



ANC SA
FREE OUR LE



Ahmed Kathrada



Uncle Kathy was a South African politician, political prisoner and anti-apartheid activist.

1929-2017



He was jailed for 26 years along with fellow comrades Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu for their commitment to ending oppression.

"THE HARDEST
THING TO OPEN IS
A CLOSED MIND"

Uncle Kathy

FROM BIRTH TO SENTENCING:

Uncle Kathy was born in the small agricultural town of Schweizer-Reneke, located in what is now known as the North West Province.

1929
BIRTH

Due to colonial segregation, at age 8, he was sent to an Indian school in Johannesburg. Although separating from his family, he was in close proximity to political parties and organisations fighting to end the segregation. Thus, at age 12, he decided to join the Young Communists League.

1938 - 1941
EARLY LIFE

FROM BIRTH TO SENTENCING:

Aged 18, Uncle Kathy moved into a flat in Johannesburg. No. 13 Kholvad House, which soon became a hub for social & political activities and became a symbol of what Uncle Kathy imagined South Africa to be.

1946
KHOLVAD HOUSE



In his final years of schooling, Uncle Kathy abandoned his studies and joined the Passive Resistance Campaign, established in response to Jan Smut's Ghetto Act in which it legalised the segregation of Indians in Natal. Uncle Kathy was arrested for the first time and held in prison for a month for occupying tents on a plot reserved for 'whites only'.



1947
PASSIVE RESISTANCE

FROM BIRTH TO SENTENCING:

Aged 22, Uncle Kathy & Mandela had their real first disagreement. Mandela was against the view that the struggle needed the involvement of all oppressed people and democratic whites and opposed the joint strike of unions against the passing of the Suppression of Communism Act.

1950 STRIKES



At age 23, Uncle Kathy was nominated to represent the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress at the World Youth Festival in Berlin. It was after the festival that he visited the concentration camp in Auschwitz. He brought back a handful of bones with him to South Africa to remind our people of the outcome of racism.

1951 WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL

FROM BIRTH TO SENTENCING:

Aged 24, Uncle Kathy was arrested for his role in the Defiance Campaign and was charged under the Suppression of Communism Act. He was sentenced to 9 months hard labour, & suspended for two years.

1952

DEFIANCE CAMPAIGN

Uncle Kathy was served with a two-year banning order that prohibited taking part in any legal political activity and demanded his resignation from 39 political organisations. Toward the expiration of the banning order, age 25, he was served almost immediately with another, this time for 5 years. Many with similar orders didn't comply and it posed a change of tactics by the police.

1954

BANNING ORDER

FROM BIRTH TO SENTENCING:

Despite being banned, Uncle Kathy, age 26, was active in organising the Congress of the People in which the Freedom Charter was officially adopted in Kliptown, Soweto. The principles of the Freedom Charter played a key role in his activism and he dedicated his life towards it.

1955

FREEDOM CHARTER

On the 9th of August, the Women's March took place with over 20 000 women marching to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to hand over a petition against the pass laws. Although being banned, Uncle Kathy provided assistance to his comrades.

And, following his role in organising the Congress of the People, he was arrested and charged with treason, aged 27. The trial lasted for 4 years, after which he and 30 others were acquitted due to a lack of evidence.

1956

WOMENS MARCH

FROM BIRTH TO SENTENCING:

On the 21st of March, the Sharpville Massacre took place at a police station in Soweto. Police opened fire on protestors demonstrating against pass laws, and subsequently killing 69 people. Uncle Kathy, age 31, was detained for 5 months during the State of Emergency after which the ANC & PAC were banned.

1960 SHARPVILLE MASSACRE

Umkhonto weSizwe ("Spear of the Nation") was the armed wing of the ANC, & launched its first attacks on government installations in 1961. Previously anti-apartheid groupings engaged in non-violent forms of resistance despite government retaliating with violence against black people. In the face of repressive measures, there was a need to switch up tactics in order to achieve freedom & equality. Uncle Kathy, age 33, was apart of Umkhoto weSizwe.

1961 UMKHONTO WESIZWE

FROM BIRTH TO SENTENCING:

Whilst Uncle Kathy was attending Mandela's trial, he was served with a notice placing him under house arrest, aged 33. The second person in South Africa to be put under house arrest, just 9 days after Helen Joseph. No visitors were allowed.

1962
MANDELA'S TRIAL



Uncle Kathy, age 34, under the instructions of fellow comrades abandoned his flat and belongings, going underground with the help of his friend Arthur Goldreich. He assumed the identity of a Portugese man, Pedro Pereira, and moved into a cottage in Mounatin View, Johannesburg. Later, in July, Uncle Kathy was arrested during a police raid of Lilliesleaf Farm and was held under the Ninety Day Detention Act. In October, he appeared in court with 10 others, and was charged with sabotage.



1963
UNDERGROUND

FROM BIRTH TO SENTENCING:

On the 12th of June 1964, Uncle Kathy along with seven of the accused Rivonia Trialists was sentenced to life imprisonment. The next day, they arrived on Robben Island to serve out their life sentences.

1964
RIVONIA TRIAL



The Rivonia Trial took its name from Rivonia, the suburb of Johannesburg where leaders had been arrested (and documents discovered) at Liliesleaf Farm, privately owned by Arthur Goldreich, on 11 July 1963.

