supply chains (documented in the Zondo Commission and ongoing SIU investigations) created the very debt and operational crisis that now justifies endless tariff hikes.

This burden falls heaviest on ordinary working families, who are already stretched because of South Africa’s expensive standard of living.

Malakia, who lives in Midrand and is a husband and father in a family of three, had this to say:

“A few years back our electricity was around



**Not on our side: Nersa has approved Eskom’s recovery of an additional R54.7 billion in “allowable revenue” over the next two financial years.**

R500 or R600 a month – now it’s R2 200 to R2 500 per month, and it jumps up again every second or third month. We only switch on the geyser for about one hour a day to try and save, but it still eats a big chunk of what we earn. Water has also gone crazy – from about R800 not so long ago to over R1 000, and then it climbs another R100 almost every month or two. Even refuse collection and sanitation keep going up by about a R100 here and there. All these basic things that should be affordable are getting more and more expensive, while our salaries don’t move much. It’s forcing us to cut back on basics like food, on school things for the kids, on everything. Why must ordinary working peo-

ple keep paying more and more just to keep the lights on and the taps running? It's not right – something has to change.”

Malakia's voice echoes the lived reality of millions of the South African working class.

Nersa, supposedly an independent regulator, acts as the transmission belt for this exploitation. Its “errors” – whether genuine incompetence or deliberate under-calculation to avoid public scrutiny

*“What was once a public utility providing relatively affordable power has become a machine for extracting surplus from the working class”*

– are corrected not by holding executives accountable or clawing back ill-gotten gains from corrupt tenders, but by passing the cost directly to households, small businesses, and energy-intensive industries.

The Energy Intensive Users Group (representing Anglo American, Glencore, etc.) warns of job losses in smelters, but the real victims are the millions of working-class families already forced into energy poverty: choosing between food and electricity, relying on dangerous paraffin or illegal connections, or simply going without.

This is the logic of capital: socialise the losses, privatise the gains. Independent Power Producers (IPPs) reap guaranteed returns from expensive renewable contracts, while Eskom's coal fleet – deliberately run into the ground, becomes the excuse for more hikes.

The push to unbundle Eskom and create a “competitive” wholesale market (as per the ANC government's neo-liberal “same aGAIN” and 10 Point Plan) is nothing but privatisation by stealth. The SACP has repeatedly warned that this will lead to higher costs for the poor, job losses for workers, and the dismantling of a strategic national asset.

## **The SONA disconnect: rhetoric vs. reality on electricity costs**

President Cyril Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address on 12 February 2026 does not substantively reflect or alleviate the lived realities of workers, the poor, and the youth burdened by escalating electricity costs, as it largely sidesteps direct engagement with the Nersa-approved “crazy” tariff surge stemming from the R54.7 billion recovery adjustment.

While acknowledging historical drivers of high costs – such as state capture, mismanagement, and inadequate maintenance that eroded cheap electricity – Ramaphosa focused on structural reforms like ending load-shedding, establishing a fully independent state-owned transmission entity “to foster competition and private investment, and leveraging renewables to eventually drive down prices long-term”.

Pre-Sona expectations from Minister Kgosientsho Ramokgopa suggested the president would address electricity pricing revisions.

The speech, however, offers no specific mention of the recent Nersa hikes, no immediate relief measures for households facing these near 9% increases on top of decades of cumulative rises, and no accountability for the regulator's errors or Eskom's ongoing crises.

Instead, it emphasises future-oriented energy security and market liberalisation, which may be viewed as privatisation by stealth that could further entrench high costs for the vulnerable rather than treating energy as a basic right, thus widening the disconnect between official rhetoric and the grinding economic pressures on ordinary South Africans.

## **The SACP's response: build people's power from below**

The South African Communist Party has never accepted that workers must bear the cost of the

capitalist crisis. It has consistently opposed tariff hikes that deepen inequality, rejected the liberalisation and unbundling of Eskom as a right-wing, reactionary project, and demanded that energy be treated as a public good under democratic working-class control.

Now, with the SACP's historic decision to contest the 2026 local government elections independently, the working class has a concrete platform to fight back at the coalface.

Municipalities control distribution networks, billing, and indigent support. An SACP presence in local councils will mean:

- Blocking unaffordable hikes at the municipal level
- Expanding free basic electricity
- Investing in public-owned renewable energy
- Protecting jobs in the energy sector
- Holding Eskom and Nersa accountable through people's tribunals and mass mobilisation

### **Direction from the People's Red Caravan**

The SACP's People's Red Caravan (PRC), activated as a nationwide programme of grassroots self-reliance, offers a living counterpoint.

