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The Leaders we all Need

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SOCIALISM IS THE FUTURE / BUILD IT NOW!

Let's be like Dora Tamana

By Precious Banda



“Dora Tamana lived and struggled with her people, she led from the front.”

During women's month, we paid tribute to the heroine of our people Dora Tamana. We choose Dora Tamana because she is one of the most outstanding women who contributed in advancing women's struggles at an epoch when our oppressed people were becoming highly organised and the apartheid oppressive regime even more brutal between the 1940s and 1950s. What makes Dora Tamana more outstanding for us is that she was a communist. The observation we made is that communist liberation struggle women unlike their male counterparts are less celebrated and remembered.

We must ask ourselves why there is so little knowledge and political lectures given to young people today on Dora Tamana, Jossie Mpama and many other Communist women who contributed to the liberation of our people. As aspiring communists, our interest is to know women who came before us, their contribution and how they confronted patriarchy in the Party and the movement in general. It is for this reason that we chose to honour Mama Dora Tamana. She is one of the pioneering women who worked very hard and contributed in making the 1956 Women March a success.

What sets Mama Dora Tamana apart is that she had a very difficult upbringing. She had to look after her siblings from an early age. Even after she got married, her life was full of difficulties,

having lost her own kids to death and had a husband who abused alcohol. What we learn from her upbringing is that she was resilient. She still managed to stand up and come up with initiatives that don't only helped her but also her community. We learn from her that our past must not determine our future because she chose to stand and fight for herself and her people. Her resilience and perseverance show us that women are indeed a rock that a community is built on. From a woman who struggled to survive, to a leader of community initiatives that provided for many disadvantaged people, this is the Dora Tamana we must all aspire to be like.

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Today's leaders must address the real concerns of our people. We often see our leaders reach out to communities only during election times, conferences or some annual commemoration on our political calendar. Dora

Tamana lived and struggled with her people, she led from the front. She believed in education and the welfare of children that's why she opened a crèche in her community in 1938 to care for children. At this time when the masses of our people raised concerns about social distance with the movement and our leaders, we must emulate Dora Tamana and we must all be active participants of community initiatives in the areas we live and encourage our people to be action oriented.

Mama Dora Tamana was a true activist and an all-rounder of all alliance formations. She was a unionist and led workers, she was actively involved in the ANC, and she joined the Com-

munist Party at a very young age inspired by the evictions she suffered with her family and the need to fight the oppressive regime for dispossessing them. She was a founder member of the Federation of South African Women and was elected its first National Secretary in 1954. The FEDSAW Congress in 1954 adopted the Women Charter as a lobbying and guiding document to advance women struggles. They clearly understood that the struggle for freedom had to be fought side by side with the struggle for women emancipation. She believed in the unity of women in advancing their struggle hence she was part of the diverse women and organisations that came together to form the Federation of South African Women.

As a communist she participated in the ANCWL. What is critical is that she knew that views of the working class and the poor must find expression in the ANCWL. Today women who differ with the posture of the ANCWL disassociate themselves with the organisation of women by saying they cannot be members.

What must be our attitude is that we must be members of the ANCWL and contest its views in the structures. We must be there in its congresses and programmes and influence content that will promote women's struggles. It is in its structures where we must interrogate the leadership as to whether they are staying true to the mandate underpinned in the aims and objectives of the ANCWL of Dora Tamana. She never gave up on advancing women struggles and that's why we must never give up on the organisation she helped to shape.

Leaders must always lead from the front. Dora Tamana did just that, she organised her community and women in defiance campaigns against pass laws that limited our people's movement in their own country. She was brave and not a coward who waited for others to act. She was ready for the consequences of the path she had chosen but

“Leaders must always lead from the front. Dora Tamana did just that...”



more determined to end the oppressive regime and its laws. When women were going to Pretoria for the historic march, they were inspired by her. Leaders must be able to inspire others the way Dora Tamana did.

Dora Tamana understood that our struggles are interlinked with all the oppressed people of the world. It is for that reason that she and other women embarked on an international tour to mobilise support against the oppressive apartheid regime. They enlightened the world about the atrocities of the regime on black people and women in particular. She was an internationalist. When they returned from the international tour, she and five other women

were listed under the suppression of Communism Act and in April 1955 she was banned from participating in political gatherings and meetings for five years. In the 1960s she served two jail sentences but she never gave up on the struggle. Even when she suffered from poor health she still continued to talk to women and urge them to continue to fight. Sadly she passed on in 1983.