RIVONIA TRIAL



26 YEARS IN PRISON



IMPRISONED
AT 34



RELEASED
AT 60



1 YEAR

PRETORIA DETENTION



18 YEARS

ROBBEN ISLAND



7 YEARS

POLLSMOOR PRISON

Ahmed Kathrada

PRISON DEPRIVATIONS:

- Life on Robben Island robbed prisoners of their dignity, denying them to simple pleasures in life.
- For 14-years, they slept on the floor with mats, and only in 1978 did they receive beds.
- African inmates were not given bread for the first ten years of imprisonment.
- For twenty-two years, no watches or clocks were allowed.
- Only one visit and a letter restricted to 500 words was allowed to be written and received every 6 months.
- After 16-years, prisoners were only allowed select newspapers.
- Cold water showers.
- No visits by children were allowed.

Ban on access to the news, no diaries and the suspension of studies were the cruellest deprivations.

Ahmed Kathrada

"OUR CELLS WERE ON
OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE
SAME PASSAGE, AND IT
WAS EXTREMELY
UNCOMFORTABLE TO
WITNESS MY POLITICAL
LEADERS GETTING EVEN
MORE FRUGAL FARE THAN I
WAS."

Uncle Kathy

PRISON - A UNI OF LEARNING:

Prisoners responded to assaults on their dignity by fighting for their rights to study. They found power in obtaining knowledge and in the books they read through their studies.

Whilst in prison, Uncle Kathy completed four degrees:

- BA History and Criminology, 1968
- B Bibliography in African Politics and Library Studies, 1976
- BA Honours in History, 1982
- BA Honours in African Politics, 1985

Uncle Kathy was one of the first prisoners to complete a Bachelor's degree while imprisoned on Robben Island. His honours degrees allowed him to focus on his research on the liberation history. It proved to be an eye opener, because whilst they were quite busy with political work, they neglected knowledge about their own history.

Ahmed Kathrada

SOLIDARITY:

Key tactics of the apartheid state was to divide and conquer comrades, this continued whilst they were imprisoned. Prisoners were offered better treatment and offers for release in hope to create conflict within the struggle movement. Political prisoners had to be disciplined and personally sacrifice a lot for the betterment of the country. These offers were often refused, knowing that it would cause a divide and that these offers were conditional in the sense that political prisoners would have to give up and abandon their beliefs, ideologies and the resistance of the struggle movements.

Both Uncle Kathy and Mandela refused these offers when made to them.

Ahmed Kathrada

SOLIDARITY:

In 1989, Uncle Kathy and seven other political prisoners were given tier freedom. The following year, Mandela was released and the ANC & other political organisations were unbanned. It is believed that these decisions were a result

of:

- South Africa had become isolated through international trade sanctions to the extent that the economy was suffering.
- The apartheid state could not suppress or control the uprisings taking place throughout the country.
- South Africa was completely isolated from the international community in terms of sporting and cultural events.

Ahmed Kathrada

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES:

After Uncle Kathy's release from prison in 1989, he focused much of his attention on deepening non-racialism in South Africa. Uncle Kathy worked to preserve the liberation movement history, and supported the oppressed in Palestine. Uncle Kathy remained committed to people and the principles of freedom knowing that our struggle for social justice is far from complete.

Ahmed Kathrada

AFTER RELEASE:

At the first legal conference of the ANC following its unbanning in 1990, Uncle Kathy, age 62, was elected to serve on the National Executive Committee of the ANC.

1991
ANC



At the age of 64, for the first time in Uncle Kathy's life, he would be able to vote & participate in South Africa's first democratic elections. Following the election, Uncle Kathy was elected as a member of Parliament and appointed as a parliamentary counsellor in the office of President Madiba.

1994
VOTING



AFTER RELEASE:

Uncle Kathy, age 67, formally stepped down from the ANC NEC, and chose to not stand for a re-election. In the same year, Uncle Kathy was appointed to serve as the chair of the Robben Island Museum Council.

1997 STEPPING DOWN



Uncle Kathy, during the years 1999-2008 authored three books:

1. Letters from Robben Island (1999)
2. Memoirs (2004)
3. A Simple Freedom (2008)

1999 BOOKS



AFTER RELEASE:

Uncle Kathy, age 79, was persuaded to establish a foundation in his name. Seeking to deepen non-racialism in South Africa and to commemorate the liberation movement history. The core of the foundations work is focused on young people because that's where his activism began and where change begins.

2008
AK FOUNDATION



Through the foundation, a campaign was launched in solidarity with Palestinian Political Prisoners in response to the ongoing atrocities against the Palestinian state by Israel.

2013
PALESTINE



AFTER RELEASE:

Uncle Kathy, age 87, wrote an open letter to President Jacob Zuma in 2016, calling on him to resign after the Constitutional Court ruled that the President failed to "uphold, defend and respect the Constitution as the supreme law of the land".

2016
ZUMA



On the 28th of March, Ahmed Kathrada passed away at the age of 87. His lifelong activism and contribution towards the liberation struggle will be remembered by generations to come.

2017
PASSING ON