Drawing from prior PRC activations and the resolutions of recent SACP congresses (including the 15th National Congress and 5th Special National Congress), the People's Red Caravan sets a clear direction: cadres and structures must build socialism in practice from below. It rejects dependency on a failing bourgeois state, instead working side-by-side with communities to fight hunger, foster development, and cultivate self-empowerment.

In villages across the North West, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, and Northern Cape, SACP cadres demonstrate revolutionary love through action – not charity, but disciplined solidarity in organising production, resolving crises, and governing collectively. This is what accountability looks like: not waiting for delivery from above but reclaiming power through people's organisation.

*“The lights may flicker, but the class struggle burns brighter.”*

The lights may flicker, but the class struggle burns brighter. This latest tariff outrage – exemplified by voices like Malakia's, must become the spark for a renewed offensive against energy privatisation, for a people's energy policy, and for the socialist transformation of our economy.

We must call on every worker, every unemployed youth, every poor household: join the People's Red Caravan, join the electoral campaign, join the struggle!

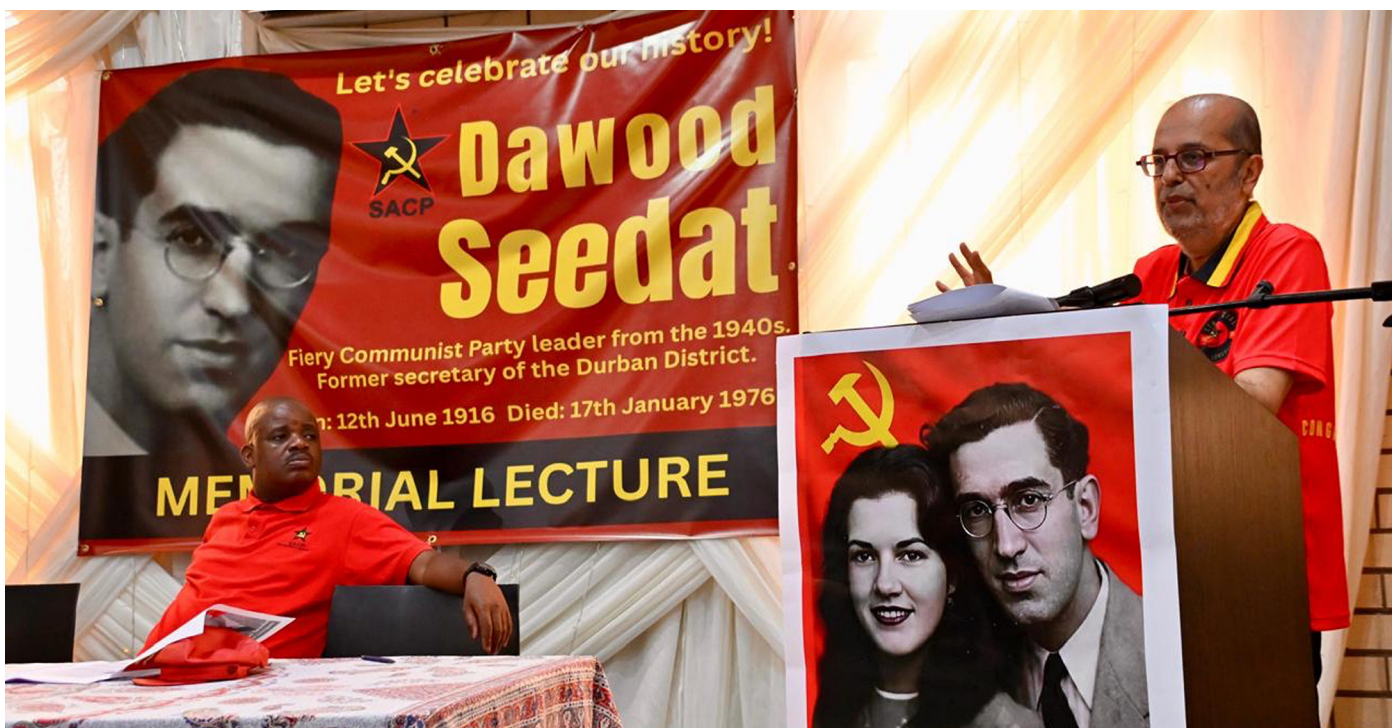
Electricity is a basic human need. Under socialism, it will be a right, not a weapon to extract profit from the people.

Forward to a People's Energy Future! Amandla Awethu! Phambili nge SACP!