Today, we need to ask ourselves whether the struggles that Dora Tamana stood for are being taken forward. She initiated cooperatives because she wanted women to be able to provide for themselves and their families through those cooperatives. Dora Tamana stood for oppressed women, in particular, women in rural areas and villages. She stood for: women disfranchised by harsh living conditions in townships, the farm worker women who everyday brave the weather to produce for farm owners who continue to dehumanise them, the house helpers who look after homes of their employers for little appreciation, women who have to endured abuse, violence and rape. Those are the women that Dora Tamana stood and fought for. If we believe that we are taking the struggles of our heroine forward, we must then ensure that we are changing the living conditions of the downtrodden and disenfranchised women for

the better.
We must refuse to compound women struggles and emancipation as an event on the calendar, like the month of August. Our struggles are from far and we must continue to fight until we have the ideal society we aspire for. Patriarchy must be confronted daily and in all spaces we occupy. The struggle against patriarchy and the emanci-

pation of women existed throughout the evolution of the liberation movement and we must continue to do so today both in form and content. Long live the radical undying spirit of Mama Dora Tamana. Malibongwe!

Cde Precious Banda (Dora Tamana) is a YCLSA National Committee and Political Commission Member and Former SASCO Treasurer General



The greatest leader

By OJ Fourie



"I have devotedly watched over the organisation all these years. I now hand it back to you, bigger, stronger, in tact. Guard our precious Movement."

The mentioning of the name OR Tambo immediately invokes admiration and respect by any supporter of freedom and human rights worldwide.

OR would have celebrated his 100th birthday this year if he was still with us.

OR served as President of the ANC from 1967 to 1991, making him the longest serving President.

Of the 12 Presidents that the ANC had including the current President - 10 served for a period of 10 years or less. Only 2 Presidents served for a period longer than 10 years. The President that served for the 2nd longest period was Chief Albert Luthuli who

I believe that OR Tambo was ANC President during its most difficult period.

served for 15 years as President until his death in 1967 when OR Tambo took over from him as President.

Another important aspect of the 24 presidential years of OR Tambo is that 23 of them were during the 30 years (1960 - 1990) that the ANC was banned by the apartheid government.

In the context of 105 years of the existence of the ANC, one can reasonably say that the 30 years of being banned was the most difficult time in the

history of the ANC. Most leaders were operating underground in SA and others went into exile to different countries. This obviously made it very difficult to run an organisation. Yes surely the ANC had challenges pre-1960 and post-1990. But I believe

that OR Tambo was ANC President during its most difficult period.

What is noteworthy of OR Tambo's leadership is that the ANC survived those difficult times and not just survived - the ANC achieved its objec-

tive to ensure that South Africa belongs to us all, irrespective of your race, culture or language. And OR Tambo also handed over a strong ANC to Nelson Mandela when he stepped down as President.

The values of OR Tambo that made him one of the best leaders the country ever had were: unity, selflessness, sacrifice, collective leadership, humility, honesty, discipline, hard work, promoting internal debates, giving constructive criticism and accepting self-criticism, leading by example and earning respect. These values encapsulated who OR Tambo was and what he stood for.

There are valuable lessons that we can learn from the values of OR Tambo that made him such a great leader. Especially lessons that today's leaders can learn.

Firstly: A leader must lead its members by example.

OR Tambo himself personified what the ANC stood for and what the ANC intended to achieve. He also sacrificed his own luxuries to leave his home, family and career when he went to live in exile. OR Tambo put the interests of the organisation first, before personal interests and he did so by leading by example.

In 1967, after the death of the then ANC President, Chief Albert Luthuli, OR Tambo became Acting President. It is interesting to note that during the Morogoro Conference (1969) OR Tambo actually stepped down as Acting President when he submitted his resignation. But he was elected as President and he remained President for another 22 years. This is testimony of the good leader that OR Tambo was. The people noted that he was the right man to lead them through that difficult period in history.

For OR Tambo as a leader, it was not about him in the context of the individual or the leader, it was about the organisation and the people. And this is an example for us to follow because he practiced selflessness, by actively serving not his own interests but serving the interests of the organisation and the people.

We must ask ourselves the following: If all current members of the ANC act in the same man-

ner as today's leadership collective (therefore if we follow their example) - what type of ANC will we have?

Today's leaders must live their lives and conduct themselves in such a way that members can indeed emulate them. And in doing so it will lead to a stronger ANC.

Secondly: A leader must ensure the unity of the organisation which you are leading.

OR Tambo set a perfect example to the leadership of today of the important role that leaders must play in building the unity of the ANC, the Alliance and within the country.

OR Tambo said in 1991 in Durban: "I have devotedly watched over the organisation all these years. I now hand it back to you, bigger, stronger, in tact. Guard our precious Movement."

That is the enormous task that leaders are given by OR Tambo. "GUARD OUR PRECIOUS

MOVEMENT!" This one sentence of OR Tambo carries a lot of weight and a lot of responsibility.

It is first and foremost the responsibility of a leader to ensure that you unite the people whom you are leading. And in doing so you are uniting and strengthening

the organisation that you are leading.

Therefore, in order to guard the organisation you must build unity within the organisation.

OR Tambo developed a culture of consensus in taking decisions - which was essential in protecting the unity within the ANC.

