



THE EFF STATEMENT ON THE BIRTHDAY OF NOMZAMO WINNIE ZANYIWE MADIKIZELA MANDELA

Monday, 26 September 2022

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) remembers the freedom fighter, medical social worker, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, a woman of faith - uMama wo Manyano, and renowned leader of the people Nomzamo Winnie Zanyiwe Madikizela-Mandela today, the day of her birth, on 26th September 2022. Mama transitioned on 2nd April 2016 at the age of 81. We continue to mourn her death and celebrate her undying revolutionary spirit.

Zanyiwe Madikizela, the name given to her by her family, was born in rural Eastern Cape, in Mbizana, Pondoland in 1936. From a young age, Mama challenged gender roles of rural life. Mama Winnie was barely 8-years-old when she lost her beloved mother. This forced her childhood to be cut short and she took up responsibilities in the household, caring for her siblings and working in the fields. At only 17-years-old, Mama Winnie became a student at the Jan Hofmeyr School of Social Work whose students included icons such as Ellen Kuzwayo and Gibson Kente. She was a dedicated student receiving the top marks in school. When Mama Winnie completed her studies in 1955, and became the first black medical social worker in South Africa. She served her practical work at Baragwanath Hospital at only 19-years-old. She was often criticised for not being neutral enough in the work environment and her seniors said she “worries so much about people...much more than about herself”. As a medical social worker, Mama Winnie did not conform and assimilate into a system that wanted to use her, as well as the few black bureaucrats to serve the interests of the apartheid state. Instead of allowing herself to be used as a prompt and a face for the apartheid system’s need to create an elite class of black people - she directly confronted the system and its leaders.

Mama was a fiercely intelligent woman who valued education and did not stop at a single qualification, she completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand. A degree she began in 1967 and would only experience its graduation three decades later due to apartheid harassment. She persisted with her studies and officially graduated in 2005 because in her words, she needed to “inspire my grandchildren”. Mama Winnie lead in making education fashionable.

With the Prisoner Number 1323/69, Mama Winnie was in and out of prisons since her first detainment in 1958. Mama Winnie was detained even while she was five months pregnant with her first daughter Zenani born in 1959. In her lifetime, Mama was arrested, banned, spent sixteen months in detention, faced numerous trials, and banished far from her home and loved ones to Brandfort in the Free State. She was held in solitary confinement, tortured, and interrogated continuously and without breaks for days on end by apartheid police security and suffered a heart condition. At one time she served 491 days in Prison. In 1976, as children were fighting the racist apartheid and colonial education policies - she was among those who sheltered, picked up the bodies and comforted their families, at a time when political parties were banned in South Africa. We detail all of these horrific injustices not to glorify her suffering, nor perpetuate the myth and stereotypes of the ‘strong black woman’ that harms black women by not seeing their humanity. We do so to acknowledge how she fought fearlessly for her freedom and ours, and to honour her for her sacrifice. We also honour the sacrifices of all women freedom fighters whose political memory is neglected and erased by this ANC government. A recent example of this is the Department of Arts and Culture in Gauteng who launched the Women’s Living Heritage Monument in Tshwane in 2016 cost more than R200 million. Yet, this monument meant to honour our political stalwarts like Mama Winnie remains incomplete, in decay and is not fully operational. This is another reminder that this ANC government is not committed to fully seeing women as full political subjects, leaders, and activists. Neither is it committed to protecting women from gender-based violence and femicide, and ensuring that women have jobs, land, and the economic means of production.

Mama Winnie did not question and diminish her sense of self-worth even when the apartheid system, white capital, the white media propaganda machine, and her own comrades in the ANC tried to break her down. Mama Winnie, the freedom fighter paid the highest price for struggle for the freedom of South Africa. It is for these reasons that on this day in 2021, the day of her birth, the EFF unveiled its headquarters and named them the Winnie Madikizela Mandela House. Our headquarters continue to act as a token of our gratitude to the Mother of Our Nation. It was our response signal to our dearly departed that her fighting spirit for the emancipation of the African Child lives on.

As a young mother and wife to two small children- Zenani and Zindziswa – Mama Winnie raised her and Nelson Mandela's daughters primarily as a single mother. Mama Winnie characterised herself as the “most unmarried married woman”. It is important to remember that Mama Winnie lived a full life. She was not just a resilient political leader and activist. She was an elder, mentor, and provider to her community she proudly served for decades in Soweto. She was a woman of faith, uMama wo Manyano in her church where she often retreated to find comfort, solace, and renew her faith in times of struggle. Although she was not a practicing social worker in her later years, Mama Winnie was always of service to all communities around her. When the brutal apartheid government thought they succeeded in dimming her political spirit and influence by banishing her to Brandfort, she found and built a politically conscious community around her.

Mama Winnie was a phenomenal leader who was denied the Presidency of South Africa because of patriarchy and misogyny. Mama, patriarchy, and misogyny continues to shut women out of the political space. While there has been some improvement in the quota of women occupying the space, the denial of strategic positions still reigns. Mama, we in the EFF, have picked up your sword, and the struggle continues. In our lifetime, we will deliver women into strategic positions as a political party.

Mama Winnie was unwavering in her fight for the return of the violently stolen land. Mama, the ANC remains adamant that the land will not be returned despite

having the power to do so with the full support of the EFF. Mama, the expropriation of land without compensation will be realized in our lifetime.

Mama Winnie did not cower and refused to legitimise the negotiated script of the elite pact between white capital and the ANC. This elite pact allows for our stolen wealth, lands, natural resources to remain in the hands of the elite few. She blatantly refused to forgive. She refused to forgive the sins of apartheid. She refused to legitimise that we can forgive and reconcile the nation without redistributing the resources that were stolen through a bloody conquest. Winnie Mandela did not sell us out. Her resistance to the influence of 'whiteness' whose ultimate goal is to maintain its social and economic privilege and superiority is exemplary. However, Mama, the ANC President, Cyril Ramaphosa insists on being the vanguard of whiteness. He is shameless with his aggressiveness to ensure the whiteness of the economy. Not only that Mama, he is also on a war path to destroy our State Owned Entities (SOEs) so they can be privatised. But we are here Mama, fighting tirelessly. We are even fighting in the deliberate rolling blackouts of Eskom.

As we continue to fight patriarchy, capitalism, imperialism, white supremacy, tribalism, Afrophobia, let us remember Mama's words, written in a letter to the imprisoned Nelson Mandela in 1970 "one of the greatest ingredients of courage is hope". Let us march on

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