***Cde Aviwe Rapelang Mohapi is the National Education Officer at NEHAWU. He is also a writer and political activist. He writes in his personal capacity.***

**STRUGGLE HISTORY**  
**50TH ANNIVERSARY MEMORIAL OF DAWOOD SEEDAT**

**Militant, fiery Communist  
 unfortunately forgotten\***



*Cde Yunus Carrim speaking at the memorial for Dawood Seedat at the Imam Husain Mosque in Ottawa, Durban, 7 February.*

**Dawood Seedat:**

- **Became politically aware at 14** after witnessing police shoot Communist Party of South Africa activist Johannes Nkosi dead in Durban, 1930.
- **Fiery Communist militant** who suggested armed struggle 20 years before the ANC and SACP adopted it.
- **Named among 500 “most dangerous communists”** in the world by a US Congress report.
- **Repeatedly imprisoned and banned**, including a three-month sentence with hard labour and the 1956 Treason Trial.
- **Keep the memory alive!**

**YUNUS CARRIM**

**A country that loses its past, doesn't understand its present and is unable to shape its future effectively. Our country is in danger of this.**

**P**eople are far too unaware of our history and care even less. Far too little is being done to inform and educate the youth about our history, about how we got to our 1994 democracy, about the sacrifices of their parents and the generations before them. And so it is that we don't have a sufficient understanding of the possibilities of the present and the potential for a much better future.

This unfortunate situation strikes you every now and then. And it does again now, in its own small

way, in considering the remarkable political role of the Communist Party's Dawood Seedat. But also his wife Fatima, who joined the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) in her own right in Cape Town, and met him through the Party. So, in a way, you could say that it was a Communist Party marriage. Fatima was often involved in many of the struggles that Dawood took part in, and in others too.

### Turning point

At 14, Dawood Seedat's political consciousness was stirred when he saw the CPSA's Johannes Nkosi and three others being shot by police at an anti-pass campaign in Durban on 16 December 1930.

Nkosi's death resonated throughout the Communist Party, and he is celebrated as an early martyr of the Party. Interestingly, Fatima addressing a rally on 26 June 1956 in memory of Comrade Nkosi 'called on the people to be prepared to die in the same manner if need be...' as Nkosi, notes academic Goolam Vahed.

The Seedats located Nkosi's graveside and erected a tombstone at the site. They organised a ceremony there which Nkosi's mother and uncle attended and had a meal together at the Seedat's flat.

First and foremost Cde Seedat was a Communist. But like most Communists, he recognised that the main immediate task was to fight for national liberation as part of the process of creating the conditions for socialism.

*"People are far too unaware of our history and care even less."*

He became involved in many organisations, including the Liberal Study Group, Non-European United Front, Natal Indian Congress (NIC), India League, National Protest Day Committee and Stalin Memorial Committee. He worked full-time for the Guardian newspaper from 1948.

### Fiercely militant

But he was no ordinary leader in these structures. He was far more militant, more radical than most. He was feisty, fiery, unrelentingly energetic and given to language that at times annoyed his comrades and enraged the security police.

*"Like most Communists Cde Seedat recognised that the main immediate task was to fight for national liberation as part of the process of creating the conditions for socialism."*

Addressing a mass meeting at Red Square, before 2000 people, on 5 February 1941 he said, "If freedom will not be given to us, we will have to use force and take our freedom." A suggestion of armed struggle 20 years before the ANC and SACP opted for this. He was listed in the US Congress Report of the 500 "most dangerous" communists in the world.

To understand the role of a person, one has to locate them in the historical, structural, political, cultural and other contexts of their times, both globally and domestically. The period from the late 1930s to the early sixties was one of huge polarisation and turbulence.

### Global turmoil

On the one hand, there was the rise of Nazism and authoritarianism and World War II, and on the other hand, the upsurge of struggles for national liberation from colonial rule, the creation of communist states in China, East Germany, Poland and other countries in the Soviet bloc, Vietnam, Cuba and North Korea.

These global events had a huge impact on our country, particularly the struggles for national liberation, not least in Ghana, Egypt, Guinea, Kenya,

Zambia and other countries.

Among the key events domestically that provided a context for Cde Seedat's role were the anti-fascist struggles and the need for Popular Fronts; the growth of Communist Party prompted trade unions; the 1946 African Mineworkers' Strike; the 1950 banning of the CPSA and its emergence as the SACP in 1953; the 1952 Defiance campaign; the 1955 Freedom Charter; the 1956 Treason Trial; the 1960 State of Emergency and the subsequent banning of the ANC.

These were very eventful, exciting times, with all their ups and downs. As a whole, it was a time of action, of being decisive, of choosing sides. And this is what Cde Seedat did.