Today it seems that decisions are made on the basis of which faction it will benefit (will it benefit my faction?); and not taking decisions on the basis that it will benefit the ANC and thereby enhancing unity.

It is just as important to enhance the unity within the Alliance. The ANC is the leader of the Alliance and therefore the ANC has the responsibility to unite the Alliance. OR Tambo was completely aware of this responsibility when he was the President of the ANC.

OR defined the Alliance as follows:

"Ours is not a paper alliance, created at conference tables and formalised through the signing of documents and representing only an agreement of leaders. Our alliance is a living organism

OR Tambo himself personified what the ANC stood for and what the ANC intended to achieve.

that has grown out of the struggle. We have built it out of our separate and common experiences...it has been fertilised by the blood of countless heroes; many of them unnamed and unsung. It has been reinforced by a common determination to destroy the enemy and by our shared belief in the certainty of Victory and this is not a congress alliance."

He understood the Alliance and the broader congress movement, and understood its importance and how to enhance and enrich it to be more united and more empowered.

OR Tambo had the revolutionary intelligence to understand the relationship between the ANC and the SACP, and the important role that the SACP was playing in the struggle for our liberation.

But (very importantly) he also understood the role played by individual communists within the ANC.

That is the reason why he earned the highest respect of all the Alliance partners and broader congress movement. The future of the country rests on the healthy relationship and cooperation within the Alliance.

OR Tambo also had a vision to unite the country as a whole.

OR Tambo said: "It is our responsibility to break down barriers of division and create a country where there will be neither Whites nor Blacks, just South Africans, free and united in diversity."

OR Tambo's ultimate vision was not just to ensure that the ANC can become one day the ruling party of the country. But, his vision was to see a united and democratic South Africa!

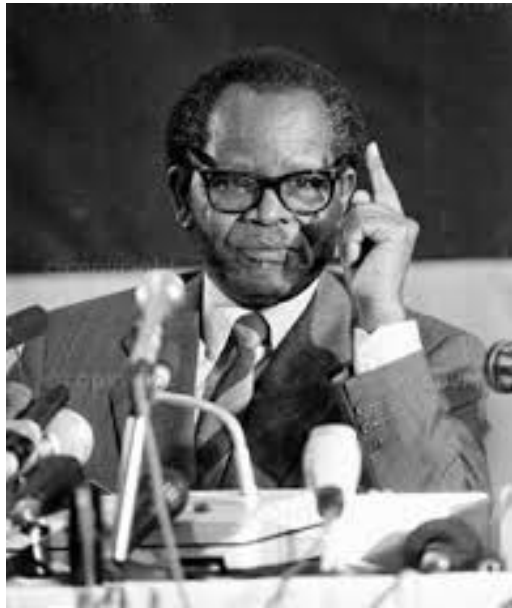
If we look at the behaviour of some of our leaders and we listen to their utterances in public, it seems that they completely distance themselves

from their fellow South Africans who are not ANC members or who are not in an agreement with them. These leaders degenerate what OR Tambo stood for.

At the end, when conferences and elections are over, we are truly all South Africans, irrespective of our political affiliation, or our cultural, racial or religious differences. After all we go to the same churches together, we shop in the same malls, and our kids go to school together.

But still some leaders when they step into the political domain seem to distance themselves from their fellow citizens.

We must all work on unifying ourselves as South Africans at all times and on all terrains. This was the dream and vision of OR Tambo.



Internationalist

OR Tambo travelled the world, in mobilizing support against apartheid. He was received with the protocol reserved for Heads of State in many parts of the world.

His success with international mobilization against apartheid is evidenced by the fact that by 1990 when the ANC was unbanned, the ANC had 27 missions abroad which was impressive for a liberation movement. The fact that the United Nations declared apartheid a crime against humanity, is the main result of his tireless diplomatic work.

South Africa needs new heroes to look up to (yes it is good to

have heroes that we can refer to from the past like OR Tambo - for lessons learned and for inspiration) but we need new heroes that can lead us forward as a country and to take us through the current challenges that we are facing.

We need leaders that will give us hope for the future, leaders that will continuously encourage

"It is our responsibility to break down barriers of division and create a country where there will be neither Whites nor Blacks, just South Africans..."

us to work together and strive for a better future.

There are a lot of good lessons that the leaders of today, and the leaders of tomorrow, can learn from the life and legacy of OR Tambo.

We need leaders that will shape the destiny of South Africa - to ensure that there will be a better life for all!

Nelson Mandela summarised the life and legacy of OR Tambo when he said:

"Oliver was pure gold, there was gold in his intellectual brilliance, gold in his warmth and humanity, gold in his tolerance and generosity, gold in his unfailing loyalty and self-sacrifice. As much as I respected him as a leader that is how much I loved him as a man".

Long live the spirit of OR Tambo long live!

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The SACP Kimberley District DEC with the SACP Provincial Chairperson, Cde Maruping Lekwene



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