

## **ALBERTINA SISULU – A WOMAN OF FORTITUDE TALKING POINTS**

### ***Mama Albertina Sisulu epitomised fortitude and resilience.***

- Mama Sisulu was one of the most revolutionary leaders of the anti-apartheid resistance in South Africa.
- She was a formidable force and exemplified the saying: “***When you strike a woman, you strike a rock.***”
- She played a formative role in the opposition to apartheid and in building a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa.
  - She took on the mantle of leadership at one of the darkest hours in our history and stood as a beacon of hope.
- Mama Sisulu was one of the organisers of the anti-pass Women’s March in 1956 and played a key role in its logistics.

### ***Mama Albertina Sisulu demonstrated strong perseverance and courage.***

- Mama Sisulu will be remembered as one of the strongest women of the struggle who suffered immensely at the hands of the apartheid regime.
- She was jailed several times for her political activities and was constantly harassed by the apartheid’s security police.
- She became one of the first women to be arrested under the General Laws Amendment Act which gave the police the power to hold suspects in detention for 90 days without charging them.
- Albertina Sisulu was placed in “solitary confinement incommunicado” for almost two months while the Security Branch looked for her husband.

### ***Albertina Sisulu was determined against all odds.***

- Mama Sisulu was accepted as a trainee nurse at Johannesburg General, referred to as a “Non-European” hospital.
- In carrying out her duties she was exposed to prejudice and faced the unofficial policy of racial segregation amongst staff.
- White nurses, regardless of age or experience, were made superior to Black colleagues.
- The hospital matron refused to allow Albertina to return home to mourn her mother’s death.
- She found that patients were denied the best possible care on the basis of their skin colour.

### ***Mama Sisulu sacrificed for her family and the country.***

- Her valiant role in fighting the apartheid security apparatus came at an immense personal sacrifice and cost to her family.
- Albertina Sisulu and her son Zwelakhe were arrested by the security police after her husband Walter Sisulu went underground.
- As a result of constant harassment from security police, the Sisulu family faced financial struggles.
- Her financial woes continued throughout the 1960s as she struggled to afford her children's schooling in Swaziland.

- When she was not at work, Albertina Sisulu sewed *lishweshwe* dresses and knitted jerseys and baby clothes to sell for extra money.
- She also bought eggs at wholesale prices, selling them at a small profit to meet her family's needs.

***Mama Sisulu was a bold servant of the people.***

- Albertina Sisulu dedicated her life to the betterment of South Africans.
- She had a passion for community development, advocacy and the mobilisation of community structures.
- During the time that she worked as a doctor's nurse and she provided much needed help to people in the poorest communities.
- In McDonald's Farm where people were living in abandoned cars she set up a surgery and installed 20 toilets that were shared by 150 people.
- She made space for a crèche in the surgery and a feeding scheme was introduced that fed approximately 80 children twice a week.

***South Africans should protect and emulate the legacy of Mama Albertina Sisulu***

- Let us use the centenary to honour the sacrifices and contributions of Mama Sisulu towards a free, non-racial and democratic South Africa.
- We should also learn more about the immense sacrifices of many other struggle icons who made us to be where we are today.
- South Africans can visit the Liberation Heritage Route which is a network of sites, places, people and stories showing different periods of the struggle for liberation.
- Those who sacrificed for our freedom have laid the path for our constitutional democracy founded on the principles of human dignity and equal rights for everyone.
- They are our heritage and we should encourage current and future generations to treasure their freedom and to remember that it came at an enormous cost to our country.
- We also have to play an active role in our communities in improving people's lives and making sure the economy works for everyone.