When King George VI visited South Africa in 1941, Cde Seedat, together with others, campaigned vigorously against the visit. 'The British empire is not an empire but a vampire'

Cde Dawood was also part of the Anti-Segregation Council that in 1945 ousted the conservative leadership of the NIC and turned the organisation towards a progressive direction and closer to the ANC and other organisations fighting for democracy.

### **Imprisoned for unrelenting activism**

Cde Seedat was in and out of prison. This included a three-month sentence with hard labour for opposing the war. The arrest of Dadoo and Seedat "triggered the biggest campaign of meetings, handbills and posters that the Party had managed for years," said CPSA leader Rusty Bernstein.

Seedat was warned not to engage in subversive activities, but he ignored this and was imprisoned for a further 40 days. He continued to address meetings of the Party at Red Square every Thursday

afternoon in defiance of municipal regulations. He was banned in 1950. From July 1951 to February 1952, he illegally visited Britain, France, Palestine, East Germany, Russia and the People's Republic of China.

He was imprisoned for 14 days in September 1955 for holding illegal meetings and in 1956 was among 156 arrested for treason. In 1960 he was arrested again during the State of Emergency.

### **Cde Fatima Seedat**

Cde Fatima served in several progressive organisations, including in the committee organising the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, and she often spoke on their platforms. She was detained in 1946 during the passive resistance campaign. In 1952, during the defiance campaign, she was sentenced to a month of hard labour. Together with Dawood she was banned for five years in January 1964. With 8 children and neither parent able to work, their extended families had to support them.

*"We need to do more to bring these comrades to life. We can certainly enrich ourselves by understanding our history better."*

In 1974, while banned, Cde Dawood attended the pro-Frelimo rally in Durban and was among those who had to flee when the police attacked the demonstrators. Cde Dawood died in 1976 and Cde Fatima in 2003.

As with many other comrades who played important roles in the SACP in the past, they've been forgotten. We are the poorer for that. We need to do more to bring these comrades to life. We can certainly enrich ourselves by understanding our history better.

***\*This is an edited version of a speech made by SACP CC and Politburo member Cde Yunus Carrim at a recent Dawood Seedat Memorial Meeting.***

**STRUGGLE HISTORY – APARTHEID KILLINGS**

# Remember the Lowveld massacre



*Wreath laying at the graves of the Lowveld Massacre victims in 2018*

**What? When? Where? Why?**

- The Lowveld Massacre – 11 March 1986.
- At Kabokweni, KaNgwane bantustan, now part of Mpumalanga.
- Army and police shot at thousands of young people protesting at the magistrate’s court against the trial of their fellow students.
- Keep the memory alive!

**TENANILE MNGOMEZULU**

March 2026 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lowveld massacre, as it came to be known following the shooting of unarmed students by the apartheid regime’s security forces.

**I**t was March 1986, and the streets of Kabokweni in the former bantustan of KaNgwane, now part of Mpumalanga, were ablaze with protests.

Students, the youth and community members, fuelled by frustration and desperation, took to the streets, only to be met with brutal force from the apartheid regime’s police and army, and the notorious Kabasa Gang.

During the protest, the security forces opened live fire on the students, and it quickly escalated into a massacre. Among the victims were three young students, including Mandla Lekhule, whose lives were tragically cut short.

The Kabasa Gang was formed in 1986, recruited by the apartheid regime’s security forces to cooperate with them against protesting communities. It was a powerful and violent vigilante group, consisting of about seven members. They were a violent reactionary force in opposition to the wave of radical protests in the 1980s. It operated in the areas surrounding Nelspruit, including KaNyamazane, Pienaars Trust, Luphisa Trust and Kabokweni.

The security forces' violence did not end during the protest. They also targeted the slain students' funeral, intent on ensuring that no political action took place.

The atmosphere was tense as the community gathered for the funeral of the slain students. The apartheid regime was determined to suppress the mourning procession. Restrictions were placed on the funeral, and the police presence was heavy.

*“The apartheid regime was determined to suppress the mourning procession.”*

On the eve of the funeral, students, youth and community members who had attended the night vigil were confronted by the police and military officers on their way back to their respective homes.

One Mr Maseko, a community member, a survivor of the massacre, who was asked during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), recounted how the police opened fire without warning. Maseko also stated that he sustained injuries during the shooting, while another person was run over by a police van and many more were seriously injured.

The next day, at the funeral of the three students killed during the protest, further restrictions were placed by the police, continuing to instil fear in the people who wanted to attend the funeral.

