

Jafta Kgalabi Masemola "The Tiger of Azania"

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Jafta Masemola Did More For South Africa Than any ANC Member. He Spent 28 Years In Prison, Nine In Solitary Confinement

Nelson Mandela Was NOT The Only Man That Fought And Was Jailed Because Of Apartheid?

I realized the majority of the people in the world do not know the truth about the South African struggle. The man in picture, [Jafta Masemola](#), did more for South Africa than any ANC member. He also spent 28 years in prison, 9 in solitary confinement.

Learn your history, if there is a time to tell people the truth, it is now.

Teacher, member of the ANCYL, member of the Pan Africanist Congress, and political prisoner.

Jafta Kgalabi Masemola, "The Tiger of Azania", also popularly known as "Bra Jeff" by many

others, was born at Bon Accord near Pretoria on 12 December 1931. He lost both his parents at an early age and was raised by his sister. The family moved to Marabastad and then to Atteridgeville in 1942 where he enrolled at De Jong Primary School and completed standard six in 1947. He proceeded to Hofmeyr Secondary School where he obtained a Junior Certificate in 1950. Then he went to Kilnerton Training Institution (KTI) where he completed his Teacher's Training Certificate.

His first teaching post was in Atteridgeville where he worked on a temporary basis until he got a permanent post at Mmakau Primary School (Rama) in Western Transvaal. In 1956, he returned to Atteridgeville to teach at Banareng Primary School where Rammopo Makhudu was principal.

In 1958, he joined the African National Congress Youth League. In 1959, he joined the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) of Azania at its inception and was one of its founding members. He intertwined lessons with political education, thus influencing some of the children and as well as his colleagues at his school. As a result, some of his pupils became members of the PAC when they got to high school and were later incarcerated with him on Robben Island in 1963.

After the banning of the PAC on April 8, 1960 under the Unlawful Organizations Act, Masemola and other PAC operatives others were sent out of the country to set up the PAC's underground guerrilla structure, Poqo in Lesotho. The formed underground structure planned an armed revolt in 1963. They gathered whatever weapons they could find for the planned uprising. The security police uncovered these activities and Masemola and other activists were arrested during a swoop on PAC-Poqo suspects on the night of 21 March 1963.

In June 1963 Masemola appeared in the Pretoria Supreme Court along with 14 others and was charged with conspiracy to commit acts of sabotage and with intention to overthrow the government by violent means. He was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment on Robben Island in 1963.

He spent over 26 years on Robben Island and other prisons. On the Island, Masemola, had access to workshop tools, including a grinding stone. Together with another prisoner, Sedick Isaacs, he devised an escape plan. Masemola crafted a copy of the cell master key, which allowed him to 'sneak' around at night. The plan was to steal medical supplies from the dispensary, dope the wells and put the wardens into deep sleep. Unfortunately, information about the plan was exposed when a common law prisoner leaked the information to the prison wardens. They raided the cells and discovered the key. Both men had an extra year added to their sentence.

Masemola was released on 15 October 1989. On the eve of his release, Nelson Mandela asked to have a meeting with him. Masemola was flown from Johannesburg (Leeukop Prison) to Victor Verster Prison in Cape Town to meet Mandela. Nothing has ever been disclosed about what transpired in that meeting. At his homecoming reception in Atteridgeville, the Super Stadium was filled to capacity. The police intervened and ordered the people to disperse before the function could end.

Following his release, Masemola immediately plunged into active politics. He used a church

opposite where he lived on 26 Makgatho Street to address masses of people who came to his meetings every evening. The church belonged to Rev. Brander whose son Simon Brander died on Robben Island convicted as a PAC-Poqo activist. Masemola travelled the length and breadth of the country reviving PAC structures. He intervened in conflicts between the PAC and the United Democratic Front (UDF) members.

On 17 April 1990, Masemola was killed in a car crash under what the PAC considers were suspicious circumstances. The truck that was involved in the crash with Masemola's car fled the scene and was never found.

In 2003 President Thabo Mbeki conferred the Order of Luthuli in Silver, posthumously, on Masemola for dedicating his life to the struggle against apartheid and standing for the ideals of a free, just and democratic South Africa.

- How many of you know who Japhta Masemola is?
- How many of you know of his contribution to the South African struggle against apartheid?
- How many of you know that he was jailed for almost 27 years on Robben Island and other prisons.
- How many of you know that He joined the ANC Youth League in the early 1950s, supporting Mandela and other league leaders in their attempts to set the ANC on a more confrontational road. But when activists led by the late Robert Sobukwe broke away from the ANC in 1959 over the issues of land ownership, socialism, workers' power and other policies, Masemola joined the new Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC).
- How many of you know that Masemola had been jailed in the notorious Robben Island prison off Cape Town with other nationalists, including Mandela and was believed to be the longest-serving political prisoner
- How many of you know that He was released on October 15, 1989 and on the eve of his release, Nelson Mandela asked to have a meeting with him. Japhta Masemola was flown from Johannesburg (Leeukop Prison) to Victor Verster Prison in Cape Town and the meeting was held at Mandela's prison bungalow.
- How many of you know that when he celebrated his freedom, Masemola told reporters that the PAC, unlike the ANC, would not negotiate with the white government for "what belongs to the people." He declared: "We are not paper tigers. We are the real blood tigers?."
- How many know that after he continued speaking against apartheid, he was mysteriously killed in a car crash 7 months after his release?
- Are all these mere coincidences?
- Are there questions we should not ask?
- So how come Nelson Mandela is more popular than Masemola?
- How come is it that Mandela is seen as the hero of South Africa struggle to independence and not Masemola?
- How come is it that Mandela's 27 years in prison is always mentioned, while Masemola's 27 years in prison is not mentioned?
- How come is Mandela globally praised while Masemola is being wiped out of history?
- If they actually stood for the same values and fought the same fight, why then did

Mandela's tune change towards his end on Robben Island and after "release"?

- Why was Masemola's message still deemed dangerous?

Like Malcolm X has said and I paraphrase, "when your enemy suddenly turns around and begins to praise a man, beware of such a man"

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