The funeral itself was disrupted by the police and the Kabasa Gang. They intimidated, without provocation, the students, mourners and protestors by shooting at the unarmed crowd with live ammunition without warning in an attempt to dismiss the funeral, which then led to the death of Connie Sibiyi, while several were injured.

Following the disruption of the funeral, more than 26 students and youth were arrested and charged with public violence.

The trial of the arrested students began on 11 March 1986 at Kabokweni Magistrate's Court. The police did not take kindly to the presence of thousands of students who had marched to Kabokweni to attend the trial. The police fired live ammu-

nition at supporters and protestors outside the court, leading to the death of three more students, disappearances and about 80 injuries. Most of the students were shot in the back.

The brutality continued on 16 June 1986, during the anniversary of the 1976 Soweto uprising. As

students gathered the previous evening to prepare for the commemoration, they were met with gunfire from the members of the Kabasa Gang, the police and army. During the actual commemoration, apartheid security forces, together with the Kabasa Gang, violently dispersed those who had gathered to commemorate the uprising.

The shots on the unarmed protestors led to injuries of many students and the death of a 15-year-old student named Bethuel, a brother to Mildred Mthethwa. Mthethwa testified at the TRC about the police's action on her killed brother as follows:

“When the hearse arrived, the police were following the car ... When the police arrived at home they take the door, they were questioning where Bethuel is, they went here and there until they found him. They kicked him even while he was dead, they continues kicking him. When they were busy kicking the corpse, my father was becoming very angry. He tried to fetch something which we could use to fight the police because he was angry at what they were doing to the corpse. He questioned them, how can they kick somebody who is already dead? He therefore asked the police to kill him and when we all saw that our father was angry, we also decided to help our father to fight against the police. We fought against them. The police went out of the house.”

The aftermath was marked by further atrocities. Neville Shabangu, a founding member of the Lowveld Youth Movement, had his home burnt down by the Kabasa Gang during an arson and he was hospitalised for four months after the attack.

He told the TRC that, despite his injuries, he was later detained and tortured by the apartheid regime's police, working together with the Kabasa Gang.

*“The apartheid regime was determined to suppress the mourning procession.”*

“A month earlier after my nephew was shot, I was attacked, my house burnt down and I sustained severe injuries that led me to be hospitalised for four months”, he said.

“My nephew”, he continued, “was amongst those who were shot and killed outside Kabokweni Magistrate Court, attending the trial of the 26 arrested students.”

Shabangu also added that the Kabasa Gang were working with the apartheid regime's police and were always seen helping in police stations.

The Lowveld Massacre is one of the many injustices that are falling off the people's collective memory.

It is important for the progressive forces to remember all these crimes against people, especially in light of the continuing commission of inquiry led by Justice Sisi Kampepe tasked with determining whether attempts were made to prevent the investigation and prosecution of apartheid-era crimes.

***Tenanile Mngomezulu is an activist in the SACP Linda Jabane District. She writes in her own capacity.***

ARTS AND CULTURE FOCUS

# Vonani Bila – writing the personal and the political



Vonani Bila reading from his collection of longer poems *Bilakhulu!*

## Vonani Bila – literature influencer

- **Born 1972** in Shirley Village, Limpopo.
- **Poet, essayist and cultural activist** whose work addresses post-apartheid disillusionment, HIV/AIDS neglect, and violence against women and children, writing in English and Xitsonga.
- **Founder of the Timbila Poetry Project**, its literary journal *Timbila* and Timbila Writers' Village — championing marginalised poets and nurturing new voices across South Africa.
- **Author** of five poetry collections and eight storybooks for newly literate adults; teaches in the Department of English Studies at the University of Limpopo, currently completing his PhD in creative writing.

## EXLIRA GIOSE-DAVIDS

*UoL is launching a new section in the magazine that will profile leading South African artists whose work depicts the struggles and experiences of ordinary people and communities.*

*We kick off with an interview with the Limpopo-based poet and author Vonani Bila, who, over 20 years ago, started the Timbila Poetry Project, which has endured as an essential channel for stimulating the creative arts at the grassroots level.*

*In the first part of this interview, Vonani Bila talks about how oral tradition, Black Consciousness poetry, and cultural activism have shaped his unique poetic style.*

**Umsebenzi Online (UoL): Where are you from and how did it shape your work?**

**Vonani Bila (VB):** I’m anchored in Shirly village within the Makhado municipality in Limpopo Province. To describe my area—well, it’s forgotten, it’s neglected. I come from a former Bantustan. So, I come from the reserve, an area that was basically designated for nothingness. An area that was designed to supply labour, and not only supplying labour, but to keep its inhabitants perpetually poor. So that is the area that continues to shape my political outlook, and which is basically expressed through cultural work, poetry, music, but largely poetry.

*“I come from a very underdeveloped community, but culturally rich and quite determined to promote what is culturally relevant in the artistic world.”*

It’s an area where you can clearly see in very palpable and glaring results of centuries of neglect, centuries of colonial rule and cultural domination of the natives. It’s an area where you clearly see that the people here were basically dumped to be migrant workers because they could not find employment in their own areas, so they had to seek out a living in the cities.

We have a chief in my area, and we all know the dynamics of power relations in villages, so we are considered subjects of the chief. We live in places where we don’t necessarily have title deeds of what we own, which is something very interesting and fascinating for me—that the lack of title deeds to property that we live in is outright dispossession, silent dispossession of some sort.

In a nutshell, I come from a very underdeveloped community, but culturally rich and quite determined to promote what is culturally relevant in the artistic world. The people continue to carry

out rituals that are culturally specific. They speak their languages. They dress in a particular way, which is reflective of their resilience to the dominant culture. They play their own music. Despite the massive invasion from the West, from the US and all the other places, people have a sense of their own identity, despite years of dispossession.

**UoL: Tell me about your journey towards poetry. You also mentioned music—can you expand on that?**

**VB:** The journey of my involvement and growth and development in poetry started when I was young. I would pay attention to the idioms and cultural expressions—how people would express certain aspects of their lives through language, rich, deep language. That would certainly attract me.

Song has always been very critical for me to understand where society is, to appreciate, to want to sing along as well, whether one is happy or grieving. You attend the wedding and they sing. You attend the funeral, they sing. So, song has always been part of our existence.

Then there’s the oral part of the whole influence. But this also involved encountering written poetry. I encountered written poetry at school, like all people, and largely poetry written by Xitsonga poets—Max Maranele, BJ Masebenza and a host of other great Xitsonga poets who were basically writing about social circumstances and domestic problems. But at the same time, using metaphors to reflect the barbarism of apartheid.

They were not very direct because I think they didn’t want their work to be censored. But you could pick it up in their work that there was serious condemnation of racial apartheid or tribalism and that kind of stuff.

Radio also played a part for me. At that time, not everyone had a radio, let alone television. So, we would gather around story time with members of my family, particularly my father and my mother. The beauty of storytelling via radio also inspired me to want to express myself.

My mother was such a great storyteller. She got

that from her mother, which was passed on from other generations as well. She instilled in us the interest and the appreciation for folk tales. So, we grew up on a diet of stories. When you grow up on a diet of stories, there's no way that stories would escape your existence. Stories have always been part of me, and as a result, my poetry tends to be more narrative, storytelling.

**UoL: What other influences shaped your journey as a poet?**

**VB:** My journey as a poet was also shaped by my belief in Black Consciousness. When I encountered the poetry of the poets of the 1970s generation of Black Consciousness—poets like Wally Serote, Mafika Gwala, Siphiso Sepamla and others—I felt their poetry spoke to me sharply because it reflected the human conditions and the kind of misery that people were subjected to.

Even though most of these comrades were writing from the townships, their protest work resonated with what I clearly saw in the rural areas. The protest poets would write about townships being neglected, townships being suppliers of labour to the big cities, people crammed there, the strikes that were always happening there. But I could see similar patterns in villages—people working on farms and being underpaid. So the element of slavery took a different form. Maybe not as harsh and brutal as the early days of slavery, but where you have unequal relations, the victim was always black.

I then became more identified with poetry that spoke of the Black condition locally but also internationally. So, I came across the work of Amiri Baraka, Nikki Giovanni, June Jordan—the Black poets, largely in the US—and also the British Black poets like Benjamin Zephaniah and Linton Kwesi Johnson and so on.

That kind of work raised my political consciousness. I could then see that poetry has a role in society. You can use it to articulate the bigger social and political problems, and you can perhaps use it to change the world. If you change people's views, change people's perspectives, you are actually inspiring them to think differently.

**UoL: Were there mentors who helped shape your development?**

**VB:** Along the way, I encountered good people who were keen to mentor me. People like Mike Abrams, who came to work for an NGO in my village called Aganani Rural Development. He came from Cape Town and he was a theatre activist. He introduced me to the work of Paulo Freire and Amílcar Cabral, Julius Nyerere, but more importantly, the work of Augusto Boal—theatre of the oppressed, theatre for development.

*“I try to write for everyone, but raising sophisticated questions, sophisticated issues, using everyday language.”*

Augusto Boal articulated the rationale for people to be involved in conflict management, in problem solving, so that they are not spectators. The governors, the commissars, the cultural paragons, those in power cannot only be the only actors. They need to be challenged.

I got that kind of drive after reading about theatre of the oppressed pedagogy, including Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire. My poetry was shaped concurrently with my political activism, in a sense.

**UoL: What makes your work distinctly recognisable?**

**VB:** I don't try to run away from my realities, so I try to express the precarities that society is faced with in my work. I combine aspects of social realism in my own work, so people can identify with what I write about. I try to combine the personal with the public. I raise personal problems, but with a view to involving society and to give shape to what society is going through.

My personal challenges—I don't see them as limited only to me as a person. I see them as a reflection

*“I could see that poetry has a role in society...to articulate the bigger social and political problems, and you can perhaps use it to change the world.”*

of what’s going on in society. For instance, in 2015, I was shot five times. I was violently attacked. For me, it’s not an isolated incident because we all know what’s going on—the nature of violence in this country. Every day, people are being shot, sometimes for no apparent reason. So, crime has just taken proportions that are so episodic.

At the same time, the language of my poetry is everyday language. I’m not trying to be flowery in my poetry. I’m not trying to run away from the language of the people, so even an illiterate person can access my work. All I need to do is to make sure that there is rhythm, there is structure in my poetry, musicality in my work.

I don’t want to isolate the people, so I don’t write targeting those who are sophisticated. I try to write for everyone, but raising sophisticated questions, sophisticated issues, using everyday language. The language must carry intensity, but it must have the kind of immediacy of impact.

**From *Boys from Seshego* by Vonani Bila**

boys from seshego, you should be on scaffolds –  
rebuilding the city  
you should be on farms – tilling the land  
or growing crops to feed this starving nation  
boys, you should be in universities sucking  
knowledge & skills  
teaching the illiterate nation to read & write  
boys, you should be on the roadside  
fixing the potholes, mapping the road & bridge  
to mtititi  
boys, you should be saving lives that crumble  
like mud huts  
in decaying hospitals  
but here you are, scar-faced  
forever drunk  
with deadened hearts

I believe just reading a poem that is written with all the necessary poetic devices but using accessible language, has the potential to stay on the mind of the reader or even the listener if the poem is being performed. It has the potential to change the mindset of the reader. Just that one poem.

***Exlira Giose-Davids is an economics Master’s student at the University of the Western Cape and a YCLSA national committee member.***

**RED BOOK DAY**

**Beyond commemoration:  
Renewing the spirit of the  
Communist Manifesto in  
South Africa today**



## SANELISIWE NGUBANE

**Red Book Day, celebrated annually on 21 February to mark the 1848 publication of *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, serves as a Global Day of Action, reading and solidarity among left movements.**

In recent years, hundreds of thousands of people from social movements, left political parties, trade unions, and left publishers have celebrated the anniversary of the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* on 21 February with “Red Books Day”.

### The big binary – bourgeois and proletarian

The *Manifesto* continues to endure and inspire. Marx identified the relationship between the class system and the means of production, arguing, at that time, that society was increasingly splitting into two great classes directly facing each other: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Over the years since the *Manifesto*, this split increased, and the proletariat, as a class for itself, began to better understand its class interests and what needed to be done to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie.

*“Marx and Engels argued that the working class cannot simply “lay hold” of existing state machinery; it must be completely transformed.”*

This appears to be exactly what is currently happening in today’s socially and economically polarised world. Global inequality crisis is reaching new extremes; the richest individuals have more wealth than the rest of the world combined. Power and privilege are being used to skew the economic system to increase the gap between the richest and the poor.

Changing the abovementioned crisis is no easy feat, however. Marx and Engels argued that the working class cannot simply “lay hold” of exist-

ing state machinery; it must be completely transformed.

The original text focused largely on factory workers, owing to the stage of development of capitalism at that time. Modern renewal must account for a “generalised proletarian condition” that includes freelancers, gig workers, and precariously employed professionals.

### Cross-cutting divisions

Social-ecological needs must be addressed, framing climate change as a product of capitalist expansion that the system itself cannot control. Capitalism has evolved “divide and rule” strategies, such as segmenting the working class by race, gender, or nationality that the original *Manifesto* did not fully anticipate.

Critics and some modern theorists argue against the original’s “revolutionary optimism” that a communist victory is historically inevitable, stressing instead that it requires active, conscious organisation.

South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world. Key issues include the following: high unemployment, especially among youth; land inequality; persistent poverty; and corruption and governance failures.

The *Manifesto*’s critique of concentrated wealth and structural inequality speaks directly to these realities. However, transformation must also address the following: the legacy of apartheid; decolonisation; ethical leadership; and inclusive economic growth.

### Motivation to read, study, learn

Red Book Day in South Africa should not be merely symbolic; it should encourage practical dialogue about economic justice and democratic accountability. It is not just about remembering a text; it is about asking whether its spirit of justice can evolve to meet today’s struggles.

The *Manifesto*’s central argument that society is shaped by class struggle remains powerful and relevant. There remains extreme wealth concentra-

tion, growing inequality, and widespread insecure employment. Its critique of capitalism as a system that prioritises profit over people continues to resonate globally. Marx predicted that capitalism would expand beyond national borders, creating a global market.

The call for workers to unite remains deeply inspiring. Trade unions, student movements, community struggles, and social justice campaigns still rely on the idea that collective organisation, not individual effort alone, drives change.

The Manifesto highlights how labour creates wealth, yet workers often receive only a fraction of the value they produce.

While inspiring, it is important to understand that the Manifesto was written in 1848 and reflects its time. A modern interpretation must expand and update its framework beyond industrial workers.

Indeed, they fully understood the principle of space and time and, accordingly, did not treat the Manifesto as a monument, which should never be improved. They understood that the concrete conditions of each country or society would determine how changes would need to be made, as well as the class alliances that would be formed.

A renewed vision must recognise gendered labour and unpaid work, among others. Already, various thinkers within the SACP and beyond have taken some time to undertake and present critical analyses of socialism as it was practised in the 20th century, underscoring that some 20th-century regimes claiming Marxist inspiration became au-

thoritarian and left the working class in the dark regarding decisions which affected their wellbeing.

**The battle for democracy**

Such analyses should help us understand the importance of constitutional democracy, the rule of law, freedom of speech, and political pluralism. Economic justice must go hand in hand with democratic rights.

The Manifesto predates modern environmental awareness. Today, climate change, resource depletion, and ecological destruction are central issues. A renewed socialist vision must place sustainability at its core and question endless economic growth.

*“The Manifesto’s central argument that society is shaped by class struggle remains powerful and relevant.”*

Modern struggles show that class intersects with race, gender, colonial history, and disability. A 21st-century renewal

must integrate these dimensions rather than focusing on class alone.

must integrate these dimensions rather than focusing on class alone.

Red Book Day is not merely a commemoration of a historical text. It is an invitation to critical engagement. The Communist Manifesto continues to inspire because it challenges us to confront inequality and imagine systemic change. Yet renewal is necessary to respond to modern realities, including democracy, gender justice, ecological sustainability, and the complex identities that shape social struggle today.

***Cde Sanelisiwe Ngubane is a media intern at the SACP head office.***

**INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY**

**Hands off Iran!**



**Excerpts from SACP statements**

It is with great sadness that we have learned of the assassination of the Head of State of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The murderous acts of the regimes of apartheid Israel and the US towards Iran reflect regimes with no restraint and an imperialist agenda with no limits.

As the SACP, we condemn this murderous act and regard it as the clearest indication of the immorality of the Israeli and US governments. Other than the fact that the ongoing war on Iran by imperialist Israel and the US is both unprovoked and unjustified, it is our view as the SACP that the targeting of high-ranking government officials, as has been done against Iran, violates all rules of international norms on warfare.

We call on all anti-imperialist forces inside of South Africa and across the world to work together to resist imperialist aggression against Iran and Palestine. We reiterate our solidarity pledge with the peoples of Iran and Palestine. The joint military attack on Iran by Israel and the US is a continuation of the imperialistic policy of the US against the people of Iran.

While this attack is reprehensible by all measures, it is not surprising to those who understand the workings of imperialism. The attack only serves to confirm the increasingly belligerent nature of the

US-Israel imperialistic axis of power.

The loss of life, even at this early stage of the military attacks, reflects the extreme nature of the violence that has been unleashed on the people of Iran.

The Israeli apartheid settler regime holds the position of an imperialist aggressor in the Middle East and has been initiating consistent acts of provocation towards Iran. This act is the climax of a series of actions where Israel has been deliberately creating conditions of war with the strong backing of the US.

Israel is not only an instrument of global US imperialism, but also a partner in imperialist efforts to impose US hegemony over the world and its natural and economic resources, and to subject all governments to US political and economic interests.

The cause of this war lies in the Israeli and US imperial agenda to undermine the sovereignty of all other nations to pursue their own interests. All defensive actions of Iran emerge out of these well-orchestrated conditions of violence from the imperialist actors in this scenario and not out of a vacuum.

We condemn the attacks on Iran. We pledge solidarity with the people of Iran.

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